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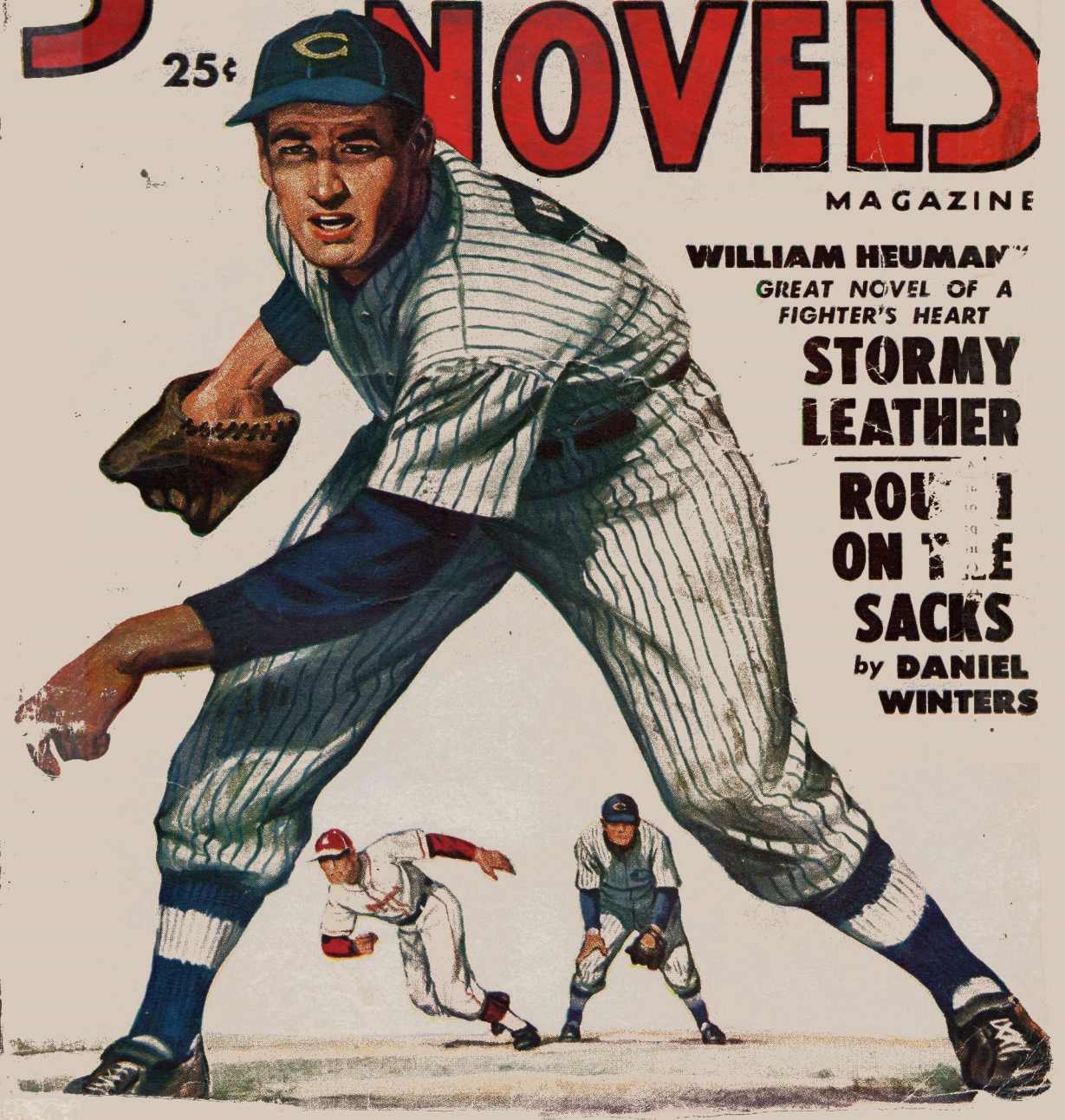

WILLIAM HEUMAN

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by DANIEL WINTERS

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VOL. 16 CONTENTS FOR AUGUST, 1948 No. 2

THREE BIG NOVELS

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SPECIAL FEATURES

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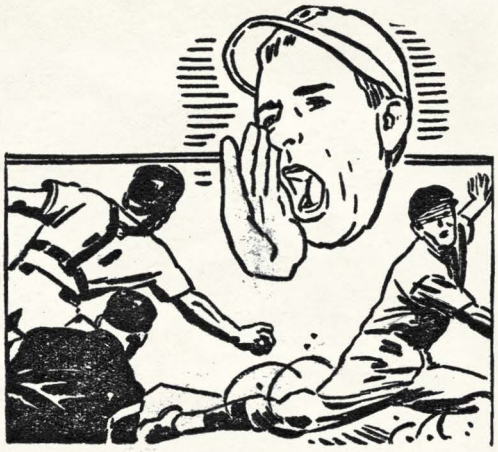


By JOHN DREBINGER

IT IS a fact that some of baseball's most spectacular deals stemmed directly from the urgent need of some club to replenish its treasury while a more fortunate outfit made off with a topflight player. Back in 1928 the Boston Braves had the great Rogers Hornsby as their star second baseman and manager. But they also had a tail-end ball club that drew practically nothing through the turnstiles and a bankrupt treasury.

So, when the late William G. Wrigley, the wealthy chewing gum magnate and owner of the Cubs, dangled $200,000 in cash before the bulging eyes of the Braves, plus about five ball players, Judge Emil Fuchs, then president of the Braves, almost fell over his feet in his haste to ship the priceless Hornsby to Chicago. There was quite a scream about it at the time, but in the very next season Wrigley saw his Cubs win a pennant with the aid of Hornsby's devastating bat, Judge Fuchs was able to stall off the Braves' creditors for a little while longer and everyone seemed perfectly happy.

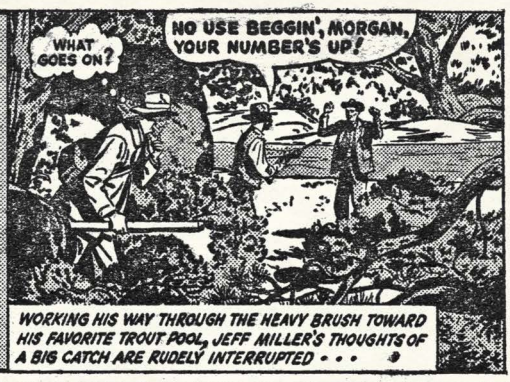
It was Connie Mack, the same Connie who spoke so vehemently about the practice only a short time ago, who really set the fashion in this sort of thing and the venerable Philadelphian's memory must be slipping to have permitted him to utter his unseemly remarks about St. Louis. For according to the game's outstanding historians Mack on occasion has not only parted with a couple of ball players here and there for luscious hunks of cash, but in his long and honorable career as headman of the Athletics he has stripped entire championship casts.

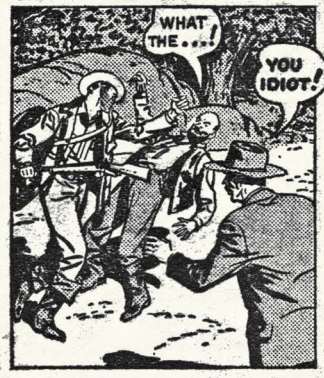
After appearing briefly with a pennant winner for Philadelphia in the first few years of the American League and discarding most of those players following his World Series defeat by the Giants in 1905, Mack came back in 1910 with the first of his great Athletic teams.

That was the club of the "$100,000 infield," a quartet that in these days of fantastic inflation probably would bring closer to a million. It had at the keystone bag Eddie Collins, perhaps the greatest of all second basemen. At first there was the flashy Stuffy McInnis, Jack Barry was the shortstop and J. Franklin Baker, baseball's first accepted home run king, was on third.

Through 1913 this cast stood astride the baseball universe, head and shoulders above the field. It won again in 1914, but that fall the "miracle" Braves, who had come up from last place in July to win the National League pennant, trounced the seemingly invincible Mackmen in four straight games for the most astounding World Series upset up to that time.

JEFF LOST INTEREST IN FISHING WHEN...





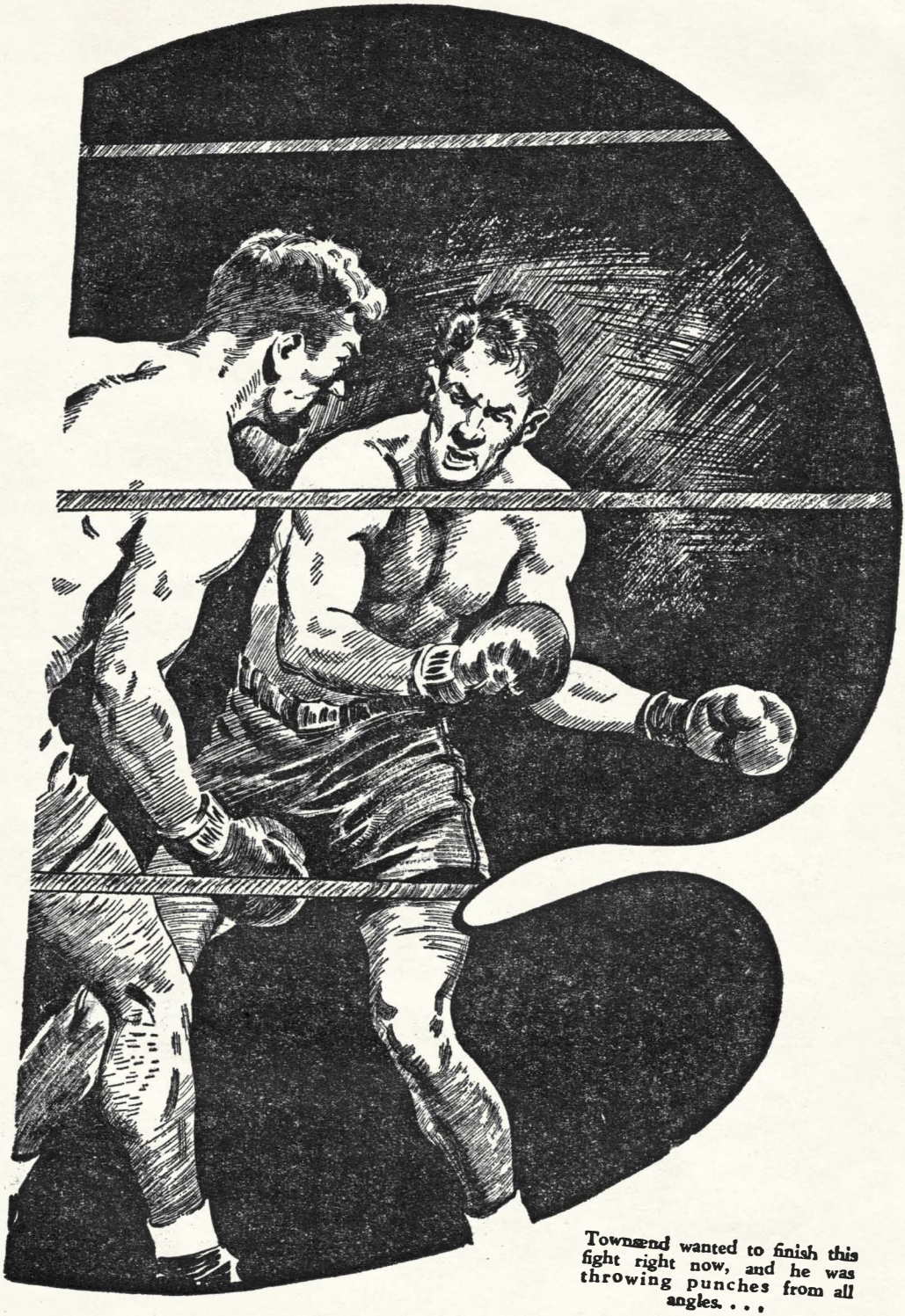
STORMY LEATHER

By WILLIAM HEUMAN

"You fight with your heart as well as your fists, kid. But if you don't use your head in this one, too, there'll be a dead man in your corner—instead of a new champ!"

IT WAS being arranged for him again; everything was arranged these days so that you didn't have to think. You went out and you hit a guy on the chin and he fell down because it was arranged; and the next time a guy hit you on the chin and you went down, and that was arranged. It was all done very neatly with no loose ends. You got your money, more than you ever got when you were slugging it out on the level, but you also got your hands dirty.

Johnny Barrett was thinking about that as he sat on the sofa on the far side of the



Townsend wanted to finish this fight right now, and he was throwing punches from all angles. . . .

room and listened to his manager, Joe Spindell, trying to argue with the Duke, but doing it in a nice way so as not to offend. Nobody offended the Duke even with talk, unless he wanted to end up in the river encased in a block of cement. The Duke was old-fashioned that way, using the methods introduced many years ago by the real mobsters.

Spindell was saying in his hoarse, throaty voice, "But Duke, Johnny's still popular with the crowd. They like his style, Duke. He can draw—"

"Flies," the Duke murmured. "Take a walk, Joe."

The Duke sat there in his overcoat and pearl gray fedora hat. The Duke even wore the hats they'd worn in the old days, and the pearl gray gloves to match. The Duke was small and thin with a seamed face, and small blue eyes as hard and emotionless as glass marbles.

"But—" Spindell tried to say, but the Duke cut him off again.

"Johnny wins tonight," the Duke said tersely, "and he loses next month against Georgie Townsend. You hear good, Spindell?"

Joe Spindell glanced in Johnny's direction, a hopeless expression on his face.

He said, "You're the boss, Duke. Only I was thinkin' Johnny's been a good champion for two years. Everybody likes him."

"I'm cryin'," the Duke said. "I got tears in my eyes."

Johnny Barrett got up and went out into the corridor, and they didn't even see or notice him go. He was the meal ticket and that was all. He was the horse they sent to the barrier every once in a while. He lined their pockets with the big dough and he collected some of it for himself, and that was some consolation for selling his soul, but he was wondering now if he'd made a good bargain.

He was the middleweight champion of the world, had been for two years, and he'd been pretty popular. The Duke was right that he hadn't been drawing too big crowds lately because his style was not colorful. In nine years of boxing he'd developed into a smooth ring man; a good boxer and a fair hitter who knew his way around, but he wasn't the killer type. This kid Georgie Townsend, from the coast, was supposed to be that, so the Duke was "arranging" for the west coast kid to be the champion, which meant that Johnny Barrett passed out of the picture just as a lot of other guys had before him, and nobody heard of them again.

He would be paid well, though, because the Duke was honest that way. He had plenty socked away now because he'd been smart enough to play the game in accordance with Duke Montrey's rules, and he would get a sizable stipend when he rolled over for Georgie Townsend in the "upset" of the year.

There had been a time when he hadn't been so smart, when he'd been a small club fighter, winging the punches home on the level, but he hadn't gotten anywhere after four years of it. There were no big fights for him, no big purses, and Joe Spindell had finally told him why. In the pugilistic world you had to be on Duke Montrey's team, because the Duke was the czar of boxing. The Duke took a man to the top when he thought that man was deserving of it, and he dethroned that man when his usefulness was at an end.

Walking down the corridor toward the rickety stairs which led to the arena below, Johnny Barrett was thinking that this was the end at the age of thirty-three. He tried to console himself with the thought that it was better to get out while he had all his senses and a pile of dough in the bank, than to wait until he'd been punched into Silly Street.

Tonight he was to fight Sam Revere, or Sam Ramizzoti, which was his real name. It was a title fight with the crown supposedly on the line, but Sam was to go out in less than six. That was the understand-

ing. This was to be a build-up for the Townsend fight next month, just as Sam Revere had been built up as a championship contender, and fed tankers until he had a nice record.

Duke Montrey and his boys would clean up on this one because Revere was thought to be very rugged, and the odds were high that he would go the limit. Johnny had a few grand on the outcome, himself, in addition to the nice purse Duke Montrey and the matchmaker, Louie Feinbaum, had guaranteed him.

The stairs creaked as Johnny went down to the lower floor and the dressing rooms. He could hear the noise from the arena as somebody opened a door down below, and then the door was shut and the noise stopped suddenly. The prelims were going on, probably the first or second six rounder of the evening. He should have been in the dressing room, getting into his fight togs, warming up a little, but there was no particular reason for that. Sam Revere would lay down whether his opponent had warmed up or not. Sam was lucky because Sam didn't think, and thinking was bad in this business. It was better to just take the money and forget about it. You could sleep better nights that way.

Johnny Barrett turned up toward the door which led to the arena. He opened it, nodded to the cop outside, and walked over toward the head of the aisle.

The cop called after him, "I got five on you tonight, Johnny. My wife needs a new hat."

JOHNNY turned to grin at him, but when he turned his face again to watch the fighters at the other end of the aisle the grin was gone. He was thinking that it was a hell of a thing the way they trusted him. Duke Montrey operated so cleverly that Johnny Barrett's reputation in the eyes of the public was as white as new-fallen snow, and only a few veteran sports writers suspected that the Duke had him under his heel.

A buzzer sounded from the ring, and then the bell rang. Two heavyweights came out at each other, and Johnny Barrett saw that the round was the sixth, the last. He watched them for a while without seeing anything, his mind on other things. He was remembering his first fight in this arena almost nine years ago. It had been the opening six-rounder.

He'd been so excited that he'd almost been flattened in the first round when he left his jaw open. He'd been fighting in the small clubs; he'd been picking up ten, fifteen, twenty-five dollars here and there and he'd thought he was going places when he got the Arena fight. He'd kidded himself into thinking he was headed for the top, and then he'd learned differently.

He'd been indignant when Joe Spindell had hesitatingly suggested that he lose one night. Spindell hadn't pressed the point and he'd won, but after that there were no more matches in the big Arena even though he continued to win. He was making chicken feed, and he didn't know why until Spindell told him he had to be Duke Montrey's boy before he went ahead. Montrey didn't have all the fighters in the business, but he had a lot of the big ones, and his name meant something to matchmakers and promoters. All those who weren't afraid of him personally were afraid of what he knew about them, and what he could tell the D.A. if he so desired. They played ball with him right down the line. When he put the finger on a man that man was dead until he took it off.

Desperate for ready cash after a siege of illness, and after years of slogging straight, Johnny had gone into the tank for the Duke—once. He hadn't had to go again in all the years he'd been working under Montrey's jurisdiction. The Duke had liked the way he obeyed orders; he'd liked the way he handled himself in the ring, and the Duke had built him up, fi-

nally handing him the championship on a silver platter.

Now it was to be taken away from him, and for the second time in his life he was to dive. He didn't like to think of that, but the Duke had given and the Duke could take away.

The two heavyweights were slugging away at each other, with the crowd giving them a good hand. Johnny Barrett's gray eyes started to focus after a while. He was watching one of the kids in the ring—a big boy with reddish hair, a two hundred pounder, fighting with an infectious grin on his freckled face, a kid fighting for the joy of it.

Johnny could see that in the way he went at his man. The kid loved to fight; it was in his blood. He didn't know too much, but he could hit and he could take a punch. He was doing both down there in the squared ring, with the howling crowd going all out for him, and he was winning.

Johnny watched him back his man into a corner and literally blast him to the canvas with a series of jolting blows. The punches had tremendous power behind them, but not all that the kid had in his system. Johnny Barrett had never seen a fighter derive more enjoyment from his trade. He was laughing as he trotted across the ring to the farthest corner.

He was laughing, too, when his opponent got up off the floor, groggy as a drunken sailor, and threw a right-hand punch to the redhead's jaw. The redheaded kid with the grin rolled over on his back, came up on his knees, a big grin still on his face. He got up then and flattened his man for good.

The crowd had gone berserk when the redhead went down. It was indescribable when he got up six seconds later and flattened his man with one punch. Even Johnny Barrett felt some of the contagion of it. It had been a hectic round with both men on the floor, and then the perfect finish, a right hand shot to the jaw and total blackness for one man.

There had been nothing fixed about that one, and Johnny Barrett had his moment of envy. He wondered how it felt to level for a change. He was thinking that he'd give up all the money he had in the bank to be in that kid's shoes right now—winner, and on the level.

He heard the name after awhile. It was Irish Tommy Shane—a good fighting name that was strangely familiar. Johnny Barrett tried to remember where he'd heard it.

The kid was coming up the aisle, waving to friends in the audience. He couldn't have been more than twenty or twenty-one. He walked like John L. Sullivan must have walked after flattening one of his hundreds of opponents, and after all his inexperience he was good; he'd showed much promise in those few minutes Johnny had watched him work. He had a punch; he was pretty fast for a big man, and he could take it and grin. It was hard to beat that combination.

Irish Tommy Shane passed within three feet of Johnny Barrett standing at the head of the aisle, his hands deep in his pockets. The kid was talking to one of his seconds, a bull-necked man with a bald head. He was saying,

"It was easy, Baldy. He tickled me—see. That was all."

It was the way he said it, the pride in his voice. He was wearing a cheap, checked bathrobe, but the robe was the only cheap thing about him. He held his head up like a champion; he walked the way a champion should walk.

Johnny Barrett turned and walked to his own dressing room, and he remembered where he'd heard the name Irish Tommy Shane before. He'd fought a man by the name of Shane many years before—a hard, fighting, veteran middleweight who'd been on the downgrade when Johnny was coming up. That fight

had been on the level, before Duke Montrey took over.

Thinking back, Johnny remembered the man. He'd been a smaller edition of this big kid with the reddish hair and the grin. He could have been an older brother, or even his father. Shane had been thirty-seven then, which meant that he was in his forties now, and the heavyweight kid about twenty.

But the veteran Shane hadn't been with his son, if it was his son. The kid didn't seem to have a manager. He'd been accompanied by two club seconds.

Joe Spindell was waiting in the dressing room when Johnny came in. Spindell was fat, beefy, two chins, a mustache. Spindell had not been a bad manager in his way. He knew how to get around, and he had connections; he knew something about the fight business, and he'd taught Johnny the rudiments in the beginning. But Spindell liked a dollar, an easy dollar, and he didn't particularly care whose it was. He'd taken too many of Duke Montrey's dollars now.

Spindell said, "I went to bat for you, kid. I did the best I could."

"I didn't say anything," Johnny told him.

"The Duke's wrong here," Spindell muttered. "You got a couple of good years, Johnny. You'll still draw."

"Don't kid me," Johnny said wearily. He began to get into his fight togs.

Spindell looked at him, a worried expression on his face. He said, "You ain't sore, kid?"

Johnny Barrett smiled grimly. "Why should I be sore?" he asked. "How did I get all that dough in the bank, Joe?"

Spindell nodded, relieved. He said consolingly, "Even when you ain't got a title, Johnny, you ain't through. You get fights, plenty of 'em, but you don't work for Duke any more. You can level from now on, and that's the way you want it, don't you?"

Johnny Barrett tied his shoelaces carefully. He said without looking up, "I hope I remember how."

HE TRIED to forget about the Townsend fight next month as he went out after the squat, black-haired, Sam Revere. He tried to make it look good the way he always did, and that was one of the reasons Duke Montrey had worked with him. In the ring he looked like an honest workman. He made Revere miss and he stabbed the squat Italian with his long left hands. He moved around his man, feinting, jabbing, occasionally stepping in with short rights to the head or body.

Revere, though, was on the ludicrous side. His misses were too wild; he stuck his jaw out too much to be hit, and that was foolish; that was the kind of thing the Duke didn't like because it was obvious to the wise ones. Johnny Barrett was sure Montrey would never use Revere in a greater capacity than that of a tanker, which meant that in a few years Sam Revere would be walking on his heels and listening to the birdies sing when there were no birdies.

Johnny stayed away from Revere's lunges. He was wondering what chance he'd have against the highly-touted Georgie Townsend if it were on the level. He knew he was slower than he'd been a year ago, but he was also wiser. He'd learned much in the ring, even from tank bouts, and he'd learned much more at fight camps when the spar mates came at him earnestly, honestly.

He was in pretty good physical condition, another reason Montrey had taken him up to the top. He didn't drink and he didn't run around; he was the family man type even though he wasn't married.

At the end of the round Spindell said to him, "Let him ride a couple more. The Duke wants to give the cash customers a little entertainment for their money."

"The Duke is big-hearted," Johnny ob-

served, and Spindell looked at him quickly.

"Look," Spindell half-whispered, "even these damn ring posts have ears. Stay on the Duke's side, kid. He can still point some nice money your way even if you don't work for him."

"I got enough money," Johnny said.

Spindell gulped and his two chins sagged. He said, "Nobody gets enough money, kid. Nobody."

Johnny went out and increased the pace the second round. He worked a fast left hand and he threw a couple of rights which were authentic. One of them made Sam Revere's bow legs sag, and the Italian glared at him angrily. Revere came back with half a dozen hard shots to the body, but Johnny took them going away and there was no sting and no damage. He hooked Revere on the chin with the left; he crossed the right to the body and then brought lefts and rights to the head again and he nearly dropped Revere cleanly with a right cross to the jaw.

It was turning into a longshoreman's brawl when the bell sounded, ending the round. The big crowd was in an uproar, and Sam Revere stalked to his corner, shaking his head. Johnny could see that he was thinking he'd been crossed and he was as sore as hell about it. Revere didn't mind laying down when a bout was supposed to be loused up, but he didn't want to get knocked out legitimately.

Spindell stumbled into the ring, a dead cigar in his mouth. He whispered, "What the hell, kid!"

"What's the matter?" Johnny asked him innocently.

"Don't make it look too good," Spinell muttered. "That dope, Revere, is liable to get sore and tag you with one. What happens then?"

"He's not tagging me," Johnny said. "Can't a man have one honest fight before he quits?"

Joe Spindell chewed on the cigar. He glanced over to Revere's corner.

"Okay, Johnny. You're old enough to know what you're doin', but don't try to cross the Duke. That's bad."

"I'd sooner cross my grandmother," Johnny Barrett said.

Sam Revere came out of his corner for the start of the third, the scowl still on his face, but he'd been warned by his manager to ease up, and Sam was a man who obeyed orders.

Deliberately, because there was an evil spirit inside of him tonight, Johnny tormented his man, trying to get him mad enough to fight, and he succeeded. He jabbed Revere on the tip of the nose with lefts, and they stung. He made the squat Italian miss, and then he jabbed him some more. He even rubbed the heel of his glove across Revere's lips in a clinch on one occasion, doing it so fast that neither the referee nor the crowd saw it, but Revere felt it.

On another occasion he stamped on Revere's toes in a clinch, making it look like an accident, and that did the trick. Goaded, Revere went after him in earnest, and it was what Johnny wanted. He started to open up with the heavy artillery, rights at long range and rights which really stung.

He caught Revere under the heart with one shot, taking a lot of the fight out of the contender. Revere started to get cautious with a minute of the round remaining, but Johnny pushed the fight now, coming in close to pepper Revere with lefts and rights to the face. He draped his man over the second strand with a hard right to the jaw, and then when Revere came off the ropes, authentically groggy, Johnny dropped him cleanly with another right.

Sam Revere went down on the seat of his pants and sat there, head hanging, some blood trickling from his cut mouth, but he had not been too badly cut up. Johnny didn't fight that way.

At eight Revere got up, but he was

through. Johnny looked at the referee before going after him, and the man in gray, catching the look, stepped in between them. It was a technical kayo.

The crowd gave Johnny a tremendous hand, and even some of the veteran writers like Marty Howlett of the *Clarion,* and Abe Schellhorn of the *Blade,* were standing up, watching, wide-eyed, a little puzzled by the peculiar turn this fight had taken. They'd been confident it was to be a tank job, but Sam Revere had been legitimately iced.

Johnny walked up the aisle with Joe Spindell. He didn't see Duke Montrey because the Duke usually kept out of sight, never sitting near ringside. There was a red-headed kid standing up at the head of the aisle, clapping his hands vigorously as Johnny came up. The kid's hair was slicked back and he looked a lot different in street clothes. He was wearing an Irish green suit and green tie to match. It was Irish Tommy Shane.

The kid yelled, "Nice fight, Johnny."

Johnny Barrett nodded. He was wondering what Duke Montrey thought of it, and he soon found out. There were some well-wishers who wanted to come into the dressing room, but Spindell, half-expecting a visitor, shooed them all out. Only the two seconds and the trainer, Jackie Bell, were in the room when the Duke came in, an expensive cigar in his mouth, slipping off the pearl-gray gloves as he closed the door behind him.

The Duke said to Spindell, "Get these monkeys out."

Johnny was sitting on the rubbing table. He had the gloves off his hands and Bell had been cutting the tape and the bandaging. Johnny started to pull the stuff from his hands as Bell went out with the seconds. Spindell closed the door behind them. He was obviously ill at ease.

He laughed and said, "The kid made it look good, didn't he, Duke?"

"Very good," Duke Montrey said. He was looking at Johnny with his cold, glass-blue eyes. He said flatly, "What's the matter, you sore, Barrett?"

"About what?" Johnny asked him, but he knew that the Duke had hit the nail on the head. Analyzing himself, he realized that he was sore—sore at himself, sore at the world, sore because he was a crook. He'd taken it out on poor Sam Revere.

"Don't kid me," Duke Montrey snapped. "You want to be champ forever? Everybody loses, Barrett."

JOHNNY wanted to say that he'd like to lose on the square if he had to lose, but then he remembered that he hadn't won on the square. He'd been handed the title on a silver platter two years ago, and now the Duke was taking the bauble back. He owned it.

"Okay," Johnny said. "I'm playing ball. I made it look good, didn't I?"

"Sure," the Duke told him tersely, "but don't try to make it look too damned good against Townsend. We won't like it, Barrett."

"Okay," Johnny said again, but he was cursing himself. He was sick with the rage inside of him—an impotent rage; he was sick because he'd brought it upon himself and he couldn't do anything about it now.

Duke Montrey had forgotten about him already. The Duke puffed on the cigar and he said to Joe Spindell, "You see that kid in the opening six-rounder? Kid won by a knockout?"

Spindell shook his head. "Maxie Gliebman was talkin' about him. I didn't see it. Maxie says the kid has it. A heavyweight by the name of Shane."

Johnny Barrett was watching the Duke tensely. He could feel his body stiffen. He didn't like to think of that clean-cut kid becoming involved with Duke Montrey, getting himself into the spider's web.

"Who has Shane?" the Duke asked softly.

"Nobody," Spindell said, "as far as Maxie knows. Maxie thinks he'll look the boy up."

Duke Montrey said, "Tell Maxie to lay off, Joe. I mean that."

Spindell looked at him. He said, "Sure, Duke. I'll tell him."

Montrey left the room. He walked past Johnny without even looking at him or saying goodbye. He walked past him the way a big horse owner walks by the stall of a nag he no longer wants.

Johnny Barrett stared at the closed door, almost quivering with anger now.

Spindell said quickly, "Now, kid, let's not get into trouble."

Johnny got up without a word and walked toward the shower stall.

Joe Spindell stood outside the stall, speaking again in his pleading voice to Johnny.

He was saying, "Look, kid, you got plenty of money. What's the kick now?"

"Money's not everything," the fighter snapped.

There was a pause outside, and then Spindell said slowly, "You should have thought of that before, Johnny. It's kind of late now."

Johnny Barrett heard the door close as Spindell went out. He stood there for a long time under the warm water, and gradually the rage in him subsided. He knew that Spindell had been right. He should have thought of it before. You can't eat your cake and still have it; you couldn't play with mud and not get your hands dirty.

Outside in the empty room, Johnny dressed slowly. He had no home to go to, no particular friends to meet.

There was a light knock on the door, and Johnny opened it and saw young Tommy Shane standing there hesitantly. Johnny Barrett stared at him.

The kid grinned boyishly and said, "Hope I'm not stopping you from going anywhere, Mr. Barrett."

"No," Johnny said. "What's on your mind, Tommy?"

The boy closed the door and took off his hat. He scratched his jaw and he said, "I—I'm looking for a manager, Mr. Barrett."

Johnny stared at him thoughtfully. He said, "I see."

"I like your style," Tommy Shane said. "I'd kind of like to get in the same stable with you. You think Mr. Spindell would take me on?"

Johnny Barrett moistened his lips. "You don't have a manager now?" he asked.

The boy shook his head. "I've only had seven fights," he explained. "I'm just starting out. Thought I'd like to get connected with somebody who knows his way around."

Johnny wanted to laugh at that one. Spindell knew his way around all right, but the only trouble was Spindell went the way Duke Montrey told him to go.

"Is Spindell filled up?" young Shane asked.

Johnny Barret took his time about answering. A lot of things were suddenly going through his head. He'd liked what he saw of this boy in the ring tonight—he'd seen tremendous possibilities for him. Tommy Shane had excellent reflexes in the ring; he was faster than most big men and he could hit hard. The rest could be taught by someone who knew his way around.

Johnny remembered then that Duke Montrey had shown an interest in this boy, also. Montrey wanted to use him.

"Are you Irish Tommy Shane's son?"

"That's right," the boy said, and Johnny saw the shadow come into his eyes. He figured that the father was dead, and for that reason wasn't managing his son. Tommy Shane said quietly, "My father is blind, Mr. Barrett."

Johnny blinked. He stammered, "I—I'm sorry, Tommy."

"He's at an institution upstate," the

boy went on quietly. "We hope maybe some day we can have him operated on. Cataracts."

Johnny read the story then. He suddenly liked young Shane very much.

"Of course," Tommy Shane said, "if Mr. Spindell is all filled up and isn't taking on any more fighters, I'll look around."

You'll find Maxie Gliebman, Johnny Barret thought bitterly, *or you'll find one of Duke Montrey's boys. They'll get you the money quickly, but you'll pay for it with your heart. You'll never sleep again.*

"JOE SPINDELL is filled up," Johnny said quietly, and then he took a deep breath. He said, "But I'm not, Tommy."

Tommy Shane stared at him queerly. "I don't get it," he said.

Johnny Barrett took the plunge, fully aware of the consequences. He said, "I'm retiring after the Townsend fight, Shane, win, lose or draw. Thought I might take on a few fighters after that—to keep me busy."

Irish Tommy Shane's face was beaming. "You—you mean it?" he gasped.

"I'll handle you," Johnny said slowly, "if you want me to. I think we can go places together." He added hastily, "Of course I don't want this known until I retire from the ring."

"It'll be great." Shane grinned. "I was kind of worried who I'd hook up with. You've got to be careful these days."

"That's right," Johnny said dryly. "You have any fights scheduled for the next few weeks?"

"A six rounder at the Star Club," Shane told him, "Saturday after next."

"Call it off," Johnny said. "We're going up to my camp in the Berkshires. I don't want you to fight again until I've worked with you a few months. I don't want to see you get tagged the way you got tagged tonight. Only a sucker is hit by a right hand."

"It didn't hurt," Tommy Shane bragged good-naturedly. "I can take that all night."

"Not with me in your corner," Johnny Barrett smiled, and then the smile disappeared. He said, "If anybody approaches you within the next few days, kid, tell them you're not doing any fighting for a while and you're not signing with a manager."

"Who would approach me?" Shane asked. "I'm a six-round club fighter."

"You never know," Johnny murmured.

He made arrangements to meet the boy at the Penn station the next afternoon. Shane was to be packed and ready to go for a few weeks' stay at the camp.

When the boy left, walking on air, Johnny caught a cab outside the door and rode to his hotel. The cabbie had recognized him, and the man said, "You won me ten tonight, Johnny. Now I got twenty-five on you against that Townsend."

"That's nice," Johnny said, "but don't bet on fights, kid."

"With you," the cabbie chuckled, "it ain't a bet, Johnny. It's insurance!"

Johnny Barrett stared out the window, and he was wondering what this guy would think, what thousands of others would think, if they knew that he was going into the tank for Georgie Townsend next month, and that many of his championship bouts had been arranged by the notorious Duke Montrey.

Back at the hotel he called up Joe Spindell, catching him in a nearby night club. He said, "Joe, I'm getting out of town for a few weeks. Don't look for me."

Spindell came back quickly, "That's what it is kid. You need a little rest, a little vacation. Get away from things. You'll feel better when you come back."

"That's right," Johnny said dryly. "You can pass the word on to the boys that I'll start training on the fifteenth."

He added, "I don't need to get in shape for this one, do I, Joe?"

"Now," Spindell said consolingly, "don't think about this one, Johnny. It's just another fight."

It wasn't just another fight; it was a title bout, the world's championship. Way back in the days of the Great John L. himself, they'd started that saying—a champion goes down fighting. But times had changed; it was big business now.

Johnny hung up a few moments later with Spindell still telling him he needed a rest; that he'd been fighting too much lately.

The next afternoon he was down at the station. He saw Irish Tommy Shane swinging toward him, carrying a cheap valise. The kid was head and shoulders over the people around him; he was clean-shaven, good-looking, clean inside and clean out.

Johnny had started the fight camp at Loon Lake four years before. He'd bought a farmhouse with a large tract of ground, and he fixed it up. He'd had the barn turned into a gymnasium, with all the equipment and paraphernalia necessary to a fighter in training.

An old pug by the name of Charlie Gleason was caretaker at the place, and Gleason was surprised when Johnny called him from the station. He came down in about five minutes driving the station wagon.

Young Shane walked around the gymnasium, eyes wide with amazement. He took a punch at the heavy bag and he turned to shake his head at Johnny.

"It's wonderful, Johnny. You really mean I can train here?"

"You're my fighter," Johnny grinned. "This is your camp from now on."

They went to work the next morning. Johnny put on the gloves with the heavyweight and boxed several rounds with him. They took it easy, and Johnny watched his fighter carefully. Shame was very crude, but he had the reflexes. He could spot the openings Johnny deliberately left for him, and he was quick to send his gloves through.

Johnny was pleased when it was over. He taught Shane how to use his left hand a little. As with all novices Shane was right-hand crazy. Johnny taught him to shorten up with the right so as to make it more effective. He told him how to get his full weight behind each punch, rather than just arm strength. There was a follow-through to punching just as there was to golf and baseball.

"How do I look?" Shane asked.

Johnny said, "I'd like to answer that in a couple of months, Tommy."

The boy's face clouded. He said slowly, "You mean I won't be able to fight for a couple of months?" he asked.

Johnny suspected what he was driving at. He needed money badly; he'd undoubtedly been sending it up to his father, and couldn't afford a couple of months' training with no money coming in. Johnny knew he wouldn't take it either if it were offered to him, even as an advance.

"We'll see what we can do," Johnny said. "We might be able to pick up a few matches in the country here." There was a fight club in the next biggest town—less than thirty miles from the camp. It was a small club, and they'd be glad to match anybody Johnny recommended to them. He was pretty well known in the vicinity, and well liked.

They worked out for a week, Shane doing plenty of road work, something he'd been unable to do before. Johnny enjoyed the long jaunts in the country with Shane at his side. He was beginning to like this tall boy with the red hair and grin more and more. Shane was good; he was wholesome; he'd be a credit to the fight game—if he were let alone. And that made Johnny think. Sooner or later he'd have to have that showdown with Duke Montrey. The Duke had already shown interest in

Irish Tommy Shane; he'd warned Maxie Gliebman off, and that meant everybody else was warned off, too.

If the Duke got a glimpse of Shane in action, Johnny realized he'd be all hopped up. Shane was the perfect foil for the kind of game the Duke played. Shane was the type you could build up easily. He'd catch the public eye with his hitting power and speed. Properly handled, he might even go to the very top, but Irish Tommy Shane, fighting for Duke Montrey, would not be handled; he'd be used, and there was a big difference.

Watching Tommy Shane work on the light bag one afternoon, Johnny said quietly, "How would you like to try a six-rounder next Saturday night, Tommy?"

Shane's eyes lighted up. He'd been waiting for that, hoping Johnny would say it. The kid had been restless—not because he had to train but because there was no money coming in. He said, "I can go tomorrow, Johnny. I feel good."

"Okay," Johnny grinned, "we'll see what we can do." He was fairly sure that Shane wouldn't have any trouble with a local heavyweight. The kid had learned a great deal, even in a week, and the experience would be good for him. Johnny called up the local promoter and the arrangements were made. He wanted to know of Johnny's fighter, and that stumped Johnny for a moment.

He said finally, "Lew Crawford."

He told Shane that and the kid grinned at him.

"It's a fight, Johnny. I don't care what they call me."

Losers Keepers 2

CHARLIE GLEASON acted as trainer and second, and accompanied them when they drove up to Barnett the following Saturday evening. Tommy Shane was in excellent spirits and raring to go.

They had a big French-Canadian as Tommy Shane's opponent—a two-hundred-and-fifteen pound ex-wood-cutter by the name of Pierre Champlaine. Johnny took one look at Champlaine climbing into the ring, and relaxed. He'd expected a muscle-bound fourth-rater and that was what he saw. There was no grace to the man as he slipped through the ropes. He was big, ferocious-looking, a lantern jaw, black eyes, black jowls.

This little Barnett Fight Club was jammed to the doors for this six-rounder, the third of the evening. A lot of them felt sorry looking at the smaller Tommy Shane as he stood in the center of the ring, grinning at Pierre Champlaine. The man had won his last three fights in this ring, stopping his men with overhand rights to the side of the jaw. They were talking of him as a comer.

Johnny Barrett said in the corner before sending his man out, "Stay away from him two rounds. Make him miss with that right hander. It'll be good experience for you. The third round you hit him on the chin with your right—he'll go down."

"How do you know?" Shane asked curiously.

Johnny smiled. "Just do it," he said. "You'll see."

Champlaine came out of his corner, lantern-jaw hidden behind his left shoulder, right hand cocked. He slashed at Tommy Shane's chin with the right before they'd been fighting thirty seconds, but Tommy easily pulled away from the punch. It was a hard punch, capable of knocking a man out when it landed, but Champlaine had to wind up before he could throw it, and Tommy Shane was moving out of reach by that time.

The kid worked the left jab Johnny had been teaching him. It was still very crude, but it was a jab, and against a slow-moving target like Champlaine it was effective.

Constantly, he kept the bigger man off balance with the left, and several times he smashed rights to the body, getting Champlaine to bring his guard down a little.

Johnny Barrett liked what he saw, and even Charlie Gleason, who was never too much impressed by young fighters, said thoughtfully, "I like this kid, Johnny."

Shane looked even better in the second round. He began to pick up speed; his timing and range were better. He speared Champlaine time and time again with that left hand and his shots to the ribs and the stomach were making the big man gasp.

Champlaine managed to corner the kid on one occasion, and the crowd started to yell as the bigger man went to work with those axe-like rights, slashing them down at Shane's chin, and this was the thing Johnny had been waiting for. He remembered how Shane had acted when he'd been floored in the Arena fight two weeks before.

The kid hadn't changed. Champlaine caught him with one good shot to the jaw which made his knees sag, and then Irish Tommy Shane went to work. He began to pump rights and lefts into Champlaine's body and a few up to the face. He hit fast and furiously and he started to work his way forward as he hit, driving the heavier man back to the center of the ring.

Champlaine had never been treated like this before, and he was amazed. He tried to hold his ground and bull Shane back into the corner again, but Shane wouldn't be pushed and he kept throwing those punches hard and fast. Again Champlaine had to give ground, and the crowd started to yell for Shane.

Charlie Gleason said softly, "He's got it, Johnny. Where'd you pick him up?"

"That's the coming heavyweight champion," Johnny said quietly.

Charlie glanced at him. He said, "That what Duke Montrey says, Johnny?"

Johnny Barrett didn't answer that question. He was watching the big red-headed kid out there, boxing again now, obeying orders. He could have stopped Champlaine then and there and he knew it, but he'd been told to wait for the third, and he was doing that.

When he came to the corner at the end of the round, Johnny said to him, "How do you feel?"

"I can go the six without any trouble," Shane said confidently. "That road work sure helped. My last fight I was tiring the final two rounds."

"Okay." Johnny said. "Watch for an opening next round, and when you see one, let go. Don't telegraph it. Punch from the hip, but get everything you have behind the blow. I don't expect this guy to get up. Don't disappoint me."

Tommy Shane grinned. "Try not to," he said. He went out at the start of the third and he was very calm, relaxed.

Charlie Gleason said, "He looks like he's been throwin' leather for half a dozen years, Johnny."

"He's a natural," Johnny said. "He inherited a lot of it."

In one minute and five seconds of the round Tommy Shane found the opening he'd been waiting for. They were maneuvering around out in the center of the ring, Shane working the left hand in a kind of feint. He caught Champlaine with a short right to the body, and he came back with lefts and rights to the head with Shane shifting away from him easily, and then the big man missed a right and the opening was there.

Johnny saw it immediately. He wanted to shout, but it wasn't necessary. For a fraction of a second Champlaine's jaw was exposed and in range of Tommy Shane's right. The kid's right glove flashed through the smoke-laden air. There was a wicked spat which lifted the Canadian up on his toes and then dropped him to the ring floor.

Charlie Gleason was up yelling, and

Gleason was not a man who yelled at fights.

Champlaine's two hundred and fifteen pounds hit the canvas with a thud. He collapsed all over, and Johnny could see from the way he fell that he way unconscious before his body struck the floor. He lay there without moving while he was counted out.

Charlie Gleason said slowly, "When I was a kid, Johnny, I see a guy hit like

Johnny was beginning to like this tall boy with the red hair—he was a credit to the fight game. . . .

that. His name was Fitzimmons. Nobody since then."

Johnny climbed into the ring, Gleason following him. Johnny said, "All right, kid. That was it." There were no more compliments.

"Didn't think I hit him that hard," Tommy Shane said curiously.

"You got more leverage," Johnny explained. "You were flat-footed when you let that punch go, and that's where you get the real power."

"A nice feeling," Shane said thoughtfully.

They went up the aisle with the crowd still howling, and then Gleason, who was walking behind a little, clutched Johnny's arm. He said quickly, "Johnny, I thought I saw Duke Montrey over there. He supposed to be in town?"

Johnny Barrett's jaw sagged. He said slowly, "Montrey? Where?"

Gleason shook his head. "Maybe it was somebody looked like him, Johnny," he said. "Over on the other side of the arena. I don't see him any more now."

Johnny breathed more easily. They went to the dressing room and Gleason rubbed Shane down. They got the boy dressed and back into the car. Johnny almost forgot to go for his purse for the fight. He turned all the money over to Shane—the full fifty dollars, and he had the matchmaker at the club pleading with him to bring the boy back again the following Saturday for the semi-final—one hundred bucks, win, lose or draw.

"I'll think about it," Johnny smiled. "I'll call you up, Ed."

THEY drove home slowly and Johnny enjoyed the ride. It was a beautiful night, the sky full of stars, and the air clean and bracing. A full moon rode with them as they moved over a little covered bridge and then dipped down to the dirt road which led to the farm training quarters.

Johnny saw the lights in the house as they drew up, and the black car parked in the driveway.

Charlie Gleason said slowly, "Company, Johnny? We expectin' anyone?"

"I wasn't," Johnny said shortly. He recognized the car as Joe Spindell's, but Spindell wasn't due at the camp for another week, and if Spindell had anything to say to him he could have called long-distance without coming down. It was very funny.

They went into the house and they found Spindell standing at the little bar in the living room. The fat manager was pouring himself a drink.

He looked uncomfortable as he said to Johnny, "How's it, kid?"

"He's doing all right for himself," a man said from the corner of the room.

Johnny Barrett looked that way. Duke Montrey was coiled up in an easy chair, hat on his head, a cigar in his mouth. He had his gloved fingers entwined across his chest as he lounged in the chair.

Johnny said, "Hello, Montrey."

Tommy Shane looked at the two men curiously, not sure whether to grin or not. He waited for his cue from Johnny Barrett.

Charlie Gleason, knowing he did not belong here, discreetly withdrew to the kitchen after nodding to Spindell.

"The Duke asked me to drive him up here," Spindell said apologetically. He added, "I see you got this boy, Shane, with you."

"That's right," Johnny said tersely.

"He looked good, too," Duke Montrey observed. "Of course against a big cluck like that French-Canadian you couldn't tell too much, but I like his style, Johnny."

"That's nice," Johnny murmured. Charlie Gleason had spotted the man at the Barnett Fight Club that night. It had not been imagination.

Joe Spindell was talking again. He said, "Johnny, if you wanted this kid why didn't you say so? Why didn't you speak to the Duke about it? You knew he'd play ball with you."

"He didn't want to," Montrey said softly. "He saw a nice clean-up for himself with this kid, and he didn't want to cut his old pals in on it."

"That's right," Johnny said deliberately. "I didn't want to cut you in on it, Duke." He heard Spindell gasp, and then the fat man gulped down the drink he was mixing.

"Look—" Spindell started.

"Shut up," Duke Montrey told him. He was sitting up straighter in the chair now. He said, sardonically, "You getting clean all of a sudden, Barrett? You forgetting who handed you the title years ago?"

Johnny Barrett turned pale. He felt Irish Tommy Shane's amazed eyes on him, and he realized what was going on inside the boy's head. Shane looked up to him, respected him. Shane thought he was one of the greatest fighters in the world.

"This kid's in line to make big dough," Montrey said. "You want to take it away from him; you want to give him chicken feed? You cleaned up, Barrett."

Johnny looked down at the floor, suddenly realizing that this decision was not his to make. Tommy Shane admitted that he needed money very quickly, very badly. He wasn't going to make much of it fighting for Johnny Barrett because Johnny, without Montrey's help, couldn't get him the matches. Duke Montrey could get him the matches—big ones, in a hurry. It was up to Tommy Shane to decide whether restoring his father's eyesight was worth the dirty hands it got him raising the money.

Shane spoke for the first time, still bewildered. He said slowly, "I don't quite get this, Johnny. What goes?"

Montrey laughed. He said, "Johnny, tell him how you won the title. Tell him who wins that Townsend bout. Maybe he'll understand."

"Fixed fights," Irish Tommy Shane said slowly.

"We don't use those words," Duke Montrey grinned. "Let's say be arrange things, kid, so that nobody gets hurt and

everybody gets a nice bit of change. Like Barrett, here, for instance. He's got a nice bank account; he's been champ for a couple of years, and now we put him out to pasture and Georgie Townsend takes over. That right, Barrett?"

Johnny was sitting on the edge of a chair, the full shame of this business running through him. There was nothing to say.

"That right, Barrett?" Duke Montrey snapped.

Johnny looked up at him, face white with rage. "Shut up," he snarled, but he'd given his answer.

Duke Montrey laughed contemptuously. "Now be a smart boy, Shane," he said, dismissing Johnny Barrett entirely. "Play ball with me and I'll make you a barrel of money. If I like the way you work, maybe you become champ. Who knows?"

Tommy Shane said softly, "What if I don't work with you?"

Montrey looked at him. "You fight for ten bucks a night," he said. "Nobody looks at you no matter how many you win. After a while you get so sick of it you take a job driving a truck." He added, "Would you like that, Shane?"

"No," Irish Tommy Shane said.

Johnny Barrett's shoulders sagged. He heard Montrey say, "Smart boy, Shane."

"No," Shane said tersely, "I don't want to take a job driving a truck. I'll stick to fighting—at ten bucks a bout. I'll fight every night in the week, and I'll fight to win, and when I'm ready to hang up the gloves no cheap little crook will be able to tell me to roll over."

Duke Montrey was getting out of the chair, but the kid ignored him as he walked out of the room and up the stairs. Johnny could hear him banging closets and bureau drawers as he packed his clothes.

Joe Spindell, for lack of anything to do or say, walked out into the kitchen and Johnny heard him say to Gleason, "Take that Shane kid down to the station, Charlie. He's leavin' us."

Duke Montrey walked over to the miniature bar and poured himself a drink. He stood there, sipping the drink, not saying anything. Joe Spindell came back, looked at Johnny and then at Montrey.

He said, "That crazy kid."

Johnny Barrett got up and walked out. He went out on the porch and down the steps. He kept walking down the path to the edge of the lake where they had a few rowboats which were used by reporters to go fishing. He sat down in one of the boats and he let the cool night breeze blow over his hot face.

After awhile he heard Charlie Gleason start up the station wagon, and he listened to the wheels crunching down the dirt road. He saw the red tail lights flicker as the car went around a bend, and then it was gone, and Irish Tommy Shane was gone, too.

Joe Spindell came down to the boat and he said, "Johnny, the reporters will be comin' up here on Tuesday to cover the fight for us. We'll forget about this business."

Johnny Barrett didn't answer.

Spindell said desperately, "Johnny, if you got a buck you got two hundred grand in the bank. Forget it."

Still Johnny didn't say anything, and Spindell gave it up and went back to the house. Ten minutes later Johnny heard his car going out of the driveway. He went back to the house then and he saw Charlie Gleason sitting on the porch, smoking a cigarette.

Johnny sat down on the rocker at the other end. He said to Gleason, "The kid say anything?"

"No," Gleason told him. "Just goodbye to me."

Johnny Barrett moistened his lips. "He was a good boy," he said.

"That's right," Gleason agreed. "He was." He placed the emphasis on the

was, and Johnny got the point. Young Shane was going nowhere from now on. He was through except as a two-bit club fighter.

Gleason tried to sum the whole business up philosophically. He said, "Maybe Spindell's right, Johnny. A buck is a buck. If one guy don't get it, the other will."

"No," Johnny Barrett told him. "You're wrong, Charlie, Spindell's wrong, and I'm wrong. Only Tommy Shane is right."

Gleason shrugged and he puffed on his cigarette. "Have it your way," he said.

ON TUESDAY the reporters started to drift in, and the fight camp became a fight camp. Johnny Barrett went through the motions, posed for the usual pictures, and didn't say anything.

Marty Howlett, of the *Clarion,* came down, gray-haired, a small, wiry man, bland blue eyes. He said, "For my readers, Johnny—how are your chances against Townsend?"

"I'll moider the bum," Johnny said, and Howlett laughed.

"There's a rumor," the reporter said softly, "that the wise money is switching to Georgie Townsend."

"Okay," Johnny said wearily. "What the hell do you want me to do, Marty, tell you it's fixed?"

"You could do worse," Howlett said, surprisingly. "When are you getting wise to Duke Montrey, Johnny?"

Johnny didn't say anything. He was punching the heavy bag in a corner, and the two men were alone here. Johnny's gloves thudded as they struck the bag. He shifted around a little so that he was finally looking at Howlett around the bag.

The reporter was watching him quietly, trying to read his mind.

Johnny said slowly, "You're no dope, Marty. Why play with dynamite? You don't have anything on Montrey or anyone else and you know it. Open your mouth too wide and the Duke's lawyers slap a quarter million dollar libel suit against your sheet. You lose your job. What have you then?"

"They'll say I tried," Marty Howlett grinned. "Everybody should try, Johnny. This used to be a nice sport."

"I used to get five bucks a round," Johnny Barrett rasped. "They wanted to make it three. Is that good?"

"How'd you feel then, Johnny?" Howlett asked innocently.

Johnny hit the bag one last good shot and walked away. Howlett cornered him again that night after he'd taken his shower and was lounging down near the edge of the lake.

Marty Howlett said, "I've been after a rat for a long time, Johnny, but I can't catch him alone."

"I'm a rat, too," Johnny said. "Don't be a fool, Marty."

"No," Howlett shook his head. "You're not a rat at heart, Johnny—that's the difference."

Johnny Barrett stared out across the lake. He watched a loon dip and go under water. He said, "What do you want, Marty?"

"Just somebody to talk," Howlett said. "You might call me a male Joan of Arc, trying to save the fight game."

"A man can get hurt just from talking," Johnny said slowly. "I mean for good."

"You're not afraid," Howlett told him. "I saw you fight when you were coming up, Johnny, before you ever heard of a guy called Montrey."

"They'll take the title away from me," Johnny said.

"What's the difference?" Howlett asked. "You're giving it to Townsend anyway next week."

Johnny laughed bitterly. "I can lick that kid," he said. "I feel it, Marty."

"I know it," Howlett nodded. He added, "I'm not entirely alone in this,

Johnny. The D.A. is with me, and so is the Revenue Department. They want to check up on the Duke's income the past five years. If they get him, Johnny, he's gone for a long time, and where he's gone he won't be able to hurt anybody."

Still Johnny didn't say anything, and Howlett went on tersely, "You're not afraid of what the Duke can do to you, Johnny. It's your pride. You're ashamed to stand up there and admit to the world that you were a louse. That takes guts, Johnny, but you're the only guy I think will do it. Think of the kids depending upon you—the kids coming up who think this game is still the way it was when John L. was the champ."

"I'll think about it," Johnny Barrett muttered. "You don't cut your own throat before thinking about it, Marty."

Howlett slapped his shoulder and walked away.

Joe Spindell, who had been away from the camp, came in that night, and said, "The Duke wants it in the third round, Johnny. They're gettin' good odds on the round."

Johnny didn't say anything, and Spindell looked worried.

He said, "You want me to place some dough for you? They'll give maybe three to one on the round, Johnny. This will be the biggest clean-up we ever had."

Johnny shook his head.

Joe Spindell blinked. He said slowly, "Johnny, don't cross the Duke, will you?"

Johnny Barrett looked at him for a long time. He said finally, "Spindell, you haven't been too bad a guy. You meant well."

"Sure," Spindell murmured.

"Take my advice," Johnny told him. "You got money saved up. Go down to South America for a couple of months. Go see Europe."

Joe Spindell gulped. "I don't want to see Europe," he said weakly. "Johnny—what about Georgie Townsend?"

"I'll moider the bum," Johnny said, and he went out. He heard Spindell calling after him, but he didn't stop.

Squared Ring 3

JOHNNY BARRETT broke camp three days later, but before he went Marty Howlett said, "How about it, Johnny?"

"I'll let you know after the fight," Johnny told him. He was smiling grimly, and Howlett smiled back.

"Who should I bet on, Johnny?" he asked.

"I don't know," Johnny Barrett said, "but don't bet on Townsend."

He weight in at one-fifty-eight and a half that afternoon, and then he went back to his apartment, Spindell was there and Duke Montrey, and three of the Duke's boys.

Johnny took off his hat and sat down. He said to Spindell, "I thought I locked this place when I went out."

"I let 'em in," Joe Spindell muttered. "The Duke wants to see you, Johnny."

"He's looking at me," Johnny smiled coldly.

Montrey got up from his chair and came across the room. He stood in front of Johnny, looking down at him, those pale blue eyes very bright.

"Nobody crosses me up, Barrett. Nobody," he said softly.

Johnny laughed at him. He got up, brushing past the man, and walked to his bedroom.

"I have to get some sleep, boys. Pardon me," he called to them over his shoulder.

"You'll sleep for good," Duke Montrey snapped, "if you get too gay, Barrett."

Johnny Barrett turned to look at him. He said, "What are you afraid of, Duke? Nobody crosses you up, do they?" He felt now the way he felt when he went out after Sam Revere. He didn't care any more. He went into the bedroom and he closed the door behind him. He heard Montrey and the others go out, and then Joe Spindell came in.

The fat man looked different this afternoon. He was worried, but there was something else, too. Spindell sat down on a chair near the window.

"I been thinkin', Johnny. Maybe I haven't been too good for you all these years. Maybe I got you in big trouble this time, kid. The Duke means business," he said.

"So do I," Johnny said. "That's why I'm telling you to get out of town, Joe, and get fast. You got money."

Spindell rubbed his fat chins. "That's right," he said dubiously, "I got money, kid." He still looked doubtful.

Johnny Barrett, watching him from the bed, said quietly, "You see what I mean, Joe? I'm the guy has to go in the tank tonight. At least you can sit outside the ring."

The fat man nodded. He was looking at the floor now, and he said, "Johnny, I'm thinkin' I loused up your life more than I intended to. I'm sorry for it, kid."

Johnny looked at him steadily. He said, "You're not a bad guy, Joe, but I'd still get out of town if I were you. There's going to be a blow-off after this fight."

"I'll think about it," Joe Spindell said, and he went out.

Johnny closed his eyes. He didn't feel too bad now. He'd decided which way he was going and that helped a lot. It was the indecision which wore a man out. He slept soundly.

Charlie Gleason, who was to work in his corner tonight, awakened him at five o'clock. Gleason said, "I had the dining room bring you up a small steak, Johnny. It just came in."

Johnny got up and ate a light supper. He went through a late paper and noticed that the odds were five to three that he'd take Georgie Townsend, the Golden Tornado. He was thought to be too smart for Townsend, and his recent knockout of Sam Revere had sent his stock up high. Duke Montrey had thought that it would, and for that reason he'd run in the Revere match before the Townsend fight.

"I got a letter from Al Seeman out on the coast," Gleason said as he watched Johnny read. "Al says this Townsend is nobody's bum. He's a pretty tough

hombre." He was watching Johnny closely now. He said, "It's straight tonight, Johnny?"

"It's straight," Johnny Barrett said.

"I'll leave that three hundred ride on you then," Gleason grinned. "I wasn't sure, with the Duke hangin' around here."

They left in a cab for the Arena at seven o'clock. Johnny didn't expect Joe Spindell to show up, but the manager was waiting for them in the dressing room. He was sitting there alone, smoking a cigar.

"So you're sticking it out, Joe?" Johnny said to him.

"A guy like me," Spindell said, "can't run fast, Johnny. You know I always liked to work in your corner, too."

Johnny slapped his shoulder as he walked past him and started to undress. Gleason bandaged and taped his hands, one of Townsend's handlers watching the procedure. He moved around the room after that, working up a little sweat.

"That kid, Shane, been around, Joe?"

Spindell nodded. "He won by a knockout the other night at the Olympic. A six-round prelim. They must have paid him fifty bucks for it."

Johnny didn't say anything.

"That'll be tops for him, Johnny, if the Duke has anything to say about it," Spindell added.

The prelims were on outside now, and occasionally Johnny could hear the noise. He lay down on the rubbing table for a few minutes as the time drew near.

"This kid throws punches very fast, Johnny. You can't see 'em comin'. That's where he gets his name. Now I'd say we play him along a couple of rounds. Let him wear himself out before we begin to work on his belly," Spindell said.

"If Duke Montrey heard you say that," Johnny observed, "he'd have your heart cut out, Joe."

"That's so," Spindell nodded, "but I could use a new heart, Johnny."

Johnny Barrett smiled at him. He looked up at the ceiling, and then he heard someone knock on the door. Spindell went over to open it.

"Oh—Commissioner! Come on in," Spindell said.

Johnny came up on his elbows to watch the boxing commissioner come into the dressing room. The commissioner didn't usually enter a fighter's dressing room, and when he did it usually meant something was up.

He was a big, solid man with a reddish face and a heavy jaw, and he didn't mince words.

"Barrett, I've always liked your style. I've considered you an honest ring man." he said.

Johnny nodded and waited for the rest.

"I've heard," the commissioner went on grimly, "that there is a hell of a lot of money being bet on the third round tonight—all of it on Townsend. You know anything about that, Johnny?"

Johnny moistened his lips. He said, "They can bet the way they want, Commissioner. It's their money."

"I thought I'd tell you," the commissioner said flatly, "just in case Townsend wins this one in the third. I won't like it, Barrett. There'll be trouble."

"He's not winning in the third," Johnny said slowly. "He's not winning at all, Commissioner."

The big man looked relieved. He said, "I'm glad to hear you say that, Johnny. There have been too many rumors going around lately, and I don't like them. We've got to keep this sport on the level."

"That's right," Johnny agreed.

The commissioner went out after shaking hands with him and wishing him luck. Joe Spindell closed the door and took a deep breath.

"The Duke is gettin' tough, Johnny. He's coming right out in the open now."

Johnny Barret smiled grimly. "The better to catch him," he said.

THEY got the call fifteen minutes later. Johnny had his robe on, and was waiting. He went down the aisle with Spindell, Gleason, and another second. The Arena was jammed to the doors, and they gave Johnny a big hand as he came in.

The blonde-haired Golden Tornado was standing in the other corner, shuffling his feet in the rosin box. Johnny went over to shake hands with him. Townsend didn't know that it was supposed to be faked, and that was another clever little stunt of Montrey's. The Duke worked through managers, and when a fighter was permitted to win he was not told of the fix. He fought honestly, making a better impression on the crowd.

Townsend was a good-looking boy. He said, "Lots of luck, Johnny, and all of it bad." He was grinning as he spoke.

He looked very fast. He had the legs for speed, and he was supposed to be a puncher—a whirlwind puncher.

Johnny went back to his corner. He saw Duke Montrey leaning back in his chair and watching him coolly.

A few rows behind the Duke sat Irish Tommy Shane. Johnny Barrett looked that way, and accidentally his eyes met Shane's. The boy looked the other way quickly.

Spindell was saying, "Just let him run himself out, Johnny. Every motor runs down."

They were out in the center of the ring then, and referee Hal Bernstein was talking to them. Bernstein was a good man for the job.

"Boys, I got orders from the commissioner to watch this one closely. That's all I have to say. You know the rules."

Townsend looked surprised. He had baby blue eyes, a well-shaped nose, clean-cut features.

"Let's go," Johnny said. He walked back to the corner and slipped in his rubber mouth protector. The bell rang.

Townsend tore out of his corner, gloves whirling, hooking a left for the head. Johnny moved away from him, jabbing gently with his left, right hand cocked. He'd heard much of Townsend's right hand. It was supposed to be a good one. He watched the right, and blocked the left.

Townsend kept circling him, feinting, jabbing, hooking with that left hand. He threw the right before the round was half a minute old, but the punch was wild.

Johnny jabbed his man several times with a left. He opened up with a flurry of punches of his own halfway through the round, and he caught Townsend with a left hook which made the younger man blink his eyes.

The big crowd howled when Johnny opened up with his barrage, but it didn't last long. Townsend came back swiftly after that left hook. He worked Johnny into a corner, punching furiously, and nearly dropped him to the floor with a right hand high on the head.

Johnny was smiling a little as he walked back to his corner at the end of the round.

"The boy's tougher than he looks. I don't know how he can hit that hard when he's moving all the time," he said to Spindell.

"Don't look like he's punchin' so hard," Spindell said dubiously, "but you should know, Johnny."

Johnny Barrett thought about that remark, not liking its implications. Outside the ring it probably did not appear that Townsend was hitting his man very hard. He threw many short punches in close, in the flurries, but they packed power because the kid knew how to hit. He snapped his punches at the last moment, the way a baseball batter gives a final twist of the wrists when his bat meets the ball, getting so much more power to his drives.

Townsend had a long string of knockouts, proving that he could hit, but he didn't look like too much of a hitter, and if he were able to catch his man with a

few of those short right hands and drop him for good, the cry would go up that it was faked, even though it was on the level.

Johnny Barrett didn't like to think of that. He was being watched very closely tonight—by the referee, by the commissioner, himself, and by the reporters at the bench down below. The slightest indication that the fight was a tank job would bring down on his head the wrath of the honest side of the profession, and before he had told his story to Marty Howlett. He'd like it better to have a win over Townsend before that story broke. He wanted something to fall back on, to prove that he wasn't entirely a crook. He wanted to leave the ring, too, with one last clean victory for his own self respect.

Spindell said, "Get in under that left hand, Johnny. Bang him to the belly."

"Just like that," Johnny smiled wryly. "That kid's an eel."

The warning horn sounded and Townsend again bounced out of his corner, always forcing the fight. He jabbed Johnny with a left, threw a right that was short, and then fell into a clinch, but even as he came in he sneaked through a short right uppercut which caught Johnny on the point of the chin, stunning him slightly.

There was no noise after that punch, indicating that the crowd hadn't even seen it, or if they had they didn't think it was very hard. Johnny held for a moment until Bernstein broke them. He was all right when they were separated, but he was thinking of those sneak punches the kid threw in, wondering how to avoid them, amazed at the power Townsend was able to get out of them. They were knockout punches.

He held Townsend off for a minute or so, stabbing at him with a long left, shifting around the ring, making the boy miss. He was the better boxer, but not the harder hitter. He knew more about this business, and tonight he realized he'd have to use everything he knew to keep this kid off. Townsend was not only fast, but he was durable—a tough combination.

At the end of the round Johnny thought he had slightly the better of the three minutes' fighting. He'd scored often with a left jab, and twice he'd hit Townsend in the stomach with rights which the kid felt.

He sat down on his stool and he said to Joe Spindell, "We'll see how he looks after the tenth. The last five are the hard ones."

Spindell nodded in satisfaction. "Let him run," he said. "You stay away and add up the points." He said as an afterthought, "Watch this next round—the third. That's supposed to be the fix."

Johnny glanced down at Duke Montrey. The Duke was sitting up a little just be-

fore the horn sounded for the third. Deliberately, Johnny smiled down at the man.

The horn blared and he went out, avoiding Townsend's opening rush. He was getting used to the challenger's style now, and that was good. He had to learn to pace himself, and to time Townsend's rushes. After the tenth he was confident Townsend would start to get a little wild as he saw the fight going against him. He'd start to throw haymakers instead of those short ones which were so deadly, and he'd leave himself open for counter punches.

Johnny jabbed his man with a left and stepped away from a right. He jabbed again with a left, took a short right to the head, and then hooked his left into Townsend's body.

Townsend rushed him up against the ropes, but Johnny tied up his man effectively. He was fighting very carefully this round, leaving no openings, because he wanted to get past this one in particular to cross up Montrey's bets.

A minute went by with Townsend still throwing the punches and missing them. Johnny moved around the ring, boxing cleverly, cautiously, throwing only an occasional punch. In a clinch once he looked down at Montrey and grinned. He saw Tommy Shane beyond Montrey, watching him closely. He wondered why the kid had come out. Shane was convinced Johnny was going into the tank anyway, but must have wanted to see it, to prove it to himself.

Two minutes of the round were gone, and Johnny had the edge again this round. He glanced up at the clock occasionally now as they boxed through the final minute. He went into a clinch, and Bernstein broke them. There was some handclapping because this round was not as good as the first two had been.

Then there were thirty seconds of the round, and Johnny started to maneuver around so that when the bell rang he'd be in his own corner, ready to sit down.

Townsend missed with a left, and then missed with a short, vicious right. Johnny jabbed him with a left, ducked under another right, and then blocked Townsend's left to the body with his elbow.

Townsend missed with a left and then fell into a clinch. Johnny Barrett never saw the two punches which hit him. He didn't know where Townsend got them from. They were struck in close, both of them coming upward into Johnny's jaws. He blacked out.

HE DIDN'T even remember falling down. He didn't feel the canvas beneath him. It was the sensation of something very cold dripping down his back, and the powerful fumes of the smelling salts, which brought him back to consciousness. He was sitting on his stool.

Charlie Gleason was in front of him, holding the bottle of smelling salts up to his nose. The other second was pressing the ice-cold sponge against the back of his skull, and the water was running down his back into his pants. He felt sick and weak.

Joe Spindell was saying over and over again, "Johnny—Johnny boy."

Johnny opened his eyes. He expected to see a crowd in the ring, with Bernstein holding up Townsend's hand, proclaiming him winner and new champion, but the ring was empty.

Bernstein stood in the far corner, watching him intently. Townsend sat on his stool, relaxing, smiling at his handlers, very confident now.

Johnny Barrett found his voice. He said slowly, "It's not over, Joe?"

"Bernstein got up to eight," Spindell mumbled, relieved. "You were still sleeping pretty when the bell rang."

Johnny heard the boos then, filling the arena. He wanted to get up and protest; he wanted to give the kid in the other

corner credit for striking two of the hardest blows he'd ever taken in his life, but they were still booing. They hadn't seen those shots; they'd watched him fall and they thought it was a fake!

The warning horn sounded, and Charlie Gleason said mournfully, "I wish to hell you had another five minutes, kid."

Johnny stood up and walked out of the corner woodenly, knowing what he was in for now. He saw Townsend tearing out of his corner, coming at him with the usual rush. He felt the force of the blow. He managed to duck one and he fell in close and held.

They were booing all the more now. Townsend hit him on the side of the face with a swinging left hand in the clinch, and Johnny staggered. He was still weak in the legs and that haze kept coming up before his eyes.

Bernstein broke them, but Townsend piled in swiftly, hooking his punches, catching Johnny on the mouth with a left, rocking him with another right, driving him into the ropes with rights and lefts. They were authentic punches now, but the crowd was thinking that the champion had gone down in the previous round without being hit. They booed.

Johnny clutched the top strand with his right glove to hold himself up. He was knocked down with a left to the mouth. He was bleeding freely from the mouth as he sat on the floor in his own corner. He could scarcely hear the numbers as Bernstein started to count. He watched the knockdown time-keeper bringing his mallet down on the ring floor, watch in hand.

He got one knee off the floor, and waited on the other one. He got up at nine and he started forward, not even seeing Bernstein when the referee slipped in front of him to wipe off his gloves.

Townsend nearly upset him with the first punch. He staggered, but he managed to stay on his feet, and he fell into another clinch. He held on tightly as Bernstein fought to break them loose. He needed a few seconds—just a few seconds to clear his head.

Then they were loose and Townsend tore in at him, rocking him with lefts and rights.

He didn't know how much time he had; he didn't care. He threw a left for Townsend's chin and it landed. The blond kid blinked at him, and Johnny lunged forward and threw another left.

He heard Spindell howling above the uproar, "He's wild! He's wild, Johnny."

Johnny Barrett got the point. The thing he'd intended to wait for after the tenth round was happening now. Georgie Townsend wanted to finish this fight immediately, and he was throwing punches from all angles, leaving himself open for the counters.

Townsend threw a wild right which would have blasted Johnny from the ring had it landed. Johnny turned his head, dropped his body a trifle, and when Townsend lunged in at him, slightly off-balance after missing the blow, Johnny caught him in the stomach with his left. He swung the right from that flat-footed position, hitting Townsend in the same place.

Townsend stepped back, his mouth popping open, the red rubber mouthpiece falling to the canvas, bouncing around crazily. Johnny stepped in and hit him on the jaw, getting every ounce of strength behind the punch. He was weak in the legs but his arms were strong. He knew that he'd never hit a man harder than that in his life.

He started to tumble forward after the punch, and he didn't see Townsend any more. He fell over the blond boy as Townsend went down, and for a moment both of them were on the floor.

Johnny reached for a ring strand and pulled himself up. He walked over to a neutral corner, walking on legs that were

(Continued on page 128)

Above the Crowd

by Ben Nelson and ..... Stookie Allen

GREATEST ATHLETE

NEVER HAS THERE BEEN AN ATHLETE WHO COULD DO SO MANY THINGS SO WELL AS JIM THORPE, THE SAC AND FOX INDIAN WHO MADE THE NAME OF LITTLE CARLISLE INDIAN SCHOOL FAMOUS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

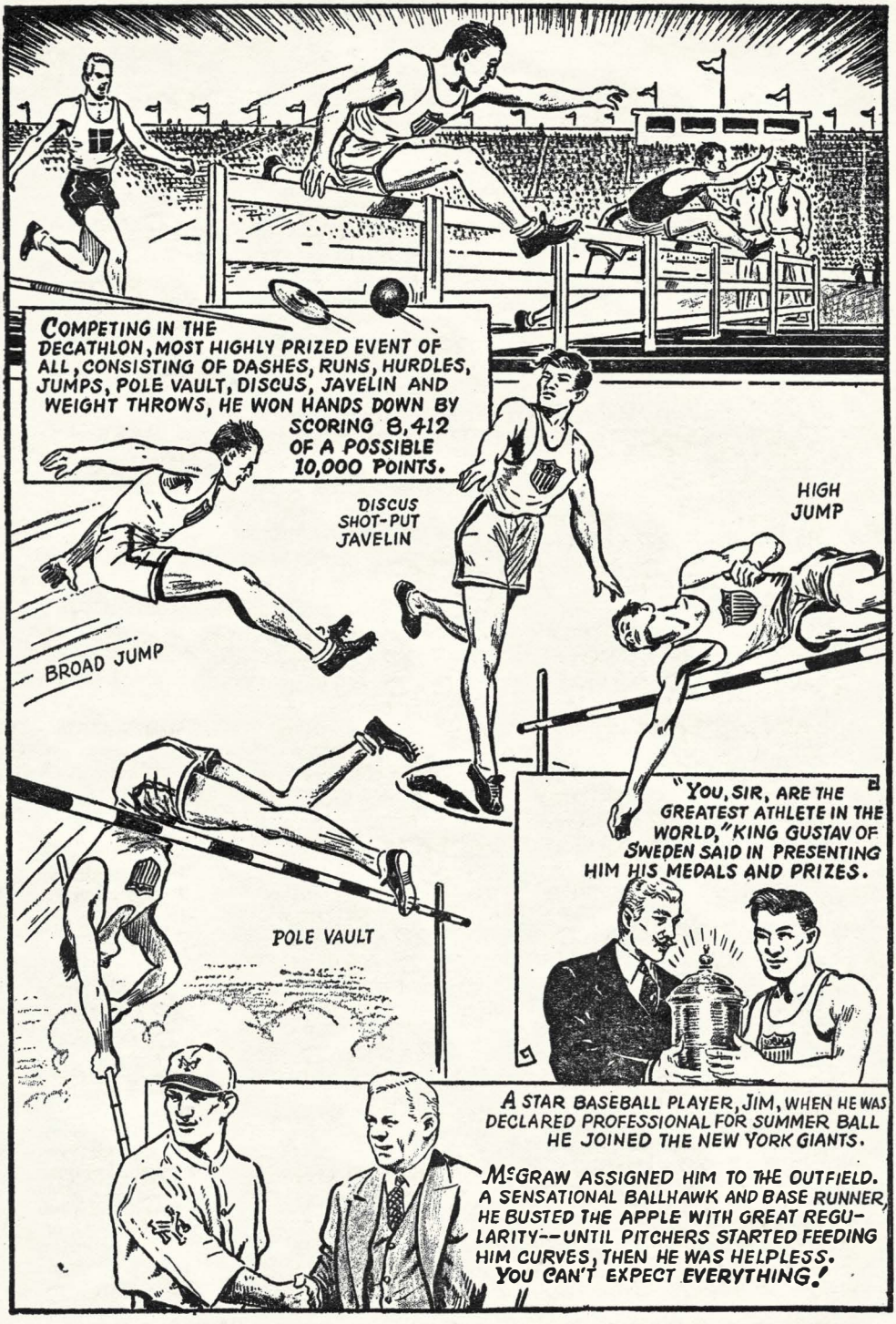
Jim Thorpe IN THE UNIFORM OF THE N.Y. GIANTS.

ALL-AMERICAN HALFBACK IN 1911 AND 1912, THE BIG FELLOW REALLY TOOK EASTERN FOOTBALL APART. HE COULD DO ANYTHING ANYBODY COULD WITH A PIGSKIN -- PUNT, PASS, RUN, KICK, BLOCK AND TACKLE.

IN 1912, PLAYING LESS THAN HALF THE VILLANOVA GAME THORPE SCORED A TOUCHDOWN AND KICKED 7 FIELD GOALS! HE REGISTERED ALL OF CARLISLE'S POINTS IN THE ROUT OF A GREAT ARMY TEAM 27-6, AND LED IN POINTS SCORED, TOUCHDOWNS AND POINTS AFTER TOUCHDOWNS FOR THE YEAR.

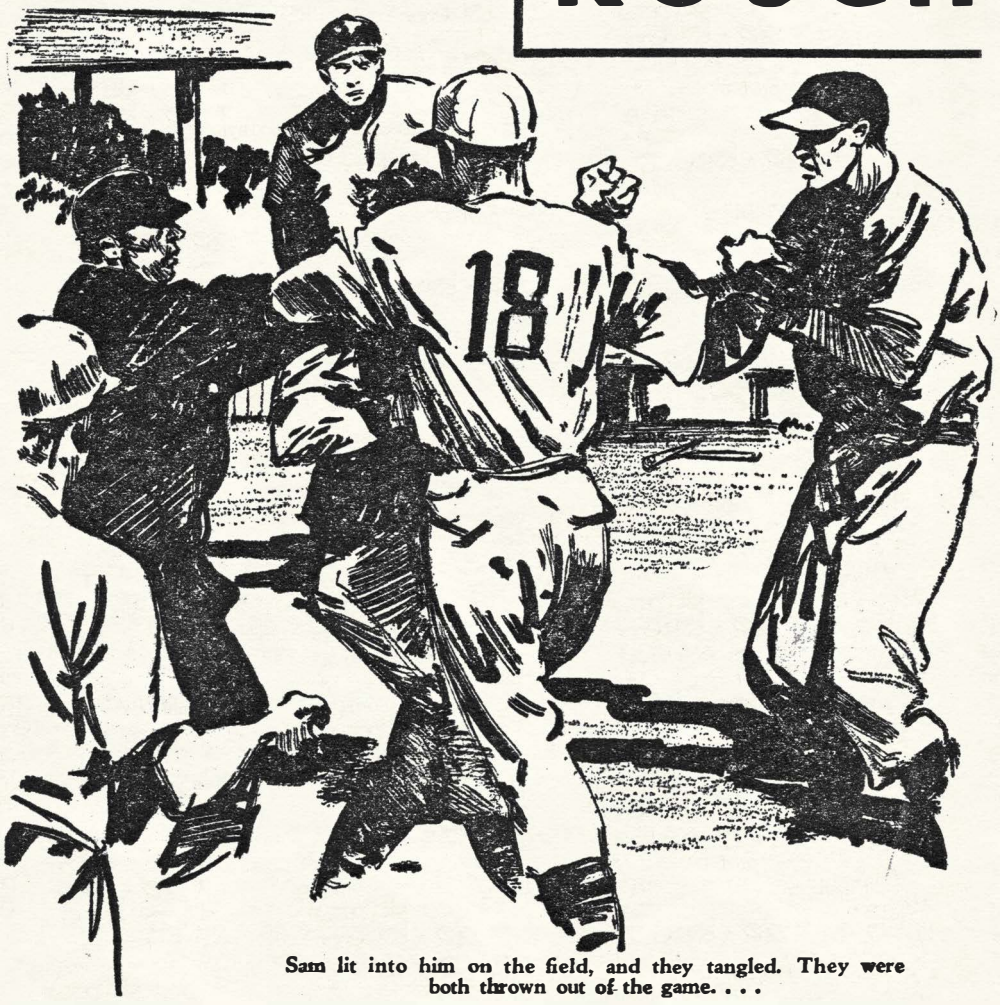
HE WAS A ONE-MAN TRACK MEET. IN A DUAL MEET WITH LAFAYETTE JIM TOOK 9 FIRSTS AND A SECOND IN THE 16 EVENTS, HIS TEAMMATES ACCOUNTING FOR ENOUGH OF THE REST TO WIN 72½ TO 32!

IN THE 1912 OLYMPICS AT STOCKHOLM, THORPE SPREADEAGLED 18 OF THE WORLD'S BEST ATHLETES IN THE 5-EVENT PENTATHLON, WINNING THE BROAD JUMP, JAVELIN THROW AND 1,500-METER RUN, TYING FOR FIRST IN THE 200-METER DASH AND BEING NOSED OUT BY INCHES IN THE DISCUS THROW.


COMPETING IN THE DECATHLON, MOST HIGHLY PRIZED EVENT OF ALL, CONSISTING OF DASHES, RUNS, HURDLES, JUMPS, POLE VAULT, DISCUS, JAVELIN AND WEIGHT THROWS, HE WON HANDS DOWN BY SCORING 8,412 OF A POSSIBLE 10,000 POINTS.
DISCUS
SHOT-PUT
JAVELIN
HIGH JUMP
BROAD JUMP
POLE VAULT
"YOU, SIR, ARE THE GREATEST ATHLETE IN THE WORLD," KING GUSTAV OF SWEDEN SAID IN PRESENTING HIM HIS MEDALS AND PRIZES.
A STAR BASEBALL PLAYER, JIM, WHEN HE WAS DECLARED PROFESSIONAL FOR SUMMER BALL HE JOINED THE NEW YORK GIANTS.
McGRAW ASSIGNED HIM TO THE OUTFIELD. A SENSATIONAL BALLHAWK AND BASE RUNNER, HE BUSTED THE APPLE WITH GREAT REGULARITY--UNTIL PITCHERS STARTED FEEDING HIM CURVES, THEN HE WAS HELPLESS. YOU CAN'T EXPECT EVERYTHING!

By
DANIEL WINTERS

ROUGH



Sam lit into him on the field, and they tangled. They were both thrown out of the game. . . .

I SAT in the dugout and watched him out there on the hill, working against Boston. It was a fine day and he was nice and loose, burning it in there past the hitters. He'd won eight in a row so far, since the beginning of the season, and it was beginning to look as if no one would beat him. Of course he'd lose one here and there between now and October, but he sure wasn't going to lose many. That smooth, flowing motion and that blinding speed were tough to beat, and he'd added a sharp breaking hook and a slider to the swift. He was having a year.

The kid on the bench next to me, up for his first season, said, "You think he'll take them today, Mr. Nevins?"

I knew I was getting old. I'd probably win eighteen or twenty games this year, but when they give you that "Mr." business, you're getting along.

I said, "It's a little early to tell. It's only the second inning, and they have no

ON THE SACKS

"When the stands start ridin' you, kid, you gotta do one of three things. You can pull in your ears, pack your bag—or bust that pill outa the ball park!"

runs, and we have no runs. But I'll lay you five to one he wins it."

The kid said, "Yeah, I guess I will." Then he shook his head in admiration. "Boy, if I could work like that! Nothing bothers him. Nothing at all. They can load the bases on him, shout at him like they'd gone crazy, and he just stands out there and pitches as if he was all alone in the park. Nothing disturbs him. I'd sure like to have an even temper like that."

I nodded. "He's nice and steady. They don't rile him none."

"You're either born with it or you don't have it," the kid said. "You can't learn self-control like that."

I said, "You're just a little wrong there, son. When Sam Bailey first came up, three years ago, he had about as much self-control as a wild horse."

The kid looked at me as if I were crazy. He pointed out to the mound. "Him? Sam Bailey?"

"Sure. He was a ring-tailed catamount with rabbit ears. Wild as a March hare. Didn't have anything but a high hard one, and half the time he didn't know where that was going."

The kid said, "Look, Mr. Nevins. I know you're not lying, but I guess I know when I'm being kidded. Why, Sam Bailey—"

I said, "Sit back and watch the ball game now. I'll tell you all about Sam."

It started in training camp that year, *I told the kid.* Babe Lewis was just about as worried as a manager could be. We'd won the pennant the year before, but during the winter both Hal Jackson and Simmy Groff had operations on their arms, and neither worked out so good. I was the only real starting pitcher Babe had, and none of the other clubs was in a mood to help us out with a sale or a trade. Anything we'd get, we'd have to pick up ourselves.

Then this big kid came into camp, fresh out of the army, and he had a letter to Babe from Joe Coffey, who used to play with the Hawks. He recommended the kid, said he had played good ball with a couple of service teams. He said the kid was a trifle wild, but that was all right—most youngsters are. His name was Sam Bailey, and Babe told him to go get a suit and start work.

I saw him that first day. He was smart. He didn't try to knock anyone's glove off. He just threw 'em in there, nice and easy, and I got an eyeful of that motion. Smoothest thing I ever saw. Like he was on a rockin' chair. He just lobbed 'em up for a few days, but he wasn't fooling me.

I told Babe, "You keep your eye on that kid. In a week or two, when he gets ready to throw hard, you're going to see something."

Babe said, "What kid?" He'd forgotten all about him.

"Sam Bailey. Joe Coffey sent him along."

Babe said, "Oh, that one. Harry, I'm just feedin' the kid as a favor to Joe. I don't expect anything from him. Hell, he never played organized ball."

"He will. A lot of it. He's got that thing."

But I didn't know then that he had something else. Something that was going to cause a lot of trouble.

It came out on the second day. We had an outfielder named Patsy Sobel, and there wasn't anyone who was too fond of him. Patsy was very big, and some of the time he was mean. We came in after a workout, and Patsy undressed and started for the showers and discovered he didn't have any towel. Sam Bailey was dressing near him.

Patsy said, "Hey, busher. Run inside and get me a towel. Make it snappy."

Bailey looked up at him, then just went on taking his things off.

Sobel said, "Hey, you! You hear me?"

Sam said, "I heard you," and went right on with what he was doing.

Sobel walked over to him and tapped him on the shoulder. "When I tell a punk like you to do something, you do it. And in a hurry."

So Sam hit him. He got right to his feet and he pasted Sobel, and it was some fight. They were both big men, and no one tried to stop it. Sam Bailey beat hell out of Sobel. And when he was through, he looked around at the rest of the crowd and said, "Anyone else?"

There wasn't anyone else. No one minded seeing Sobel get the pasting, anyway. He'd been making a lot of noise for a long time, now, and he rated what he'd got.

So Sam went back and had his shower, and then he left. He didn't speak to anyone.

People began to steer clear of him. He roomed by himself, and he ate by himself, and if he hadn't been a pitcher, I guess he would have figured out some way of working by himself.

WHEN he was in the camp ten days, he walked up to Babe Lewis one morning and said, "Okay. I'm set to go."

Babe was a busy man. He said, "Swell. Don't bother me, son." And he turned to walk away.

Sam took him by a shoulder and turned him around. I was nearby. Sam said, "Look. The arm is loose and I'm ready to chuck them. I want to work."

The club was having batting practice, and there was some kid up on the hill throwing it in. Babe said, "Okay. Just go out there and relieve that boy. He must be gettin' tired about now."

So Sam went out there, and this Sobel was at the plate. A pretty fair hitter. Sam Bailey reared back and let it go, and Sobel dropped on his back like he'd been shot, then came up roaring and waving his bat.

Babe calmed him down and he went back in there and the kid threw again. It was something to see, but you had to look fast. It burned in there. It traveled a thousand miles an hour. I'd seen all the great ones, but I'd never seen anything like that, except maybe Walter Johnson. And that second pitch was right in there, over the plate and across the letters.

But Sobel wasn't there. He was on his back again. He was scared stiff, and I didn't blame him. Standing up to stuff like that was no joke.

He tried to take a cut at the next one, but it was up over his head somewhere, and that was enough for him. He walked out of the batter's box, happy to be alive.

Babe called to Pete Banken and Sam Gold, a couple of the toughest hitters in the league. Pete was first, and the initial pitch almost took his head off his shoul-

ders, but he pulled back out of the way. The second pitch was good, and he cut at it but couldn't touch it. He fouled the next, then the following four were so wide he couldn't even offer at them. He took one more swing and caught a small piece and fouled it off, then Gold took his turn.

It was the same thing. He couldn't touch the kid, but Sam Bailey was wild as a mountain goat. It was murder to stand up there at the plate.

But Babe had seen enough. He went out to the kid and said, "All right, that's enough. I want you to work with a catcher for another week before you pitch to a hitter. Just take it easy and try to get the ball in there. And come see me after the workout and we'll talk about a contract."

Sam said, "Sure, I'm wild. It's early in the season."

"I know it," Babe said. "That's what I'm talking about. You take your time."

The kid went off the hill, and Babe came over to me. There were stars in his eyes. "You ever see a swift like that, Harry?"

"Johnson."

"Maybe Johnson. Maybe. And that motion. Smooth as silk. He'll last a million years."

"But will the rest of the league? He'll kill half the hitters in the business."

"We'll iron that out. We'll work him."

So he worked him with Tony Ostello, the first string catcher. Worked him for a week, just trying to teach him to get it over. And he improved fast. He was no wildman. It was just a touch early in the season. He came along fine.

And when he pitched to hitters again, you could see the difference. They were afraid to stand up there, but they needn't have been. The kid was afraid of hurting someone, and if anything was wild, it was away from the batter.

And no one could touch him, except Sam Gold and Pete Banken, once in a while. He really burned that thing in there.

He was good, and he knew he was good. He'd whipped the strong boy of the club, and now he was out there forcing the good hitters to get out of the way. He started to ride a little high.

We played the Sox an exhibition game, and it was the first look anyone but the rest of the Hawks had had at him. Babe started him, and he walked in there and started heaving. They must have thought Feller was eight years younger and on another club. They walked up there and looked carefully at what he pitched, then walked back and sat down. A couple of them waved at pitches, but it didn't get them anything. They were scared, and they didn't care who knew it.

He walked two men in the third inning, and they started giving it to him from the bench. He was a busher, and

he was a lot of other things. I could see him getting red, out there on the hill.

Well, he walked the third man, and the hollering got louder and rougher, and he dropped the ball on the mound and started on a run for the Sox bench.

It was murder, let me tell you. We piled over there in a hurry and broke it up, but he'd done a lot of damage. One Hawk was out cold, and another had a face like a busted grapefruit. We dragged Bailey off the field and out to the clubhouse. When he'd had a shower and had cooled down, I talked to him.

"You crazy? What was the idea of starting a rumpus like that?"

He looked at me, and his chin jutted out. "You hear what those people were saying to me? I wouldn't talk that way to a dog."

I said, "Hell, that's just bench stuff. They don't mean anything. They're just trying to get your goat."

"Nobody talks to me like that."

"They'll be giving you that business all through the league. There are guys who'll find out things about you that you didn't know yourself, and they'll be shouting at you every time you're in a game. You can't fight the whole league."

"I can try," he said. "I never met anyone yet who could whip me. My daddy always told me, 'Never take lip from a mouth you can shut.' I never have."

I didn't bother to try to tell him anything more right then. He was too riled up. I let it go for another time.

And when the game was over, Babe said to me, "Harry, I want you to take that kid in to room with you. Try to teach him some sense. If he's gonna take off like that every time a bench jockey starts riding him, he'll be no more use to us than a drunken camel."

"I'll see what I can do."

So the kid moved in with me, and I tried to tell him some of the things I'd picked up along the line. I told him people would ride him and he could expect it and not to let it bother him.

He said, "They won't talk to me that way and get away with it."

"They'll talk," I said. "And you'll either pull in your ears or pack your bag. And they'll send you so far into the bushes that you wouldn't understand the language if someone did ride you."

Sam Bailey said, "My daddy told me—"

"It doesn't make much difference just what your daddy told you. He was very probably a smart man, but he didn't play big league ball, or he would have told you a lot of other things."

The kid shut up for a little while, and I figured he was thinking things over. Then he said, "Let's get some air. I figure I might meet some of those Hawks on the street."

I thought I had a convert. "You want to apologize to them?"

He looked at me as if I had two heads. "Apologize, hell! I aim to beat their brains out."

But we went for that walk. He was feeling pretty chesty, and I knew that any Hawks around would avoid him.

WE JUST got outside the hotel when the convertible pulled up. It was a lovely car, but the girl that stepped out of it would have made a mummy gasp. Redheaded and beautiful. She left the car at the curb and started for the hotel entrance.

She said, "Hello, Harry." Sam Bailey said, "Wow!" in a voice that you could have heard in the next county. She went in the door without turning.

He turned to me. "Did you see that?"

"I've seen it often, but I have a wife and two children. Her name is Sally Blake. And her father is Thomas H. Blake. He also happens to be the guy that pays your salary. He owns the Hawks."

He headed for the door, and I grabbed his arm. "Did you hear what I said?"

"I heard what you said, but that's the prettiest girl I ever set eyes on. I aim to say hello to her."

I tried to hold him, but I might just as well have tried to hold the Queen Mary with a spool of thread. He was gone into the hotel. I didn't follow him. I didn't want to be a witness to what would happen—I knew Sally.

So I saw the kid when he came into the room that night. There were moonbeams in his eyes and he couldn't speak coherently.

I said, "Where were you?"

He spoke like a sleepwalker. "Dancing. She dances like an angel. You don't know you have anything in your arms. Except you know you do."

That didn't make sense. "You were dancing with Sally Blake?"

"Dancing," he said. "Dancing."

It was all I could get out of him. It sounded improbable, until I really looked at him for the first time. He was half as big as a house, had blond, curly hair, and was just about as handsome as you could get without looking silly. So I shrugged. It could happen here. Sally had tossed away a lot of boy friends, but this kid was really something to look at. And I knew it was just another touch of trouble.

I had plenty of it. I was with the kid most of the time, and I've been around a lot, and I tried to teach him some of what I knew. He learned fast. He loved baseball and he picked it up quickly. He had a pride that was hair-triggered, and I was careful not to get him touchy. In a week I had him throwing a fair hook, converting that wrinkle he'd brought along with him. I had him finding the plate most of the time, and watching him, I knew what he could do through the years, if he could hang onto that horrible temper.

He started in a couple of exhibition games as we went north. The other clubs had heard about the fracas with the Sox, and they were divided in their emotions. Should they ride him and get him out of there, then get hell beat out of a couple of players, or should they let him alone?

It was half and half. Those that didn't ride him were beaten. Those that rode him got him out in an inning or two, but they suffered casualties. He broke Ben Jameson's jaw and Buddy Keleher's nose. He left plenty of stitches and scars on the Titans. His ears reared up anytime a guy opened his mouth, and he heard everything they had to say, and most of it wasn't nice.

And he saw Sally frequently. She brought him home early, in a daze, and he went to bed, most of the time, without speaking to me, without knowing there was anyone else in the room.

I caught up with her one day, and she grinned at me and said, "Hello, Harry. Sammy tells me that you're teaching him more than he ever knew."

"That must go for both of us. You serious about this hammerhead?"

Her grin disappeared. "He's a lovely boy. He has every nice quality a girl would want in a husband."

"How would your father like it," I asked, "if you got married to a gent who, in a month or so, will be pitching for a ten dollar a week team in Wasmagossit, Nevada?"

Those lovely shoulders straightened. The girl had a fine chin, and it stuck out a bit, now. "He'll be pitching for the Hawks. You know that."

"He'll be pitching hay. That temper. What are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing," she said. "You're just jealous. I like a man with spirit."

I said, "Okay." I'd warned her.

He got into fights on the club. Willy Weems, in left field, chased hell out of a fly ball one day and couldn't catch it. Willy is the fastest man in the league. It

was a triple, and a run scored on Sam Bailey. In the clubhouse, he bawled Weems out.

Weems said, "Listen, busher. When you can tell me—"

That was all. Weems came to about half an hour later.

In the third game of the season, against the Bruins, Harry Jennings, at short, got handcuffed by a hell of a drive and couldn't make the play at first. Sam Bailey bawled him out right in the field, and Harry wouldn't take it. They tangled, and both got thrown off the field.

We played the Tigers, and they rode Sam, and he went into their bench and raised hell. He was thrown out of the park.

It was getting monotonous, and I knew the end wasn't far off. We'd bought Grayson from the Cubs, and he and I were doing most of the work, winning most of our games. Bailey would win pretty near every time the opposition let him alone, and that was about half the time. During the other games, his rabbit ears picked up remarks like radar. He even went into the stands after a guy and almost killed him.

Babe got fed up. He said, "I can't stand it any more. I'm getting too old for this sort of thing. Either that maniac becomes human in a week, or I'm going to spend a thousand bucks on a railroad ticket and have him tied to the train. He can play in the Korean League. I want no part of him."

I hated to see him go. He was a wonderful kid, underneath all this temper and rubbish. I knew what it was. He'd come up the hard way, all by himself, and he wasn't letting anyone deal him a bad time. He'd fight and fight until he'd knock himself out—because no one else was going to do it. He'd licked everyone he fought. He was big, and he was tough, and most of the time he was mad as a bull. And he knew how to fight.

THE kid was due to pitch on a Thursday against the Tigers. They were a riding crowd, and as near as I could figure it, they would pitch Pete Murray, a great guy who was a fine pitcher.

Sally had heard about Babe getting rid of the kid, too. She called me Wednesday morning, and there were tears in her voice. "Harry, you were right. Dad told me that Babe wants to get rid of him, and in a hurry. What are we going to do?"

"Outside of stuffing his ears with wax, I can't think of a thing."

"But you have to do something. I love him."

"It seems some people have to do everything the tough way. But I'll try to think of something."

I did. It was a dopey idea, and it might work. I went downtown on Wednesday, and I hunted up Johnny Redding. Johnny was from my home town, a very good friend of mine. He was also the third ranking heavyweight. I talked to him, and when I had finished, he shrugged and said, "All right, Harry. As a favor."

The next day, in the dressing room, I watched Sam. He was nervous. He knew how the Tigers had ridden him before, and he knew they'd do it again. It bothered him to think about it.

He was in his shorts and his sox when the kid stuck his head into the dressing room and said, "Mr. Bailey. Gentleman outside wants to see you."

I had arranged that, too, and when Sam left the room, I was right after him. He went out into the corridor. It was dark, filled with shadows. There was a big man standing there. I listened.

The big guy said, "Bailey? I'm Murray. We'll be working this afternoon, and I just wanted you to know that I'll tie your ears back in a bowknot."

Sam said, "Listen, you—"

The big man said, "You listen." And then he said several things I wouldn't take from a battleship.

Sam said, "You start your riding early, don't you?" and he threw the first punch.

It was murder. A good country fighter doesn't have a chance against a good pro. Johnny Redding whacked him good, without cutting him up, and in three minutes Sam Bailey was on the floor, out like a light.

I said, "Johnny, I thank you. There'll be a ticket at the window every day."

Redding shook his head. "That guy is good, for an amateur. Any time he wants to make a business of it, let me know. He's a tough customer." He left.

Sam Bailey came around. He shook his head, then sat up. He saw me. He said, "Were you watching that, Harry?"

"I saw some of it."

He shook his head again. "That man can go. I've been up against a lot of people, but no one like that."

I said, "He's a hell of a pitcher, too. You'll see, later."

"If he can pitch like he can fight—"

"He can," I said. "Better. And I'll tell you another thing about him." I told him. It was a lie, but I figured it was justified. I told him plenty.

Then I went into Babe Lewis's office and spoke my piece. He looked at me as if I was crazy. "What the hell are you talking about? You know that's the screwiest thing in the world. We'll be wasting our time."

"Go through this thing with me and you'll have the best pitcher in the league. Try it. What have you got to lose?"

"Only my brains. And they're about gone now."

We went out, and Sam warmed up. His face was mussed up a bit, but Johnny Redding had done a neat, inconspicuous job. A very tidy lad. I said to Sam, "Now I want you to listen to me. You'll be starting, and you'll pitch the first half of the first inning."

He nodded.

"Do me one favor," I said. "Don't—I repeat, don't—get thrown out in the first inning. Hold onto yourself somehow. And then I'll show you something. You promise me?"

"If they start saying things—"

"They will. But take them for one inning. If what I tell you and show you doesn't change your mind, you can go into that Tiger bench in the second with a pistol, for all I care. Okay?"

He looked at me and said, "Okay, Harry. As a favor."

Everyone was doing me favors.

So he started. He went out there, took his warm-up pitches, and Cannon, their lead-off man, came up. I was hoping the kid would hold out for one frame. He was a smart, intelligent lad, and I figured that if my scheme worked, he and Sally Blake would be saved a lot of trouble.

He pitched, and the Tiger bench started. They were loud and they were crude, and I could see the color coming into Sam's face, out on the hill. But he pitched to Cannon and struck him out, and Fogarty came up. He was a tough Irishman with a mean tongue, and while he was at the plate he gave it to Sam along with the ones on the bench.

Sam chased him away from the plate with one at his head, then burned three lovely strikes across.

Zabella came up. He stood there in the box and he called Sam some very impolite names. The Tiger bench roared out their lurid song of scorn, and suddenly Sam dropped the ball and started for them. He checked himself halfway to the foul line and came back. He threw three balls to Zabella. The guy swung three times and didn't even get a loud foul. Sam came into the dugout.

His face was scarlet, there was murder in his eyes. He headed for me and he said, "Harry, I'll never forgive you for this. My daddy would turn over—"

I shushed him. "This is what I wanted you to see. This is the guy who beat up

on you an hour ago, and he's one hell of a pitcher. I want you to see how he reacts to jockeying. Take a look."

PETE MURRAY stepped up on the hill. Sam looked at him, a puzzled frown on his face. "This the same fellow? Seems to me the other was a touch bigger, taller. And not quite so heavy."

"I was there. I saw it. I ought to know Pete Murray."

And as soon as Pete hit the mound, our bench started. We really gave it to him. We loaded it in there and we kept it up, and it wasn't nice. We said all the things the Tiger bench had said to Sam Bailey, and we added a few.

Murray didn't move a face muscle. He reared back and pitched, and this was one of his good days, when he was almost untouchable.

I turned to Sam. His face was red, not from anger, but from shame. "I never heard our fellows use language like that. I thought—"

I hopped on him. "You see how much attention Pete Murray pays to that sort of talk? None at all. In one ear and out the other. He knows we don't mean it. Just trying to get him sore, is all. And once we get him sore, he's ours. But he won't let us. He just lets it go over his head."

Sam pounded his hand into his glove. "Harry, I do believe you're right. He's the toughest and best man I ever fought, and if he can listen to that and still control himself, I can too. My daddy always said, 'If you can't lick 'em, learn from 'em.' "

So he went out there and pitched. The Tigers kept shouting at him, plaguing him, but it didn't do a bit of good. He just stood up there, inning after inning, blowing that big fast one past him.

We kept after Pete Murray, too, and when, in the fifth inning, he turned to our bench and waved a big hand and grinned at us, that was the finish. Sam Bailey threw his glove on the dugout floor and said, "That's the clincher. He just doesn't give a damn."

And when he went out there for the sixth, the Tigers started yelling again. Sam turned to their bench, gave them sort of a salute, and said, "H'ya, fellows!"

And from that day on, no one has been able to ride Sam Bailey. He just goes out there and pitches, and there isn't a thing in the world that bothers him. He's one of the greatest in the game, and there's no more rabbit in his ears, now, than there is in that big heart of his.

Out on the field, it was almost over. Sam was pitching for the last out of the game. We'd collected three runs in the sixth, and Sam had blanked Boston.

The kid beside me said, "And did he win that game? The one against Pete Murray?"

"By a run. The Tigers got just two hits off him, and he had fifteen strikeouts."

"He get married to that gal, too?"

I looked at him. "How long you been around, son?" I brought him up on the steps of the dugout and pointed to a box not far away. There was a beautiful woman and a beautiful little girl sitting there.

The kid said, "Gosh. He stayed around to become a great pitcher just because you pulled that trick with the fighter, and because Pete Murray can't be jockeyed out on that hill."

I said, "Pete Murray is about the worst tempered guy in baseball. Got locked up about a year ago for beating his wife. Flies off the handle real easy, you work it right. But you can't bother him much in a ball game. He's stone deaf."

The kid looked at me and his mouth fell open. "He's what?"

"Deaf, son. Man wouldn't hear the gun that blew his brains out if you held it against his head."

It had been a real nice afternoon.

LOSER TAKE ALL

By JOHN D. MacDONALD

The ball, sharply and cleanly hit, sped out over the deep green of the fairway. . . .

A has-been with a prayer . . . a fresh kid with a birdie . . . and magic on the eighteenth—the green where champions are made!

AT THE END of the second day of the Crest Club Open, he stretched out on the bed in the small room they had assigned to him, the ache of fatigue bitter within him.

He was a smallish man, spare and leathery, his face impassive with the habit of the long years of tournament play, the crow's-foot wrinkles at the corners of his blue eyes so deep as to look as if cut by a knife.

The crumpled newspapers lay beside the bed. The sportswriters, he thought, would have ignored him, had not Al Werton of the *Globe,* written that item at the end of the first day.

Among the names on the roster is that of Jock Drew. Remember him? When I saw that name, I thought it must be the son of that man who, years ago, won steadily, back in the days when the purses were small.

But no! It was Old Jock himself. He teed up for the first hole, playing against a laughing blond giant from Toledo named Bob Wallen. Wallen outdrove Old Jock by fifty yards. But there is still magic in the touch of Jock's irons. Wallen was all

through laughing by the sixth hole, where he was two down.

I asked around and found that when Jock retired from tournament play eleven years ago, he became pro at a little Vermont golf club. Four years ago Jock became assistant pro when the club hired Hiran LaMont. The word is that Jock has been little better than a greens keeper these last few years.

Folks, he's an echo out of the past. Thirty-one years ago, Jock played in his first tournament. I, for one, am pulling for him to grab a slice of the prize money here at the Crest Club.

Jock thought of those early tournaments. In those days that wiry body never felt the heavy drag of exhaustion. Molly had traveled with him, after the first two years. Some seasons had been bad, but they had laughed together and lived cheaply.

After Al Werton had given them the lead, the others writers had picked it up, and gotten themselves into a bitter argument, some contending that modern golf was more expert than that played in the days gone by. As evidence they pointed to Jock's last two years of tournament golf, when he had totaled eleven hundred dollars for the two years combined.

Others said that golf was a matter of hands and heart, and thus was a young man's game.

Jock looked up at the ceiling and felt the thud of his heart. It was as though a small hammer was tapping steadily and too fast on the inside of his chest. A tired heart trying to restore exhausted muscles with oxygen.

He smiled, his lips a thin hard line. At least none of them had checked back and found out about Molly. That would have given them a field day. A hearts and flowers motif. The poor old man trying to win the money to buy the needed operations. What did the youngsters call that kind of a plot? Corny. That was it. Pure corn. And yet life, with impassive cruelty, could thrust a corny situation upon you. Foreclosure of the mortgage—only this was a mortgage on life. Molly's life. Molly of the eyes which had never ceased laughing.

He remembered her face pale against the pillow when he had left. Her hand, weak on his. "Jock, you're a stubborn old man. You know that, don't you?"

He had grinned. "Maybe I can show the children something."

"Ah, Jock, while you're stitching out pars, they'll be dropping birdies and eagles all around you."

"A man can try," he said.

When he had bent to kiss her cheek, she had put her arms around his neck, held him close for a moment. "Remember what I used to tell you in the old days, darling?" she had whispered. "Good luck, and a long roll, and magic on the greens."

Though they had not mentioned it, he read the fear in her eyes. The fear that he would lose, and then, having lost, appeal to charity. She knew that for him, a prideful man, to take a gift of money would be like another form of death.

And so he was glad that the newspapers had not found out about Molly. Nor did they know that he, Jock Drew, one-time winner of the National Open, had spent many hours of this golf season driving the motorized mower across the sleek fairways, the sun hot on his wrinkled neck, the stench of the blue exhaust in his nostrils.

Time enough to let them find out when he lost. If he lost. Then he would endure the small death of charity because there would be no other out.

It had seemed certain enough in Vermont, when his heart had said, "Go out and win. This time you must."

The reality was that golf had changed. A man could not win by playing the game the way he had learned it. They did not make carefully placed drives out to the bend of the dogleg, and then pitch onto the green for a careful par, as in the old days. They did not pitch short of the creek, then drop the third close to the hole

for a second careful par. Not any more.

Nowadays they boomed high over the trees with a tremendous, controlled slice, and with great luck they were close enough to sink the approach for an eagle two. With less luck, you could collect a birdie. But with no luck, you were deep in the woods and out of the tournament. And you did not pitch short of the creek. You played it hole high with all the strength of wrist and shoulders.

A new kind of golf. A young man's game. It made Jock think of driving down a city street at fifty miles an hour, foolhardy and young and daring.

The answer was obvious. To play his own game meant that he would play out of the money. Thus the caution of age must be forgotten. He was playing their game. And, stretched out on the bed, he felt the effects of it. It was an incredible strain to push his drives to the limit of tolerance, cocking his backswing deeper than ever before, playing for the pin when experience said to play safe.

TIME to eat. He stood up, and swayed with weariness. The others would be down in the dining room, laughing and joking, waving casually to him when he came in. More of them would notice Jock Drew. Though marked for early elimination, he had managed to cling close enough to the leader so that he would go into the last day's play.

After dinner there would be a few mild parties for the big names who had gone off their game and had been crowded out of the last day's play.

The first two days had sapped most of his reserve strength, yet he knew that the final day, the final thirty-six holes, would be incalculably rougher. Only one stroke separated Don Jeryde, the leader, and Finn Makinson, in second place. Jock Drew was six strokes behind the leader.

Six strokes to pick up in thirty-six holes—one extra one to win. He fought down the tide of panic and helplessness, and when at last he had mastered himself he knew that he had done so at the cost of a bit more of his strength.

First place money was ten thousand—worth three times that in subsidiary contracts. Second place money was fifteen hundred—worth very little in subsidiary contracts. And the grave man from the clinic had said, "The chance is very slight, Mr. Drew. Fowler is the only one who has had any success in this sort of thing through surgery. He's—very expensive."

"Without Fowler, she'll die within the year. Is that right?" he had asked in a voice so rough that it concealed his feeling.

The grave man had nodded.

C. K. Arden, the man who ran the little golf club in Vermont, had sought him out the day he left. Arden was a stout,

brassy man with an air of great self-confidence.

"What's this I hear, Jocko? Somebody told me that you're going to try your luck in the Crest Club Open. What are they doing? Letting you in for old times' sake?"

"I'm paying the usual entrance fees," Jock had said stiffly. He saw Arden's resentment at the absence of the usual "sir". Arden felt that club employees should know their places.

"Then you're throwing your money away, man."

"And it's my money to throw."

"You needn't think, Drew, that you can go down there and make a laughing stock of this club, and then come creeping back to your job, you know."

Jock had taken the bitten stem of the briar out from between his teeth and had looked at it steadily. Then he had spat over the railing of the caddie house, and said mildly, "Good day to you."

Arden's stocky back had been stiff with anger as he had walked away. And that was another door closed tightly.

No matter. Arden liked to have a man crawl on his knees. Crawling might be necessary.

He went down to the dining room, and ate sparingly; then he returned to his room, undressed and went to bed.

His body yearned for sleep, and yet his tired mind, chained tightly to worry, revolved in a tight spiral that made sleep impossible. When, many hours later, he slept, it was to dream that he was in the bottom of an enormous sandtrap. Each stinging, blasting stroke sent the ball high up the steep face of the trap, only to have it stop, roll back and lodge exactly where it had been before. Sweat stung his eyes, and he sobbed as he swung. . . .

His caddie was a solemn youth of fifteen, with the shy awkwardness of adolescence. The vast crowds of gay, hurrying people, the men with the radio packs, the solemn officials, the carnival atmosphere—all gave Jock Drew a feeling of taunt nervousness. The big course was faultlessly clipped and tailored. Jock saw on the big board that he was matched with a man named Kelly. He noticed that Kelly was seven strokes behind the leader. That was good. It meant that they would travel with a slim gallery. He hadn't met Kelly before and they shook hands on the first tee.

Kelly was a slim, dark boy, with smiling lips, nervous eyes, and good strong wrists and hands. "How's it going, pops?" he asked.

"Fair, lad. Just fair."

The nervousness clung, but when he stood by the teed ball, the familiar grip of the club in his hands, a certain amount of confidence returned. After all, this was the tool of a trade that he had followed for over thirty years. Other men called it a game. To him it had been a livelihood, and a hard and bitter one at that.

The first hole was a 335 yard par four, straight out, with a high trapped green. There was knowledge in Jock's muscles. Knowledge of the breaking point. You can push just so hard, and so far—and then your game comes apart like wet cardboard. His swing was as grooved as though the throat of the club traveled in a narrow steel track. At the last instant came the snap of sinewed wrists, and the white ball, cleanly and sharply hit, sped out over the deep green of the fairway, striking the ground a little more than two hundred yards out, rolling long with the little tail he put on. Two fifty to sixty, thereabouts, he judged. Respectable. And straight.

Kelly smashed out with the resiliency of young muscles, the whipcord of young wrists. It sped low, then began to rise, floated, soared, dropped near Jock's ball, and rolled far beyond it.

Jock began mechanically to trudge toward the ball. This was the last day.

These steps would be retraced only once more. His legs were like dull wood, and there was a glowing pain under his heart.

With 85 yards to go, he asked for the seven iron, lofted one that was white against the morning sky, seeming to hang for a moment before it arrowed down to disappear beyond the high leading edge of the green. Kelly had a chip shot to the green. Jock sunk his eight foot putt, while Kelly ringed the cup for a heartbreaking miss.

Walk, stop, judge, take the club, swing, and walk again. Jock moved like a mechanical doll in a weirdly complicated game, moving in green infinity, lulled almost to apathy by the constant drain on his strength.

And yet, as he walked, all the training of thirty years was at his call. A flicker of wind, a grain of the grass, the subtle trickery of a slope—he knew them well, and each shot was played to take advantage of the enormous number of variables. Because that is all golf is. Man against variables. Variables of swing, of impact, of green and fairway and rough. In tournament play there are other variables—courage, tension, and fatigue.

On the seventh—that incredible par three at the Crest Club, a two hundred and thirty-eight yard hole, where the drive must carry a full two hundred and fifteen yards, or else fall into the raw gully that cuts across the deep green of the fairway—he thought for a long time, and discarded the long iron in favor of the number four wood. He teed the ball well back toward his right foot, and hit it explosively. It went out on a direct line, and he didn't breathe until it began to rise, and he knew that it was floating dead in the air.

As they watched, it struck against the side of the green, bounded high, bounced once on the green, trickled in a line that curved slightly to the right and disappeared into the hole. The caddie let out a wild yelp of glee, and then covered his mouth with his hand and looked ashamed of his outburst.

Kelly used a three iron. Jock saw that the muscles were tight ovals at the corners of Kelly's jaw. In his eagerness to birdie the hole and thus lose only one stroke, Kelly cut viciously at the ball, cutting a shade too far under it. The ball towered to an incredible height, fell short, missing the brink of the gulley by inches, losing itself down in the clumps of shrubbery. The rules permit another ball to be driven, plus the one-stroke penalty. Kelly put the second ball on the green, missed his putt and took a five.

Four strokes dropped on one hole.

Word of the hole in one got back to the gallery. By the time they had reached the fourteenth, the crowd was over a hundred. And many who saw the posting of Jock's score on the big board joined the gallery because they sensed drama.

The eighteenth at the Crest Club is a hole to break the hearts of men. In kindlier days it was a par five. For the last four years it has been a par four. You stand on the tee fifty feet above the fairway level, and for three hundred and ten yards the fairway stretches but, straight and true. But it narrows as it goes. Three hundred and ten yards from the tee, there is a spot as big as a wide green. But it isn't the green—the green is down a slope off to the right, two hundred and twenty yards further. The green itself tilts back away from the fairway, and beyond it is a wide creek.

The theory of the hole is that you drive three hundred and ten yards straight out. Next you find some miraculous club in your bag that will enable you to put the ball onto a sloping green two hundred and twenty yards further. Then you take two putts.

If your drive is short, then you must play over a line of pines, playing a controlled slice that will send you bounding

down the slope to be gobbled up by the deep traps in front of the green—if you go that far.

Each time he played the hole, Jock Drew forced himself closer to the limits of control. A man cannot hit a golf ball with all his strength and know where it will go. That tiny bit of reserve strength must be used for the type of control which causes a variation of an eighth of an inch in the angle of the clubhead, to result in thirty yards of angle by the time the ball is two hundred yards away.

He had learned one thing. He had learned that even with the deceptive height, to drive the full three hundred and ten yards brought him dangerously close to the limits of control. He knew that he had a choice. He could either play a short drive to the left of the fairway to give him clearance to go over the trees, or he could take a chance and play far to the right, getting close enough to the trees so that he could play low between the shaggy trunks.

He played to the right. And when he got to the ball he found that a huge tree completely masked the green. All or nothing. In the old days he would have pitched cautiously out of danger, played for a five on the hole. But that sort of golf was not the kind that wins. Not today.

The caddie's eyes widened as he asked for the number three wood. He set himself carefully, and when he swung, he pulled the club head across the ball, from the outside toward the inside. The ball, struck fairly, whistled close to the trunk of the tree. Jock did not have the strength to run to where he could see its flight. He stood, his eyes half closed, listening to the gallery. If he heard that descending sigh, he would know he was in trouble. He heard a full-throated roar of approval.

When he walked down to the green, he heard a man saying, "Sliced like it had a string on it. Looked like it was going over into the road over there and then it came back. See, it bounced just short of this trap, rolled across the green and barely stuck on the far edge. What luck that old guy's got!"

It was a wandering, uphill putt. He stopped and took a long look at it. Two sideways slopes to watch. That one will pull it to the right and then that other one will pull it back to the left. Try it dead on the cup. They both look the same size.

He stood very still, and felt the sweat make his grip on the putter uncertain. He put the club down, calmly wiped his hands, stuffed the handkerchief away. Then he stroked the ball crisply. It swung to the right, then back to the left, seemed to be going too fast for the uphill slope. But it hit against the far side of the cup, bounced a few inches into the air, and fell in.

The silent gallery exploded into sound. He heard the low tone of an announcer and wondered why they had put a man in the gallery.

IT WAS only when he walked back to the big board that he saw why. The deadly tournament play had shaken the leaders. Don Jeryde had taken a 70. Finn Makinson had taken 71 to put him two strokes behind Jeryde's total. And Jock Drew's 66 had tied the course record and had tied him with Makinson for second place. Both of them were just two strokes behind Jeryde.

Kelly had been eliminated along with many others in the Crest Club Open rule that the leading eight men go into the final round on the afternoon of the third day of play.

It was after a very light lunch and an hour of rest that Jock Drew found he was matched with Jeryde for the final round.

Jeryde was a man who, from a distance, gave a deceptive impression of

youth. His tan face, slim body, and corn-yellow hair made him the delight of the amateur color photographers.

Yet, from close by, the tan skin was covered with a network of fine wrinkles, and there was a jaded look about his grey eyes. He looked as brittle as a dried twig. But the law of his life was competition. It just happened that he had learned golf. It could have been billiards, tennis, bowling—almost anything where it is man against man, skill against skill. Time had put a veneer over his ugly wrath at losing, and he could smile and shake a friendly hand with the best of them. Time had mellowed his ecstatic glee at winning. But nothing would ever mellow the tight, hard competitive quality of his play—the give-nothing, take-everything style of play that made him respected and feared in the field.

The vast crowds in the afternoon made the morning crowds look slim. They came in their sleek cars, and by bus and even on foot from the city. They paid the fee and swarmed over the course, and the mark of their passing was a rash of gum wrappers, cigarette butts, crumpled cigarette packages and heel prints.

When Jock stood on the first tee, they stretched in an unbroken line on both sides of the fairway. The officials pushed them back with bamboo poles, but still the aisle they left was not over fifty feet wide from tee to green.

Jeryde was treating Jock with an exaggerated courtesy, an eager-young-man manner in which there was nothing objectionable, and yet Jock knew that Jeryde, though he would deny it even to himself, sought in that way to anger Jock Drew and thus crack his game.

Jock's drive was crisp and average in length. Jeryde was thirty yards beyond him. As they walked down toward the two balls glistening against the green grass, Jock felt that he was past exhaustion, that some strange numb nerves had taken over his limp body and were forcing it to go through the motions of play.

He pitched on, missed his putt, saw Jeryde smugly confident as he increased the lead to three strokes.

The second hole was even, as was the third, the fourth and the fifth. The ache in Jock's shoulder muscles made him want to cry out with each swing. Jeryde played tough, daring, competent golf, and Jock knew that the burden of proof was on himself, not on Don Jeryde. If he played Jeryde even, he couldn't be sure of second place, not knowing how well Makinson might be doing. So he had to play better than even. He had to outplay Jeryde, using a body that was tired and old, but using golf knowledge that had been painfully gathered while Donald Jeryde was pedaling a tricycle.

On the eighth hole, Jock was given his first break. A silly woman tried to run across to the other side of the fairway while the crisp sound of Jeryde's drive still resounded in the air.

The ball bounded, hit her in the face and knocked her down. She scrambled up, screaming, and they took her away, blood dotting her handkerchief. Jeryde's ball bounded into the rough, into an almost unplayable lie.

His recovery was almost good enough, but faded off into a trap, and his explosion dropped him inches from the pin. Jock picked up one stroke.

On the ninth, a five hundred and twenty yard hole, Jock got a second break. Jeryde had a downhill lie for his second shot. He used a number two wood. A fraction of a second before the club head hit the ball, the ball moved slightly down the slope. As a result the ball was semi-topped, and it bounded off with a great deal of overspin, coming to rest a bare hundred and fifty yards away, still a good eighty yards from the green. Jock saw his chance and changed clubs, pushing himself dangerously, and managed to put one on the left

edge of the green. It was a lovely shot.

Jeryde put this third shot on, five feet from the pin for a certain par four. Jock could feel himself tightening up. He stroked the ball crisply and it came to almost a dead stop just shy of the hole, but turned, ever so slowly, and plopped in. Jeryde threw a look of annoyance at the crowd, and the officials made threatening sounds to quiet them.

He holed his putt firmly, and Jock Drew was one stroke down—and ten to go. It was on the fourteenth, still one down, that Jock, out of pure weariness, pulled a beginner's trick, something he hadn't done for more years than he could remember.

Faced with a forty foot pitch onto the green, he looked up like any dub. The edge of the seven iron cut into the ball and it scampered off at an angle. The gallery tried to surge out of the way, but it hit somebody's heel, glancing off, running up the brink of the green, trickling nicely down toward the hole to stop not more than nine inches from the pin.

Jeryde's lips were white, and the grin he gave Jock Drew was so forced as to appear more of a grimace. Jeryde's ball was ten feet from the pin, as he had leaned a bit too much on his own approach. His careful putt stopped dead a bare two inches to the left of the cup. Jock putted his own in, and the match and the tournament were even.

The gallery was almost unmanageable. The fifteenth was halved, and the sixteenth, and the seventeenth.

Jock stood for a long time on the eighteenth tee, looking down to the small patch three hundred and ten yards away where the dogleg curve began.

He glanced down at the ball and it took his tired eyes several seconds to focus properly. The sun was dropping, and it slanted across the course. He thought of Molly and thought of the radio at her bedside.

What were they saying about Jock Drew? Were they wondering how long it could last? How long the old man from the past could keep up his challenge? How soon he would break?

He addressed the ball. What had Molly's words always been? Of course! Good luck, and a long roll, and magic on the greens.

But that patch of green was so far. So far.

The clubhead went back into that smooth backswing, looping smoothly at the top of it, slashing down with a clean, whip-like sound. When the club head was six inches from the ball, he uncocked his wrists with a sure, hard snap. The impact was like a pistol shot. Never had he hit a ball harder. Or truer.

It made a line of white fire against the green distance and with his far-sighted vision he saw it bound and roll, fading off to the left slightly, coming at last to rest beyond the border of pine.

He looked back, saw Jeryde give him a strange, unbelieving glance as he teed up his own ball, waggled his arms to loosen up. This could be the payoff hole, or it could mean extra holes. Jock was afraid of extra holes. He even dreaded the five hundred yard march ahead of him. But Molly had heard the radio. Molly had heard the announcer describe the drive. She would know what it meant, and what was behind it. She knew his limitations as well as he did.

Jeryde's drive was a money ball. He had that look on his face as he hit it. Jock knew that the hole and the tournament depended on his taking the heart out of Jock Drew. Jock watched the drive. Jeryde cut it dangerously close to the trees, and with his greater power, he could afford the roll limitations of a slice. The ball disappeared around the corner, rolling slowly; but Jock knew that it was going fast enough to catch the slope, to be carried well down toward the green, shorten-

ing Jeryde's second shot appreciably.

AT LAST he arrived, spent and weary, at his own ball, and he could see the green at the foot of the slope, the creek glowing behind it where the sun sparkled off the cool water.

The perfect shot would land on the green, an iron shot with sufficient backspin to enable it to cling. And yet the distance was so great that backspin would be largely spent by the time the ball arrived.

He stood so long inspecting the terrain that he heard somebody behind him mutter, "What's the matter with him?"

The caddie was biting his underlip. Jock called for a four iron. One more swing with all his heart in it. Just one more. Magic on the green, Molly had said. And magic was what he would need. Magic and strength.

He dug at the ball with a full swing, and the pain that ran up his arm was like a blazing knife. It clouded his vision so that he couldn't follow the flight of the ball. He bent over and tried to still the pain in his wrist by holding it clenched in the fingers of his right hand.

The great cheer that went up made him look up and he saw his ball, clean and true on the green about ten feet from the pin.

He held his wrist and looked at it, saw the puffiness coming, knew that he had pulled tendons loose.

"What's the matter?" the caddie asked breathlessly.

"A small hurt. Nothing. I can putt."

He watched Jeryde. The blonde man settled his feet firmly. Jock saw the deep pitch on the club, guessed that it was a seven, or even an eight. All the breaks had gone against Jeryde. He was the better golfer, Jock knew.

So it was without a great deal of surprise, with a feeling almost of inevitability that he saw the ball drop, hit the green a foot short of the hole, bounce almost straight up, land, and trickle in for an eagle two. An eagle two, the tournament and the failure of Jock Drew.

He walked stiffly down the slope, and he knew that no man could better the scores that he and Don Jeryde had hung up on that day.

So with warmth in his blue eyes, he caught up with Jeryde, put this thin brown hand out and said, "Ah, you did well, lad. Well."

"I lucked out on you, Mr. Drew. You should have had it," Jeryde said quietly, but behind the calm of his gray eyes, his glee was huge and bright.

Jock took a long time over his putt. The fingers of his left hand felt numb, and the slighest pressure was like a vise on his wrist. But he putted straight and true and well for the birdie three.

The congratulations were surprisingly warm for a second place winner. He felt them press close behind him to pat his shoulders, and he kept an empty smile on his lips. The group around Jeryde was only a bit larger, and Jock, his heart heavy, gradually forced his way through to the clubhouse, gave the caddie the five wrinkled ten-dollar bills that were his just share, and carried his clubs into the elevator to take them up to his room with him. He was too sick at heart to brave the tumult of the locker room.

The doctor came within a few minutes, pronounced it a torn tendon and strapped his wrist tightly.

Jock sat on the bed, his face in his hands. He was treasuring his last few minutes of pride. Soon, before it was too late, he would tell the story of Molly to the newspaper men, of how she was listening, and why the money was needed.

Oh, the American public would love it. There would be vicarious tears and the money would come in. But it was for Molly.

(Continued on page 129)

MONEY MILER

There was a quarter of a mile to go, and he was all but finished . . .

A BLAZING red sun was dropping behind the cold hills to the west as Johnny Marvin came legging it up the last long hill outside the Tech stadium.

He ran alone, stopwatch in hand, and as he glanced at the time, an expression of unrepressed bitterness moved fleetingly across his gaunt face.

A tall man, Johnny Marvin, with compact hips and thin; scarred legs that bore the marks of nineteen skin grafting operations. He ran with legs driving hard, with nostrils flaring. He was leaning forward, now, forcing himself to ignore the agonizing pain that was like a raging fire just below his ribs.

An outsider, seeing Johnny Marvin then, would have said that he was too old, at twenty-six, to race, and that he ran like a man who hated the event. On both counts, the outsider would have been right.

At the top of the hill, Johnny Marvin swung off to the left, entered the stadium gate. His short spikes made little crunching sounds as they broke through the frozen earth's crust. Then he was circling the cinder track, everything forgotten save the mental agony of having to force one foot in front of the other. He was

"That first lap will take your lungs, kid . . . the others will take your stamina. But there's one thing a champ will remember: you run that last gun lap with your heart!"

dazed by the time his last stride carried him beyond the finish line of the five-mile course.

For a moment, Johnny bent forward, as if it might be possible to squeeze the fire from his lungs by the simple act of constricting them. Nausea crept close to him, then ebbed away. At last, he straightened, began to look for the sweat suit he had laid beside the track.

A man stepped out of the shadows near the retaining wall. A little man, Sam Beloin, squat and dumpy, with silvering temples and a balding crown. He handed Johnny his sweat clothing and when he spoke, his voice was no louder than Johnny's heavy breathing.

"I saw you leave," Sam Beloin said. "I held a watch on you. Run that kind of race Saturday and you'll get a third, maybe fourth place for Tech."

Johnny bent forward, stepped into his loose fitting warmup pants. His temples were pounding again, but not from the race he had just run.

"You surprise me, Sam," he said bitterly. "I didn't know you were even aware that I was out for the team."

Sam Beloin sighed. "Still got the old chip on your shoulder, haven't you, Johnny?"

"Any law against it, Sam?"

The Tech cross country coach sighed again. "No," he said. "I guess there's no law against it. . . ."

Johnny started for the dressing room, but when he got there, Sam Beloin was still beside him. Sam pressed his back against the door, blocked it.

"I think I know what's the matter with you, Johnny," Sam said, his voice soft again. "And I think you're makin' a mistake that you'll regret. . . ."

"Look," Johnny said. "You run your job. I'll run mine."

Something like anger flared briefly in Sam Beloin's eyes. He said, "Five years ago, before you were in that fire, you were the cross country champion. You had an athletic scholarship. You were sort of human, then. You liked this business and. . . ."

"I fell for that glory routine once, Sam. Remember?"

A far away look came into Sam Beloin's eyes. "You were in the hospital a long time, Johnny, and it made you bitter, didn't it? Your cross country glory didn't pay the hospital bills. It didn't lessen the pain."

"Am I squawking?" Johnny demanded.

Sam Beloin shrugged, made a wry face. "When you came back," Sam said softly, "you asked for your old scholarship back. But we looked at your legs and we told you we'd have to watch you run, first. That gave you funny ideas, Johnny. You decided we'd forgotten the days when you were champion. . . ."

"Didn't you?" Johnny asked cynically.

Sam shook his head. "Somewhere along the line, you got the idea that money talks. Then you met Duke Dexter. For some reason Duke wants to win the cross-country title, Saturday. But he knows that he can't beat Joe Ellis, of State, unless someone runs Ellis into the ground. . . ."

Johnny Marvin frowned, wondering

By DUANE YARNELL

how much Sam knew, how much he was guessing. But he said nothing.

"You and Duke have been pretty thick," Sam continued. "I think he's made a deal with you. I think you'll run Ellis ragged during the early part of the race, so Duke can win. . . ."

"You've been reading tea leaves again," Johnny said acidly.

"I'm not blind, Johnny. Duke's paying you in one way or another. You're in his fraternity. You use his car. You wear good clothes. And you don't have a job. How else can you add it?"

"It might be a little hard to prove, Sam."

Sam Beloin's gray eyes turned bleak. "Yes," he admitted. "It *would* be hard to prove. That's why I'm leaving you on the team. But if what I've said turns out to be true, I feel sorry for you, Johnny."

"Don't ever feel sorry for me, Sam."

"I feel sorry for you," Sam said again, "because you're wrong. Right now, you think money talks. Money's getting you your education—Duke Dexter's money. But someday, you'll be able to see the other side. Someday, you'll remember that you ran your guts out for a guy who's a grade A heel."

Johnny Marvin said, "Are you finished, Sam?"

Sam looked at him. Then, slowly, he turned away fom the door. "Yeah," he said. "I'm finished. And so, I'm afraid, are you."

Johnny was still upset as he took his shower. Sam had pretty well covered the situation, except for one thing. Sam didn't need to feel sorry for Johnny Marvin. No one would ever have to feel sorry for him again.

This glory business, Johnny, is a lot of nonsense. You're a big shot today, but you get your legs scarred up and they look the other way when they see you coming. It takes money to finish that education, Johnny. And if Duke Dexter's fool enough to want to furnish the money for a favor, why not let him? You'll run Ellis into the ground during the third mile. And they'll bring both of you home in the jeep. But who gives a damn, Johnny? Duke Dexter will win. And Duke will keep paying the tab until you get that degree. Money talks, Johnny Marvin. Don't ever forget it. . . .

LATER, when he walked outside, the cream colored roadster was waiting. The door came open and he got in.

Duke Dexter was younger than Johnny. His skin was light, his hair closely cropped, and except for a slightly receding chin, he was on the handsome side.

"We've got troubles, Duke said, easing the car away from the curb. A frown was upon his smooth brow as he said it.

"Like what, Duke?"

"I just checked the mid-semester Lit grades," Duke said. "I'm at the bottom of the flunk list."

A look of apprehension crept across Johnny Marvin's face. A flunk for Duke would keep him out of Saturday's Intercollegiate cross-country event. And while Johnny hoped that it would not necessarily upset his own plans, the hope was quickly shattered.

"Unless," Duke said pointedly, "I can get the grade raised, I'm afraid it'll change our little deal, Johnny."

Until this moment, Johnny Marvin had accepted Duke Dexter with easy toleration, satisfied to do Duke's bidding so long as it paid off for him. But the cold expression in Duke's eyes was like a slap in the face, and without understanding it, Johnny was aware of a feeling of anger.

"What can I do about it?" he asked slowly.

"Plenty," Duke said. "You know Ann Corbin, the Lit class assistant. You'll have to talk to her, of course."

Johnny frowned, considered Ann Corbin. She was young, about Johnny's age,

a girl who came to class in plain dresses, who wore no makeup, who hid whatever looks she might have behind a pair of horn-rimmed glasses. She'd helped him a couple of times on assignments, but there had been nothing personal in their relationship. Nothing strong enough to justify Duke Dexter's optimism.

Johnny said, "I'm not sure, Duke. Ann Corbin's the quiet type, but she seems to have a stubborn streak somewhere near the surface. She'd be hard to deal with."

Duke's eyes were still cold. "That'll be your tough luck, not mine. You've got a few chips riding on me yourself, Johnny."

Again, Johnny's anger flared, if only briefly. He held his silence for two blocks, his face turned toward the quiet, tree-lined street. Then Duke parked before the Sigma house. Lights glowed from the curtained windows, but there was no warmth in the glow.

Johnny said, "Just why is it so important for you to win, Duke? You've never told me."

Duke said, "To show someone that I'm a better man than he is," and his voice was husky with unrepressed emotion. "Maybe you don't know what it's like to have an old man who hates your guts. Who looks at you as if you were a worm. . . ."

Johnny said, "What will winning cross-country prove?"

Light blazed in Duke Dexter's blue eyes. "My old man tried, for four years, to win the cross country event here at Tech. The best he ever did was third."

"Oh," Johnny Marvin said.

"Can't you get the picture? The race will end between the halves of the homecoming football game. There'll be fifty thousand people yelling, 'Dexter! Dexter! Dexter!' when I romp home. And the old man will be in the stands, listening."

"Yeah," Johnny said. "I begin to see. . . ."

"There's just one thing against it," Duke said pointedly. "I won't get the chance unless you can do business with Ann Corbin."

"I'll try, Duke. . . ."

"You'll have to do more than that," Duke said, a strident fierceness in his voice. "I've never taken 'no' for an answer yet." His eyes were arrogant again. "Don't be the first one to annoy me, Johnny. I don't think I'd like it."

Johnny got out of the car and his hands were trembling at his sides. Then a feeling of relaxation went through him as he told himself that he was a fool to be angered. He had what he wanted, didn't he? Listening to Duke blow his top was only a part of the price that he must pay. Again, he told himself that it was a small price, that it was worth it.

They went up to the room together. Johnny Marvin changed clothes. Duke sat watching him, his eyes sullen. And as Johnny left, Duke tossed him the car keys, carefully wrapped in a crisp, green bill. Downstairs, as he sat beside the telephone, Johnny studied the bill. It was a century note. He whistled softly, then dialed his number.

Ann Corbin answered the phone with a soft "Hello. . . ." He recognized her voice and he said, "Miss Corbin. . . ." Dampness broke along his brow and he frowned at such a start. He tried again, this time, putting more warmth into it.

"Ann . . . this is Johnny Marvin. I . . . I'd like to see you tonight. . . ."

A pause, then, "I have a lot of papers to grade, Johnny."

"This is pretty important . . . to me," he said, with emphasis on the latter. "Couldn't you forget the papers for awhile. . . ."

Her laughter was soft and it released the tightness that was in him. "Well, all right, Johnny. I . . . I haven't gone out for an evening in so long, I can't make myself refuse. What do you have in

mind? The pre-homecoming prom?"

The tightness came back with a rush and he had to catch himself before he blurted his admission that he hadn't called her for a date. Almost at once, he realized that she had misinterpreted his call, that telling her now would be like a slap in the face. Then, fiercely, he asked himself why not? He had a job of selling to do. Blue lights and soft music might be just the right background.

"The prom," he said, "is too public. I'm thinking of something quieter. How about Mulloy's?"

"If you hear anything," the girl laughed, "it's just my teeth chattering. I've always wanted to go there, Johnny. So much, in fact, that it frightens me. . . ."

"An hour from now?" Johnny asked.

"Yes. And Johnny . . . maybe you'd better just honk. Father's not exactly an old fogey, but he doesn't quite approve of a teacher going out with a student. You don't mind, do you?"

"I'll honk," Johnny promised.

He had a full hour to worry, a full hour to make his plans. He decided that he'd mention Duke's grade the moment Ann got into the car, then gradually keep pressing the subject before the evening was over.

But when he saw her, his plans went glimmering. He supposed that it was her eagerness that made him realize that a mention of Duke Dexter would be out of place at the moment.

She came out of the small bungalow that she shared with her father, a former Lit instructor, retired, now, because of illness. She was small and slim and in high heels, she looked much taller. He climbed out, held the door for her.

"It was nice of you to ask me, Johnny," she said, smiling.

Her hair was red gold under the lights on the dash. She was wearing a black velvet cape, a long black dress with gleaming sequins. Her head was small and finely shaped and her make-up was flawless. She was, he had to admit, somewhat lovelier than he'd a right to expect.

He said, "Something about you is different. . . ."

Again, there was an eagerness in her laughter. "You miss the spectacles, Johnny. I wear them for effect. That dignified look, you know. It helps me when I feel the urge to get really severe with a student. . . ."

He said, "I think it's a big mistake," and he meant it.

She danced well, he discovered later. The top of her head came to the level of his chin and the scent of her perfume made him forget, for the moment, why he had come to Mulloy's in the first place.

Ann Corbin was easy to talk to and before he realized it, he learned why a girl as young, as lovely, was content to spend her evenings grading papers instead of going out nights. It was simply a case of her loyalty to her father, whose pension was inadequate to cover the expenses of his prolonged illness.

Johnny felt suddenly sorry for the girl. But the fact that she needed money was encouraging. He started to broach the subject of Duke, but when he looked into her excited eyes, he could not bring himself to it.

Johnny Marvin was having fun and some of his inner bitterness was ebbing. Ann had a way of dancing close to him, of smiling at just the right time, of letting him know that this night at Mulloy's was one of the high points of an otherwise drab existence. And each time she looked at him, he delayed the mention of why he had brought her here.

Then, it was over and they were driving home. Her shoulder was barely touching his and her head was back against the cushion, her eyes gently closed.

"This evening has meant a lot to me, Johnny. In more ways than one. . . ."

"Such as, Ann?"

"For one thing," she said dreamily, "I've felt young again." Then her eyes opened quickly and she was staring at him. "But most of all—for what I've learned about you. You've been hard to understand, Johnny. Somehow, I've had a feeling that you were bitter about something. But you really aren't. . . ."

"No," he said hollowly. "I guess not. . . ."

"I've seen you with Duke Dexter," the girl said quietly. "And . . . well, I've had the idea that you must be somewhat alike. But I was wrong." She flashed him a warm smile. "I apologize," she said.

HE WAS cold inside, for he knew what he must say. They were near the street where she lived. He steeled himself, then blurted. "About Duke, Ann. This race Saturday, is pretty important to him. . . ."

"Yes?" Her voice was strained.

"He can't run with a flunk in Lit." He watched the color drain from her face, the understanding come into her eyes. She knew, now, why he had asked her out in the first place. And she was a girl with intense pride. But he had to finish it. "Listen . . . Duke needs some special tutoring before the race. He's willing to pay a hundred dollars."

Ann Corbin's voice was flat, listless. "In other words, you're trying to bribe me. You think that just because I'm desperately in need of money. . . ."

"What difference does it make?" He was angry, now, without knowing why. "Both of us know what it means to be broke. And it would be an easy hundred. All you have to do is . . ."

"All I have to do," Ann finished for him, "is forget everything I've ever been taught." She was staring at him, lips trembling, humiliation in her eyes. "I . . . I think I can understand a lot of things, now. You want me to take Duke's money just the way *you're* taking it yourself."

They had reached Ann Corbin's home. The girl opened the door, climbed out. For an instant, she turned to look at him again. "I'm really sorry for you, Johnny. . . ." Then she was gone.

He watched her go and his forehead was lined with thought. Then he sighed, heavily, began to drive back toward the Sigma house. He tried to forget the humiliation that had been in her eyes. He tried to forget, too, that she was sorry for him. First, Sam Beloin. Then, Ann Corbin. How crazy could people get?

Duke was waiting for him. "Well?" Duke demanded.

"She wouldn't listen," Johnny Marvin said.

Duke glowered. "I don't like it, Johnny."

"That's too damned bad," Johnny flared.

Duke studied him a long time. "I've got one other angle. The department head is a pretty ambitious guy. He might listen to reason—especially if he thought there might be a chance of getting the Dexter library collection. It's a long shot, but worth a try."

Again Johnny Marvin was trembling. "It's your baby, Duke. But don't involve Ann Corbin. Leave her out of it."

Duke nodded knowingly, and the look in his eyes was one of insinuation. "So that's it. You must have had quite a time tonight."

Johnny's temper leaped. But he held himself in check. He needed Duke Dexter. So he let the remark pass. He watched Duke go downstairs to make the phone call.

When Duke came back, he was grinning arrogantly again. "He went for it the way a rat goes for cheese. . . ."

"You promised him the Dexter library?"

"Why not? If I decide to forget my promise, what can he do about it?"

Again, Johnny Marvin had an impulse to start swinging. But he choked it down as Duke said, "Look, Johnny—we shouldn't flare up this way. You take care of Ellis Saturday and I'll take care of you. Okay?"

"Okay," Johnny said, glad to have it ended.

The plan was working out fine, Johnny Marvin told himself as he joined the group of cross-country harriers at the starting line. Duke Dexter had let it slip to the papers that Johnny had turned in a sensational time trial. And because Johnny had once been the champion, the story was easy to believe. Runners from a dozen teams were eyeing him nervously.

Sam Beloin came up, his face a study in emotional contrasts. He said, "There seems to have been quite a scramble after Duke got that sour Lit grade. . . ."

"Such as?" Johnny said, flushing.

"I get it through the grapevine that Ann Corbin had it out with the department head. And when she threatened to go to the Prexy, he fired her for insubordination. If it's true, then someone's gonna have an awful conscience. . . ."

Sam Beloin turned away, left Johnny standing there, temples hammering. If the story was true, then Ann Corbin was a fool. She had a job which she needed. Why, then, hadn't she left well enough alone? And why should he be worrying about her? But he *was* worrying and it upset him.

The starter said, "Runners—into your lanes!"

It was suddenly very quiet. Up on the hill, the home-coming crowd was in the stadium, screaming for their teams. Johnny smiled, cynically. Within less than half an hour, that same crowd would be standing, would be shouting, "Dexter! Dexter! Dexter!"

The teams were lined up, now. Johnny was the first man. Duke was right behind him. Joe Ellis was in an outside lane. Duke Dexter leaned forward urgently.

"Get the jump," he whispered. "Draw him out. . . ."

Again, resentment blazed within Johnny. Why was he getting so jumpy? This thing was going to be a breeze. Three blistering miles, then he'd drop out. And the rest of his education would be paid for. Yet he was worrying. He was as edgy as he'd ever been during the days when he was champion.

The gun sounded. The runners leaped ahead. Johnny Marvin, lost in contemplation, was neatly sandwiched by the men around him. He tried to move up, but the runners were bunched thickly in front of him. He'd have to wait, now, until they reached the plowed ground, a quarter of a mile ahead.

Duke Dexter moved up to Johnny's elbow, anger in his eyes. "What do you think I'm payin' you for?" he demanded. "You're loafing!"

Johnny flushed, tried to move ahead. But he was in the middle of the pack and men were pouring up on either side, squeezing him back. Ellis, running easily, was a yard in front of the pack.

They held it that way until they reached the plowed field. Then the field began to widen out. The clods were frozen and it was a tricky task, picking your way across the furrows without ruining an ankle. Johnny turned on a burst, but one ankle gave way. Scowling, he slowed his stride again. He'd have to wait until later, to make his bid for the lead.

He was in twentieth place now as he came to the edge of the field. He was running along a narrow lane that wound through an apple orchard. The field was beginning to string out somewhat. Joe Ellis, of State, had rounded a curve, somewhere ahead, was completely out of sight. Then a Tech jersey appeared at Johnny's elbow.

Duke's face was white with anger. "What's eating you?" he demanded.

JOHNNY MARVIN'S second wind had come to him. He began to move up. Then, making the turn, he came to a place where two lanes intersected. It was the mile post. Coach Sam Beloin was sitting there in a jeep. He looked at Johnny, surprise in his eyes. But there was something else. There was a look of warmth.

"Six minutes, Johnny. Good boy. . . ."

Fury hit Johnny Marvin then. Sam Beloin was a fool. *He thinks you've changed your mind, Johnny. He thinks you're running your own race, that you've changed your plans. But he's wrong Johnny, and you know it. . . .*

Almost blindly, Johnny Marvin began to run. He leaned forward, letting the weight fall upon the balls of his feet. He increased the rhythm of his pumping arms, swung wide to pass a cluster of men from many teams. Then he saw Joe Ellis, twenty yards ahead, moving easily, confidently.

Johnny closed the gap fast, but the pressure was beginning to tell on him. His lungs were rising and falling and the air was beginning to sear his throat as he expelled each breath. He could keep up this pace for another mile or two. Then something would have to give.

The road straightened, crossed a small footbridge. And there, the jeep was waiting again. But this time, when Sam Boloin called the time, the warmth had gone out of his eyes. Again, Johnny Marvin was infuriated. What difference did it make how Sam Beloin felt, how anyone felt?

Then, another annoyance crept over him as he began to think of Ann Corbin. He had seen the warmth go out of her eyes, too, just as it had gone out of Sam's. And he knew that both of them felt sorry for him.

Why should they feel sorry for you, Johnny? You've got what you want, haven't you? Let the rest of the boys have their glory. They can't spend it, can they? Money talks, Johnny. And Duke Dexter's putting up the money. Remember?

Instinctively, Johnny looked back. Duke Dexter was a hundred yards behind. Running easily now, saving himself for the last mad rush up the hill, for the last lap around the cinder track inside the stadium.

And there was a look in Duke's eyes that Johnny had seen many times before. A look of arrogance. Johnny had seen it last two nights ago. Right after Duke had returned to the room after talking to the department head. That was the night Duke had said, *If I decide to forget my promise, what can he do about it?*

Prespiration began to crawl across Johnny Marvin's body. Two nights ago, Duke had been secretly laughing at the department head for believing what he'd told him. Duke had used the man and now he was through with him. He had tried the same with Ann Corbin, and now, where was Ann? Her pride had meant more to her than money and she no longer had a job.

Johnny's skin was clammy now. It suddenly occurred to him that Duke Dexter had been using him, just as he had used all the others. But would Duke discard Johnny, once the race was over and he no longer needed him? Bitterly, Johnny realized that this was true. Why not? Why shouldn't he? It was in character.

This, then, was the thing that Sam Beloin had tried to tell him. Sam, who had said, *Johnny, I feel sorry for you. Someday, you'll remember that you ran your guts out for a grade A heel. . . .* Sam Beloin had known, but he had been too big a man to beg, too big to tell Johnny Marvin the truth. And now, Johnny was finding it out for himself.

Another thought occurred to him. Suppose Duke *did* offer to continue paying

him if he kept his part of the bargain. Would he want to accept it now? He knew, then, that he wouldn't. Duke had blinded him, had capitalized upon his bitterness. But he could not go on. There were some things that money could not buy. Ann Corbin had shown him the way—but he had been to bitter, until now, to understand.

A lot of things were happening to him then. For a moment, his mind was filled with confused memories. The title he had won five years ago . . . the bitterness, in coming back to find that many of them had forgotten . . . the money that Duke was giving him . . . the job Ann Corbin had sacrificed. . . .

Then his mind became crystal clear. He studied the faces of the men around him. They were watching him carefully, waiting for him to make his bid for the lead. They were in awe of him because he was a champion. And suddenly, he felt like a champion. This one he wanted to win.

Johnny Marvin dropped his pace and men began to drift past him again. He kept falling back, but it was easier, now, for he was in his best stride again. He was running easily, legs scissoring smoothly, arms pumping in perfect rhythm.

Then Duke was beside him. Duke, fury blazing in his eyes. "What're you tryin' to do?" Duke panted. "You . . ."

"I'm trying to win," Johnny Marvin said. He felt loathing for the man, and contempt. "From now on, Duke, you're on your own. . . ."

"Blast you! What about that dough you're . . ."

Johnny felt exhilaration for the first time in years. Money, no longer, seemed important. He was freed of its restrictions. He would have to get a job if he expected to finish his education. But he would feel pride in doing it. He would be able to look Sam Beloin in the eye. And Ann Corbin, if it wasn't too late. The thought of being too late with Ann frightened him.

Duke Dexter, face aflame, moved ahead. But Johnny Marvin held his slower pace through the rest of the third mile, then well into the fourth. Again, he came to a stretch of open field that led down to the highway in the valley. He counted quickly. He was in twenty-second place, a good quarter of a mile back.

For an instant, a wave of hopelessness came over him. He was twenty-six, and running against kids. He'd never make up the gap. But strangely, the desire to do so was like a blazing fire within him.

Johnny started to move past a kid in a green jersey. The kid met his challenge. They loped down the hill, stride for stride. They passed half a dozen men and when they reached the highway, they were only three hundred yards back of Joe Ellis and Duke Dexter, who were battling it out for the lead.

Johnny Marvin's chest was beginning to burn. But his challenger dropped back, unable to continue. He felt a surge of optimism. Then he was moving past a Southeastern runner. The man recognized him, frowned, but picked up the challenge.

Again, it was a duel of wills. The two runners swept past a cluster of men. They were driving, now, picking them up, putting them down. And as before, it was Johnny's challenger who broke stride first.

At the foot of the hill below the stadium, Johnny Marvin had moved into third. Joe Ellis, already beginning the climb, looked strong. Duke Dexter, three yards back, was beginning to waver. Johnny Marvin bent forward, tried to constrict the fire in his chest, but it did not help. Then he hit the base of the hill, started his climb.

He kept his eyes down, avoiding the two men in front of him. Each step was agonizing, each gasping breath a physical triumph. Then, from outside the stadium walls, crowds began to cheer. The ground

leveled off and when he looked ahead, he could see Ellis and Dexter, running abreast, entering the stadium gate. They were still ten yards beyond him. But after coming off the hill, Johnny Marvin felt as if he were flying.

He turned on a burst that carried him to within two yards of them as they moved onto the track. The capacity crowd was standing, now. But it wasn't for Dexter that they were calling. It was for him. For Johnny Marvin, running after a five-year layoff on a set of legs that were scarred from nineteen operations. He was the underdog and they were pulling him home. It came as a shock to him that after five years, they still remembered.

A quarter of a mile to go and he was all but finished. But when he saw Duke waver, when he saw Joe Ellis turn a fearful face behind him, he knew that they were almost finished, too. The rest of the field was far behind and it would be one of the three of them.

Johnny took the first turn in a daze, staggered precariously toward the inner rail. But the two leaders were staggering, too, and when they went wide, he came up to them on the inside.

They were pounding down the backstretch, almost abreast. Duke was in the middle. His eyes were pinpointed at the pupils. With one last lunge, Duke shoved over in front of Johnny, went sprawling.

The crowd screamed a warning. Johnny Marvin saw Duke try to get him. The fury that was within him gave him the strength to step over the fallen man. Then he was running a yard behind Joe Ellis.

They hit the turn, weaving, flailing, gasping. Johnny was a man in a dream, trying to run, unable to gain an inch. His vision fogged, blacked out, came back into focus again. Then they were off the turn and it was Johnny who was swinging wide, eyes on the tape only ten yards ahead.

He gathered himself, lunged, the man beside him forgotten. Then he left his feet in a headlong dive. The tape snapped across his chest and when he went down—and out—the crowd was screaming, "Marvin! Marvin! Marvin!"

When, later, he came out of it, his scarred legs were burning from where the cinders had raked them. Sam Beloin was bending over him, his eyes very bright.

Sam said, softly, "Good boy, Johnny. I see that you finally figured out what I was trying to tell you."

"Yeah," Johnny said. "I guess I did."

Sam said, "Listen to 'em yell, Johnny. Those cheers won't buy anything. But when you get older you'll remember them. Or maybe I'm talking in circles."

Johnny Marvin got shakily to his feet. The cheering increased. He glanced toward Duke Dexter, sitting sullenly beside the track. And for the first time in years, Johnny Marvin felt free.

Then he saw the girl pushing toward him. Ann Corbin, without glasses, now, her red gold hair streaming in the November wind. He caught the look in her eyes, the pride, the tenderness. His throat grew tight.

"No, Sam," he said. "You're not talking in circles. Not at all." Then he began to grin foolishly as he turned, again, to the girl who was moving toward him.

A NOVEL

By ROE RICHMOND

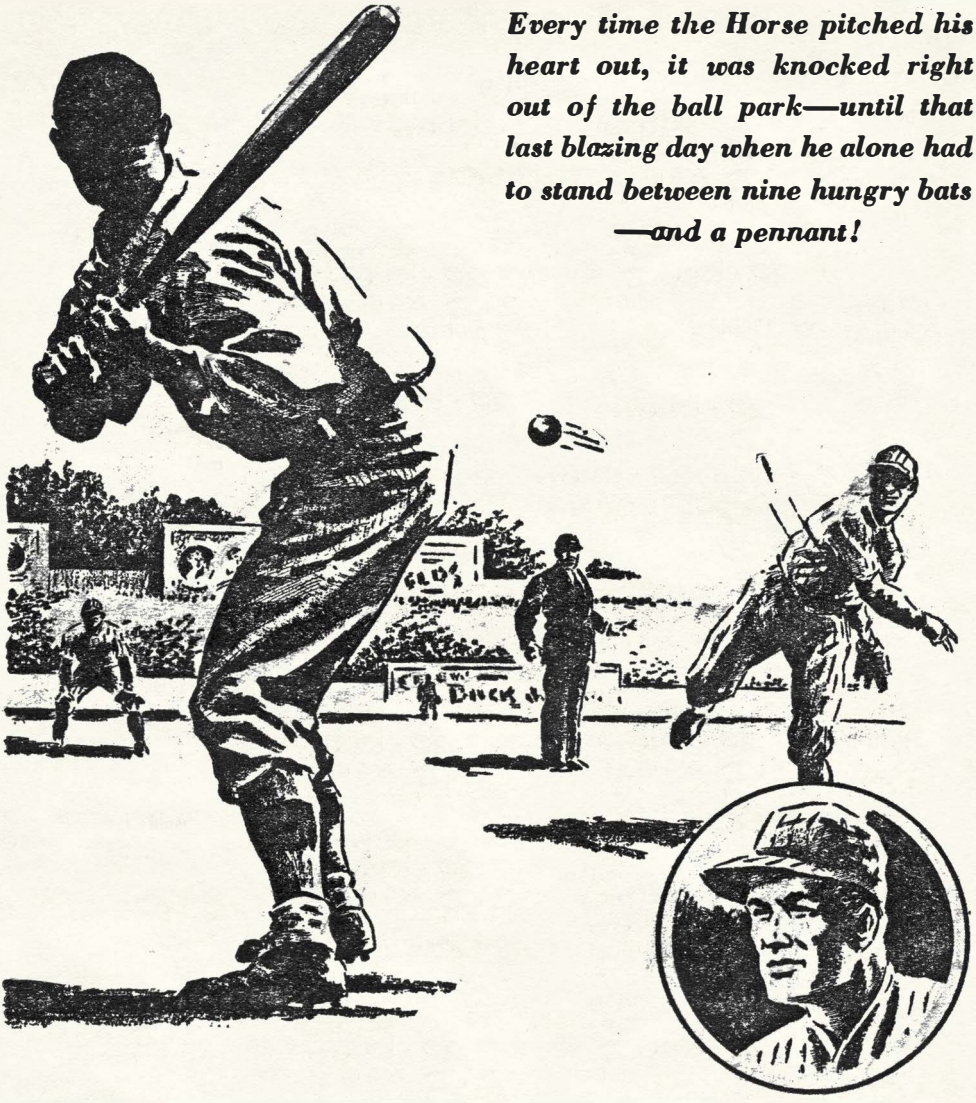
Harshany turned his fireball loose and threw the first one for a strike. . . .

SLUMP BUSTER

YOU can talk about your pitchers, but I'll string along with Harshany. You can have your Fellers and Blackwells and Newhousers, but I'll take the Horse. He was a character and a headache too, but I wish I had the Old Hoss today. Harshany had everything, but most of all he had control. Besides keeping the ball where he wanted to he could make the batters hit where he wanted them to hit. He was that good.

The Horse was always experimenting. Give him a lead and he was apt to fool around experimenting until it was gone. Then he'd go back to work; but when he had a few runs to coast on Harshany liked to see what different hitters would do to different kinds of pitches.

Of course he drove the rest of us crazy, and we cussed him out more than we did



Every time the Horse pitched his heart out, it was knocked right out of the ball park—until that last blazing day when he alone had to stand between nine hungry bats —and a pennant!

the players on opposing teams; but the Horse never seemed to mind. We liked the Horse, you couldn't help liking him. Keniscott, the third-baseman, was the only one who had no use for Harshany. They had been friends when they first came up, but something split them up so bad they didn't go back together again for years.

They didn't carry their feeling against one another onto the field much, though. Once in a while Harshany might pitch inside to right-handed pull hitters so they'd be sure to slam some tough ones at Keniscott, but Ken had a pair of hands that'd take anything short of bullets. To get even, Keniscott sometimes cut his throws close to the Horse's head. But outside of that they paid no attention to each other. We always thought they'd have it out some day, and I guess we kind of looked forward to it. They were both big and rugged, it would have been a beautiful fight.

To see Harshany you'd think he was a power pitcher, and he could have been with that fast one of his. But he was too

smart and had too much other stuff to rely on speed alone. Harshany was tall, broad in the shoulders, long in the arms, built strong and solid. He had the grinning face of a happy-go-lucky boy, bright blue eyes, and black hair shot with red. He got a lot of fun out of life, and with all his horsing around he was the best pitcher we had, and also one of the best in either league.

Keniscott was taller and leaner, loose and rangy, but tough as rawhide. He was bowlegged with a natural swagger, and he had the bleak ugly face of an Indian. Ken seldom smiled and had never laughed, at least since his rookie days. He was a great third-baseman, with the best pair of hands in the business and a rifle for an arm. He was a right-handed hitter with eagle eyes and terrific wrists, a batter to rank with the best of the top right-handers.

We had quite a club in those days. We hadn't won the flag yet, but we always finished right up there. It was just a matter of time and the breaks before we got into the Series money, everybody figured. And this year I'm telling about looked like the year.

We were strong down the middle, with Storey having his best season behind the plate. Square, compact, hard, and durable as a brick, Chip Storey was good for one hundred and fifty games a summer, and thought nothing of catching both ends of a double-header. Slim Hollis, the lathe-thin whip-limber shortstop, and Jock Rebel, the stocky firebrand second-baseman, formed a fine double-play combination around the keystone sack, and the fleet, smooth Carnevale could go get them with any center-fielder in the game.

The other positions were well taken care of, too. At first base we had the big blond giant, Alderson, and in right was brawny, rawboned Charley Coaker. Batting fourth and fifth, both were long-range left-handed clouters. Keniscott, playing third and hitting third, gave us our right-handed power, along with the sharp, scrappy Bocek in left field. It was a good outfit.

But as the season went on it was evident that the feeling between Harshany and Keniscott was higher and stronger than ever, and a feud like that can cut a ball club right down the center. It was hard to understand because they had been such inseparable partners when they came up from Texas. At that time rookies found the going pretty rough when they tried to break in. Ken and the Horse were no exceptions, but they could take it, and they could dish it out.

One day Rocco was throwing them up for batting practice. He was always hard on freshmen, and when Keniscott stepped in there Rock started shooting at his head. Ken had to hit the dirt three or four times and he was plenty burned. When Rock broke a curve over, Keniscott swung with all he had and let the bat go straight at the pitcher. Rocco had to jump fast to save himself some cracked shinbones. The bat went almost to second base. Rock went in after the batter on the run, and Keniscott walked out to meet him. They were just coming together when Harshany moved in.

The Horse caught Rocco by the shoulder and spun him all the way around. Rock roared like a bull and charged at Harshany flailing with both arms. Harshany ducked and swung a couple himself. Rocco's head snapped, and he landed on the back of his neck. Harshany was smiling pleasantly when we crowded in to break it up. Rock swore he would get both of them, but like most ball players' scraps nothing ever came of it.

Another day we had the pitchers practicing at covering first base on balls hit to the first-sacker. Every time Harshany covered, the boys tried to give him the works with their shoulders and elbows, hips and knees. The Horse took quite a

beating but it didn't seem to bother him much. Alderson had been fielding the grounders and flipping to the bag, but after a while he said he ought to do some running because he was overweight that spring. He was always overweight in the spring, but that's the first time I ever knew of his wanting to do any running that wasn't absolutely necessary.

I saw that he was aiming to knock Harshany clear into right field. The Horse got a jolting on every trip across the bag, but he was always twisting away and rolling off the impacts. Even then Harshany knew how to take care of himself. It was a bum toss that finally pulled the Horse way off balance and stretched him out helpless. Alderson grabbed at the chance and went crashing into the pitcher like a runaway locomotive. The collision sent Harshany tumbling down the foul line, and if he hadn't been so tough he might have been hurt bad. Alderson was still standing there laughing when Keniscott came tearing in like a blood-crazy Apache.

Ken slapped Alderson so hard it staggered him, and the cap flew off Al's blond head. He recovered and rushed the rookie third-baseman. Ken stiffened him up with a spearing left and whipped a right across. Alderson's yellow head jerked back a foot and then thumped the turf as he lit on his shoulderblades, legs flying high in the air. We hustled in to stop it but Alderson was out cold.

After that the boys let up on the two recruits. Rocco and Alderson were supposed to be the toughest guys on the club, and they didn't appear anxious to tangle again with the laughing Harshany and the grim-faced Keniscott.

That's the way they were that first year, the Horse and Ken, always together, always ready to fight for one another. They were a couple of wild young hellions too, but they were big-leaguers right from the start. Harshany won twenty-three games in the first season, and Keniscott belted the ball for a mark of .338.

THE break between Harshany and Keniscott, like so many breaks of that kind, grow out of woman trouble. It was over a showgirl named Nora Bray, a real handsome Irish colleen with rich black hair and sparkling blue eyes. Showgirls are all right to look at, but I hate to see any of my ballplayers go beyond that. It was Harshany who found her, of course, in a song-and-dance act at the Carlton Club. She was something to see all right, with a fine figure that matched her face, and a gay manner that went with the light in her eyes.

A large and pompous playboy with too much money and too many ideas was pawing at her one night when Harshany stepped in and slugged him, knocking him over one table and in under the next. The

Horse was about to be given the heave then, but Nora Bray came to his rescue. Her influence there was such that the moneyed party finally got the bounce instead of Harshany. Nora joined Harshany, and romance set in.

Soon after, I heard the Horse working on Keniscott in the clubhouse. "It'd do you good, you big jughead, to get off them Westerns and murder mysteries for a few nights and see some bright spots with us."

"I don't go for that junk," Keniscott said. "That's sucker stuff."

"You aren't even civilized," Harshany told him.

"If smotherin' in them lousy noisy nightclubs is bein' civilized I don't want any part of it," said Keniscott.

Harshany tried a different tack. "Nora wants to meet you, Ken."

"Why? Because I'm so pretty?" Keniscott said, looking more than ever like a sullen, disgusted Indian.

Harshany hid a grin. "No, because you're the strong silent type."

"Nuts," said Keniscott. "To you and to her."

I was congratulating myself on having a good, sensible, level-headed third-sacker when I heard that the three of them were going around together, Nora Bray with Harshany and Keniscott. Being a female she had to start playing them off against each other. It took her quite awhile to get to Keniscott, but once she got inside his guard he was done.

Now I'm not saying Nora was a bad girl or anything like that, but she was flirty, flighty, butterfly-brained, and that devil in her blue eyes didn't mean any good for the man who got mixed up with her. But I couldn't say too much because the Horse went on winning for us, and Ken kept on playing a great third base and breaking down fences all around the circuit.

That was their second year with the club, and the three of them were together most of the time when we were at home. Next season she started alternating between them. The trio was dissolved, and the Horse and Ken began drifting apart. It didn't affect their playing but it hurt the general spirit and morale to have two old friends separated like that.

By their fourth year up the boys weren't speaking to one another at all. At the end of the season everyone was surprised when Nora married Keniscott instead of Harshany.

The funny thing was that Keniscott always acted as if he was the loser instead of the winner in that deal. He had always been quiet but that summer after his marriage Ken got so he hardly ever talked at all. He just grew darker and colder and gloomier, withdrawn into himself, morbid and brooding. But he led the league with an average of .377, and also in runs batted in and homers. So I couldn't kick and neither could the boys.

Harshany didn't change at all. He was still smiling and irrepressible, light-hearted, merry and boyish, the life of the clubhouse, the pullman cars, and the hotels. The only thing that worried me about the Horse was his habit of experimenting on the mound when we were in the lead. But he never pitched away games in doing that, although he sometimes made them much too close for comfort.

When the mood was on him Harshany would feed every enemy batter something to make him hit toward third, but Keniscott just scowled all the blacker, dug his cleats in, and came up with almost everything except the blasts that went for base hits. The harder Ken worked the broader Harshany grinned, but about all he accomplished was to let Keniscott set a new major league record for handling chances at third base.

In the second year of his wedded life Keniscott started hitting the bottle a bit. Everybody knew it, but Ken was always all right at game time and it didn't hurt

his play, so there was no cause to discipline him. He still took everything within human reach in the field, and he kept powdering the pellet at bat. That was the sixth season Ken and the Horse were with us. I tried to talk to Ken, but by that time he wasn't speaking to anybody if he could help it and nobody could talk to him. We wound up in second place that fall. We would have had the pennant if Slim Hollis hadn't been spiked and Charley Coaker hadn't run into the right-field wall and two pitchers hadn't come up with sore arms in September.

Their seventh season is the one I want to tell you about. It was another battle all the way between the Lions and our club. This time the injuries didn't hit us, and we stayed right with them through the heat of August into a golden September. All summer I had the feeling that this was the year, it had to be now or never, this was the big chance.

The boys were going great for me. Harshany was having his best year, and all of them had been good ones for him. Keniscott was still boozing some but the stuff hadn't begun to destroy his effectiveness yet. Ken was leading the team at bat, with Charley Coaker and Alderson close on his heels. Slim Hollis and Jock Rebel were reeling off more double plays than ever, and Carnevale was covering acres in centerfield. Chip Storey was proving himself the finest receiver in the big time, and Bocek was more than adequate in left.

It was so close that when we moved into the Stadium for a final three-game series with the Lions the whole outcome was hanging on it. The team that took two games would have the flag nailed to the mast. It was like an extra World Series, and the high triple-tiered stands and broad open bleachers were packed full.

We took the first one, 3-2. Bocek was aboard when Keniscott hit one into the left-field seats. Then, after the Lions had tied it up, Charley Coaker homered high into the upper-deck of the right-field stands. So we beat them at their own game that afternoon.

But on the second day the Lions exploded their mighty and vaunted power, wrecking us under an 8-3 barrage. Polk and Gorman clouted drives into the right-field crowd, Lambert laced one into the lower-deck in left, and Mantle tripled to the flagpole in center, among other lighter blows.

That left the championship riding on the last game. Everybody figured our backs were broken and we were all done. I was afraid they were right, although I wouldn't have admitted it under torture. I was sure glad I had Harshany to throw at them. The Lions held no terror for the Horse, and if they did beat him they would know they had been in a ball game.

Sauce for the Goose 2

THAT evening, after the second game, I was sitting in the lobby with some of the players and sports writers when a boy paged Harshany. "My public," grinned the Horse, shaking his red-tinged black head as he stood up to go. We all smiled and watched him walk away, tall and graceful and easy, well-dressed and still boyish, and there was fondness and respect in all our faces. Heads turned to follow him as he passed. There was a certain quality in Harshany, the mark of greatness maybe, the look of a champion.

This part of the story is his. I didn't know about it for some time afterward.

Nora Bray Keniscott answered when Harshany phoned the room number the boy had given him. She was in trouble and afraid, and wanted him to come right up. Harshany didn't want to and told her

so frankly. She came back with the remark that if he wanted to win tomorrow he'd better come. Harshany went with reluctance and misgiving.

Nora was alone in the room, and looked very upset. The bloom had gone from this Irish rose, Harshany noticed. Her face had a hard, worn aspect, the warm twinkle of the blue eyes had become a cold light, the clean lines of chin and throat were blurred, the once-luscious mouth had thinned and tightened. She was holding a tall drink and her hand wasn't steady. She waved the glass toward a blood-stained towel on the table.

"What'd you do, put a knife into him?" Harshany asked.

"Don't be a damn fool," Nora said, her voice as harsh as her face. "He hit somebody."

Harshany laughed. "He probably had a good reason to. There must be a lot of guys he ought to hit."

"And you're the first one!"

"That's right," Harshany agreed soberly. "For ever introducing him to you. Where's he gone?"

"I don't know," Nora said. "I'm afraid he's gone to get drunk."

"Afraid?" He eyed the highball she had. "Oh, I get it. You're afraid on account of that slice of Series money."

"You're an awful bright boy, Harshany," she sneered, taking a long drink.

"Who's the punk he cuffed?"

"He used to be my agent," Nora said. "We were up here having a quiet drink when Ken came in."

"Yeah, I know," Harshany said dryly.

"Ken knocked him down, and he bled all over the place."

"Good," said Harshany. "Surprised to see his blood is red, though. What do you want me to do about it?"

"Find him, before he gets too drunk."

"You've kept him half-mulled for two years," Harshany told her, "and now all of a sudden you're afraid. Why is tonight so different from all the other nights?"

"The game tomorrow, you dope!" she said viciously.

"Oh yes, you want that share of the World Series dough, don't you? But I don't know where to look for the Indian. I don't go around to those night spots any more."

"You're so noble!" Nora said. "Listen, Sammy's last name is Shiller. Does that mean anything to you, wise guy? Ken went out with him."

"Ah, they made up," said Harshany. "Did Sammy kiss Ken too?"

Nora swore. "You get cornier all the time. Haven't you ever heard of Sammy Shiller?"

"Sure, he was your agent." Harshany smiled at her.

"Get out!" she yelled suddenly. "Beat it, you bum, before I throw this drink in your stupid grinning face!"

"You wouldn't waste good liquor like that," protested Harshany. Then he turned serious. "Don't you know better than to have Shiller up here? No, of course you don't."

"I didn't know he was a big gambler now," Nora said. "I didn't know it until he got up here."

"Where'd they be apt to go?" Harshany asked.

She named a list of places. She said desperately, "Try everywhere! You know what it'll mean if Ken is seen drinking with Shiller tonight, and tomorrow he boots away the ball game!"

"Sure, it'll mean the end of your big-league meal-ticket, baby."

"I'm not thinking of me, I'm thinking of Kenny."

"You're a little late," Harshany said. "For all I know you're betting on the Lions and you framed the whole thing."

Nora's glass was empty now and she hurled it at him. Harshany ducked and the glass shattered against the wall. He raised a warning finger at her. "You'll be

getting thrown out of this room, kid."

She sank down on the edge of the nearest bed and held her hands to her face. "Get out," she sobbed. "Leave me alone."

"I'll find him," Harshany promised. "I'll bring him back alive—I hope. If Shiller hasn't poisoned him or something."

Harshany started the long, expensive, hopeless search through the myriad canyons of night-time New York. He had to go alone because he didn't dare tell anybody about it, not even his most trusted teammates. Keniscott was a lone wolf on the club anyway. His sullen manner had soured the others against him, and they'd be likely to think the worst of him in such a situation. In spite of his joking jibes at Nora the Horse knew how deadly serious the matter was. It could mean not only the loss of tomorrow's game and the pennant, but the ruination of Keniscott's entire career.

Well, thought Harshany grimly as he taxied from place to place, I got the Indian into this, and it's up to me to get him out.

It was very late, and the Horse was ready to give up when the weary quest ended at last. They were in a low dive where, by that time of morning, nobody would recognize anyone else.

Sammy Shiller heaved himself up, spilling bottles and glasses, shouting for a bouncer. Pivoting quickly, Harshany let go with his left and bounced Sammy from the wall onto the floor. Keniscott came up swinging then. Harshany whirled back and clipped Ken under the chin with a right. Keniscott was sagging when the Horse caught him and dragged him toward the door.

A big burly brute in a soiled white jacket clamped onto the Horse with a bone-crushing grip. "Hey, chum, what goes?" he asked in a low hoarse voice. "You can't come in here and treat our customers like that, chum."

"Friend of mine," panted Harshany. "Got to get him home."

"You sure you ain't goin' to rub this jerk out in some alley?"

Harshany shook his head and thrust a ten-dollar bill at the giant. "My best friend," Harshany said. "His wife's looking for him with a whole squad of coppers. You don't want them in here."

The big man took the ten and shook his clipped head solemnly. "No, bud. I can't stand coppers."

"I'll take good care of this guy," Harshany said.

"What about the other one?"

"You can have him."

"Come again, chum," said the big man. "Only next time tell me who you want flattened. It looks better and it'll save your knuckles a lot."

Harshany got Keniscott into the cab and questioned the driver about hotels. He couldn't take Ken back where the club was staying. The cabby drove to a smaller second-rate hotel and helped the Horse get Ken upstairs into a room with twin beds. Harshany tipped him generously and said good-night. They weren't known in this place and he had signed false names at the desk. Harshany stripped the Indian's clothes off and rolled him into one of the beds.

It was almost daybreak when Harshany crawled into the other bed. It didn't seem at all possible that Keniscott could ever play ball that afternoon, but he was going to if it killed him, Harshany resolved. Ken had to play if he was going to stay in baseball. Lots of people must have seen and recognized him with Sammy Shiller last night.

Harshany was tired, but he wasn't worrying about himself. "Strong as a horse and almost as smart," he used to say. Harshany snorted and settled down to sleep.

I WAS worried that morning when Ken and the Horse didn't show up, especially since some of the New York writers

had taken sly cracks at Keniscott in their daily columns. They didn't come right out with anything, just hinted around that Ken might not play today and if he did he probably wouldn't be much help to us. It was a relief to me when Harshany phoned about ten o'clock, saying they were together, everything was all right, they'd see us at the Stadium. I felt better after that but I was still worried and troubled. This one meant a lot to me and to all of us. We had waited a long time to get into a World Series. Now it looked as if something might trip us right on the threshold.

But when I got out to the clubhouse they were there, already getting into their uniforms. I looked them over closely—I couldn't see anything wrong with either of them. They weren't cut or marked up any. Keniscott looked as good as he ever did those days, and I wasn't able to catch any smell of whiskey on him. He had one of those dark, tough faces that never showed the effects of liquor anyway. The Horse told me he'd explain everything later.

"Nothing to worry about, Ed," he said. "The Indian and I just got back together again a little."

I looked at him.

"What were those writers raving about in the morning papers?" I asked.

"Oh, they think Ken's marriage is on the rocks and he's going to drink himself out of baseball, I guess."

"Is it?"

Harshany smiled. "It is if I can put it there."

"Well, it'd be nice to have Ken acting human again," I said.

"Yeah, that's what I mean," said the Horse.

The Lions were starting Granger, the great left-hander, against us and he was always poison. I was thankful I had Harshany, a good guy to have on your side anywhere and any time, but those Lions were bad for any right-hander to go against. They had the old original Murderers' Row at that time, and they were murderous right down the line, and one of the toughest crews that ever walked on cleats.

Making out our list for the chief umpire I felt a justifiable pride in it and the knowledge that, with any kind of breaks, we had an outfit that could knock the Lions out of the championship and beat the brains out of any club in the league. Writing the names down, I knew it was the finest team I ever had, and if I couldn't win the flag with them I'd probably never win it . . . Rebel 2b, Bocek lf, Keniscott 3b, Coaker rf, Alderson 1b, Carnevale cf, Hollis ss, Storey c, Harshany p.

Keniscott always took it easy in practice but today he took it easier than usual, I thought. Still he seemed to be all right, and he hit some long balls in the batting drill. I figured if he wasn't right Harshany would let me know anyway. The Horse didn't warm up as long as he generally did, but I never had to worry much about him. It was hot and bright for late September, and Harshany always knew what he was doing. . . . There must have been close to seventy thousand people in the park at game time.

Granger, slim and graceful with all kinds of stuff, set us down in order in the first. Rebel bounced out to Lambert. Bocek pulled one past third but Jumping Joe Digan came up with it and threw him out. Keniscott was called out on strikes, a thing that seldom happened to him. But against Granger it could happen to anybody, so I didn't pay much attention to it.

Harshany got by the Lions in their half just as well although they hit the ball harder. Combs drove one over first but Alderson grabbed it and tossed to the Horse for the putout. Koenig grounded out to Rebel at second. Big Jack lofted a towering fly which Coaker caught in deep right.

We fared no better in the second inning although Charley Coaker made Frank Clark go a long ways back in center to pull down his drive. Granger got Alderson on strikes, and Koenig threw Carnevale out at first.

Harshany worked carefully on Mantle but Bob lined one to right. Lucky for us it went straight at Coaker and Charley took it almost in his tracks. The powerful Gorman got a good piece of one, but Johnny Rebel knocked it down and flipped to Anderson in time. The Lion coaches were getting on Harshany about being so lucky, but Harshany just gave them the old horse laugh. Lambert fouled back of the plate and Chip Storey caught it near the foot of the stands.

Slim Hollis started the third with the first hit of the afternoon, a hard bouncing single between third and short. But Lambert trapped Storey's skipper and threw to second. Koenig took it on the fly, and relayed it to Gorman for the double-play. Harshany tapped to Granger and Herb tossed him out.

The Lions, burning at being held hitless so far, were giving Harshany the business—but they might as well have saved their breath. Joe Digan hit through the middle and it looked safe. Slim Hollis streaked over to glove it behind second and snap his peg to the stretching Alderson. Digan did some kicking on the decision, but he was out. Markland slashed one toward right, but Jock Rebel scooped it and nipped him at first. Harshany threw three fast strikes past Granger, and three scoreless innings were over. Only nine men had batted on either side.

"They haven't hit a ball toward left field yet," somebody said on the bench.

I checked back in my mind and discovered this was true. But it wasn't very unusual for the Lions, with all those left-handed pull hitters. Most of their blows went to the right side anyway.

"Let's get something started here," I told the boys. "Head of the list again. What do you say, Jocko?"

"Yeah, get me a run or two, you guys," grinned Harshany. "That's all I need—I hope!"

Jock Rebel nodded grimly and went up to face the slender southpaw in the top of the fourth. Waiting patiently, Rebel worked to a three-two count, fouled off a couple, finally walked. I put on the sacrifice and Bocek laid one along the third-base line. Digan got him nicely but Rebel was on second, halfway home, with one out.

Keniscott went up and set himself squarely, a dark, stolid, emotionless figure in the batter's box. Ken was always strong in the clutch and I figured him to get hold of one now and give it a ride. But Granger used all his craft and cunning on him and Keniscott struck out again, swinging this time. He didn't look quite right up there today, but I couldn't put my finger on the trouble. I glanced at Harshany, but the Horse wasn't looking my way.

With two out it was up to Charley Coaker. Charley got his club on one solid and I thought it was going into the right-field stands, but Polk went back and caught it with his shoulders against the wall. And we still didn't have a run.

It was the front end of their order in the last of the fourth. Harshany got Clark on a sky-scraper to Charley Coakley, and Koenig on a fierce grounder to Jock Rebel. With two down Polk stepped to the plate, a huge awe-inspiring man, his great barrel of a body erect and easy on his slim legs, feet close together, bat far back. The crowd was roaring for him to hit one out of sight and break this scoreless struggle wide open.

Harshany pitched with care and caution. Polk never stirred until the count was two-two. Then he saw one coming that he liked and his big bulk twisted easily into a back-swing from which he unleashed all his tremendous power in a swift, shat-

tering stroke. The explosion rang loud and clear in the arena, and vast waves of sound thundered across the field as the crowd came up cheering and the ball rocketed high and far out over right field. Charley Coakley gestured helplessly and turned to watch the lofty flight of the sphere. Soaring to impossible heights, the ball descended majestically and disappeared at last into the upper-deck of the right-field stands. Polk trotted around the bases, touching his cap from time to time, shook hands with teammates and batboy, and ducked into the home dugout. The Lions led, 1-0.

Mantle hit one like a shot to right center, but Charley Coakley crossed fast and snared it on the run in front of our bullpen to retire the side. Harshany walked in, smiling wryly and shaking his head.

"What can you do with a guy like that?" said Harshany.

"Walk him every time," somebody muttered.

"Sure!" Harshany said. "With Mantle, Korman, and Lambert coming up behind him."

"Never mind that," I said. "Let's hit a few ourselves. One run isn't going to lick us."

"Not by a damn sight!" growled the boys.

Going into the fifth frame each club had only one hit, but theirs was a homer and ours was a single.

ALDERSON, our big, blond first-baseman, got to Granger for a sizzling single through the hole into right field. After Carnevale fouled a hit-and-run attempt I switched to the sacrifice. Carney bunted toward first. Gorman threw him out to Lambert, covering the bag, while Alderson went to second. Granger cut loose with a dazzling assortment to whiff Slim Hollis, and there were two gone.

Then Chip Storey came through with a clean smash over second base, and Alderson rounded third and raced Clark's throw to the platter. The peg from center was true but it bounced kind of high. Catcher Markland was reaching up for it when Alderson slid in hard and kicking, spilling Markland and skimming over the rubber untouched and safe. Markland was up like a cat to chase Storey back to first, but we had it tied up, 1-1.

Harshany tried to keep it going but the best he could do was fly deep to Mantle in left. But we all felt better with two more hits off Granger and that run up on the scoreboard.

Lou Gorman was the first batter in the Lions fifth, built like a blacksmith, rugged and solid on those big muscular legs of his. Lou laid the wood on one and pulled it screaming on a line past first base. Alderson, playing deep, got his mitt up just in time to keep the ball from drilling his ribs. Alderson staggered back a couple of steps but held onto the horsehide. The Lions dugout opened up again on Harshany and his blind damn-fool luck. Harshany laughed at them.

"Get right on and ride, boys," Harshany said. "This horse has been ridden before, but he's never been broken."

Lambert, a slim, wiry, right-hand hitter, liked to pull them to left, but Harshany was pitching him outside all the time. He stroked a scorching grounder at Jock Rebel. It was too hot to handle, but Jock blocked it somehow and nailed Lambert at first.

Joe Digan was another righthander who made it rough for opposing third-basemen as a rule, but Harshany kept the ball away from him too, and Joe finally flied out to Charley Coaker in right-center. At the end of the fifth it was still even at 1-1.

In the dugout Alderson confronted Harshany with anger. "What you trying to do, Horse, get us killed out there? You keep pitching inside to those left-handers

and they'll either kill Jock and me or lose some more balls like Polk did."

Jock Rebel nodded. "You got the right-handers hitting bullets at us too. What's the idea, Horse? Outside to right-handers, inside to left."

Harshany regarded them with mild surprise. "Maybe my control isn't so good today."

"Don't give Gorman no more inside there," muttered Alderson. "He'll be tearing my head off if you do."

Charley Coaker laughed. "What you crabbing about, Al? I'm the boy that's doing the heavy duty out there in right."

"Forget that stuff," I told them, "and get some more runs."

I could see now that Harshany was making them all hit to right, and I had a pretty good idea why. I walked along the bench and sat down beside the Horse.

"If we get somebody on I'm going to lift Keniscott for a pinch batter," I said.

Harshany looked at me and shook his head, very grave and serious. "No, Ed, don't do that. You can't do that."

"Why not?" I demanded. "He's struck out twice. He's dead on his feet today."

"He's all right, Ed," Harshany said. "Leave the Indian in there. He'll come through yet."

"I should think it was bad enough pitching against the Lions without having to make them all hit to one field, Horse," I said, deliberately.

The blue eyes widened in his brown sweaty face. "What are you talking about, Ed? I don't get it."

"Never mind," I said. "I guess I don't get it either."

"Don't yank Ken, though," Harshany pleaded. "I'll explain later."

"All right, son," I told him. "It's on your head, and your arm. The ball game and the pennant."

Harshany smiled at me. "Thanks, Ed. You know I'm stronger than any horse. And smarter than some mules—maybe."

"If you only had your control today it'd be a breeze," I said sadly.

"I know it," he said, solemn as a saint. "There'd be nothing to it if I had the old control."

I went back and sat down in my regular spot. Keniscott was rubbing his face and head with a water-soaked towel. He was gray and drawn under the tan, gaunt and haggard now, and the agony showed in his narrowed dark eyes. He must have suffered the tortures of the damned all afternoon, and I felt sorry for him even though I knew he might cost us the flag. The top of our list was up in the sixth and Ken was the third man. I knew he was dreading it like a condemned prisoner dreads the chair.

I placed my hand on his damp shoulder and felt the nervous muscles twitch in under my fingers. "Don't you feel good, Ken?" I asked.

"I'm all right," he said, sullenly.

"Do you want to bat this time?"

"Why not?" he almost snarled at me. Then he forced a laugh. "Sure, that left-hander can't strike me out all day, Ed."

Johnny Rebel tried to win another free ticket from Granger, but this trip Herb caught a corner with the third strike and Rebel came back to sit down. Bocek looped a soft single into center and we still had a chance to start something, although it was a thin one the way Keniscott had been beating the breeze today.

To the Victor 3

SICK and miserable as he was, the Indian still looked tough and dangerous digging in there at the plate. I flashed the steal sign and Bocek got a good start and went down fast. Severeid's peg was accurate but chest-high to Lambert, and Bo slid in under and hooked the bag be-

fore he could get down with the ball.

I don't know whether Granger eased up a little on Keniscott, or perhaps Ken's eyes cleared and sharpened and his reflexes quickened up. At any rate Keniscott lashed into one, and lined it humming into the left-field corner. Bocek came over standing up and Ken slid safely into second. Harshany looked at me, nodding and grinning happily, and I smiled back at him. I was proud of the Indian, too. Feeling the way he did it took a lot of guts just to stand in there against a pitcher like Granger.

Charley Coaker, our big muscle-man, unloaded a ringing line drive to right. Polk fielded it fast and made a beautiful throw to the pan, but Keniscott went into Markland like a battering-ram. They were both down in a rolling, thrashing tangle across the rubber. We all thought Ken was out and the ump's arm was jerking up when the ball came trickling out of the billowing dust. The umpire spread his palms flat to the ground then, and a long groan rumbled through the Stadium. Keniscott was safe, Coaker was on second base, and we led, 3-1.

Keniscott stumbled into the dugout, sobbing for breath and covered with dirt. The boys forgot he was a lone wolf, yelling and cursing at him with fond delight. Keniscott smiled weakly, and it was like the first faint ray of sunlight after months of darkness. There was a lump in my throat too large to swallow, and a funny smarting in my eyes. Harshany came along and threw his arms around the Indian's heaving shoulders, and everybody on the bench was grinning and jabbering like mad.

Alderson tagged one too, but Lambert leaped high to rob him and flicked the ball to Koenig barely in time to double Coaker off second. Even a break like that failed to dampen the spirit in our dugout. We were up, 3-1, and Keniscott was back with us again.

To sink the gaffs a little deeper in the furious Lions, Harshany fanned Markland and Granger in short order. Frank Clark popped a blooper to center, but Slim Hollis raced out and took it over his shoulder to close the sixth inning.

Granger came back stronger, swifter, sharper than ever, to stop us cold in the seventh. Carnevale struck out, Hollis bounced to Joe Digan, and Mantle made a sweet running catch of Storey's smack to left-center.

The worst of the big bad Lions was coming up in their seventh, and sixty-odd thousands were on their feet howling for revenge. Koenig cracked one back through the middle, but Jock Rebel came up with a spectacular barehanded stop and peg to rub him out at first.

Polk was up there, deadly at the dish, menace in every line of his vast hulking frame. Harshany, calm and quiet and cool under pressure, labored with assiduous care on the great one. But Polk laid into an inside pitch and whipped it past first base like a streak of lightning. The ball struck Alderson so hard it spun him around and hopped on into right field. Polk pulled up at first, and time was called for Alderson to massage his wounded thigh. Harshany walked over to first, and Alderson glared at him.

"Keep 'em away from those guys," snarled Alderson. "You oughta know better, Horse. They murder that inside stuff."

"That wasn't inside," protested the Horse.

"It was in enough," Alderson said.

"I can't pass 'em all," said Harshany, turning back to the hill.

For the third time Mantle belted one with the velocity of a high-powered rifle only to see it whistle into the glove of Charley Coaker in right field. Mantle came back from first saying, "If I had that Horse's luck I'd play the market instead of baseball."

Big, brawny Lou Gorman planted himself solid in the batter's box and eyed the Horse with cold vindictiveness. Harshany gave Lou everything he had but it wasn't enough. Gorman blasted a line drive off the bleacher wall in right center near the 407-foot mark. Polk scored all the way from first, and Lou went into third with a triple. Our margin was sliced to one run. Two out—and the tying score on third base.

Lambert was the batter, lean, dark and hungry for a hit. Harshany worked the outside corners, but even so Lambert pulled one over third on a vicious line. It carried curving into the second-tier of the left-field stands, foul by only a few feet. Harshany pitched him low and away—and lost him. Lambert walked to first.

Joe Digan stepped in, another wicked right-hand hitter. A curve failed to break outside as it should have. Digan fell on it with fiendish joy, and hooked it down the left-field line. Again the ball swerved just outside the foul pole and sank into the bottom-deck of the stands. Harshany studied Keniscott at third, shook his head wearily, and went back to duel with Digan, sniping at the outer edge of the plate. Jumping Joe waited with stern restraint, and drew another pass. The bases were full with two out, and the crowd was in a constant uproar.

Chip Storey strode out toward the mound to confer with Harshany. Markland had been easy the last time, but had hit the ball well on his first trip and was especially formidable in a pinch. It looked as if the Lions were going to bust the game wide open in characteristic manner. It was an awful spot for any pitcher to be in, even the Horse.

"I'm all right, Chip," Harshany told his catcher. "I was just missing the corners by a hair."

"I know it," Storey said. "But those righthanders hadn't oughta bother you so much, Horse."

Harshany grinned. "We'll stop 'em right here, Chip."

"Don't walk him, anyway," said Storey. "I'd rather see him hit it."

Harshany turned his fireball loose and threw the first one right by the batter for strike one. Harshany wasted another fast one, then came in with a sharp dipping curve. Markland fouled it off into the stands. The Horse curved him inside for ball two. Markland fouled a fast one and took another, running the count to three-and-two.

Harshany shook off the first sign, nodded at the second. Markland was ready for anything, and he went after that last one eagerly. But Harshany had summoned up enough extra speed to overpower Markland, and he swung a split-second late at that blinding fast ball. The inning was over, the Horse had hauled us out of it, and we still led, 3-2.

HARSHANY was the first man to bat in the eighth and the fans gave him quite an ovation. But the Horse went down swinging before Granger's paralyzing stuff. Jock Rebel rapped a long one nearly out to the flagpole, but the fleet, graceful Clark went back and made a sensational catch of it. Keniscott topped one toward short. Koenig came in fast, and made a superb play on the slow roller to catch the sick and tired Indian at first base.

Harshany struck Granger out again to open the last of the eighth. Clark hit one through second so hard it ripped the glove off Rebel's hand and went on for a single. Koenig bounced another savage single over Alderson's head into right field, and there were Lions on first and third with one out, and Polk coming up.

Polk connected with enough force for another homer, but it went a mile high and dropped short of the stands. Charley Coaker was waiting in under it, but too

deep to have any chance of throwing home. Clark counted with the tying run, and Koenig held at first. One on and two away.

Big rangy Mantle was up, and this time he wasn't to be denied. Three times he had lined to Coakley in right. This trip he shifted his sights to centerfield, and rifled a terrific drive far over Carnevale's head. It bounced way to the wall near the 461-foot sign. Koenig scored from first, and Bob Mantle rounded third bent on going all the way.

The third-base coach finally flagged Mantle down as Slim Hollis took Carnevale's throw and pivoted toward the diamond. Mantle tore back toward third base, and the alert Hollis fired the ball at that bag. Keniscott took it and whirled to meet the runner squarely. Mantle smashed into him full tilt, and they sprawled across the bag in a swirl of dust. The Indian was only half-conscious but the ball was clamped tight in his hand, Mantle was out and the inning finished. The Lions were up now, 4-3.

Harshany ran up from backing the play and helped Keniscott to his feet. They walked in together and Ken was in a bad way, dazed and groggy, sick enough to lie down and die right there. It was the ninth inning, and we had to get at least one run or it was all over and the flag and the Series were gone.

I thought we were done then. The boys had put up a grand fight, but the Lions had too much dynamite. They were just too good, that's all. You could stop some of them, but never all of them. Sooner or later they exploded in your face and it was all over.

But my boys weren't done yet. Strong-armed Charley Coaker blistered the ball down the right-field line for a double, and our dugout was like a den of wild animals. Alderson got the wood on one enough to lift a long high one to right. Polk caught it easily, but Coaker moved to third after the catch. Granger bore down with cold fury and whiffed Carnevale for the second out.

It was all up to Slim Hollis then. The long, lithe shortstop stood in there, loose and graceful, a real money player. Granger poured everything he had at him. Slim stepped and swung cleanly, slamming a solid driving single over short into left-field. Charley came across with the tying run, and it was even at 4-4.

Chip Storey, hard and square as a brick, set his spiked shoes at the plate. For the second time that afternoon Chip delivered in a crisis, hitting a long, low liner to left center. It skipped clear to the bleacher wall beyond the 415-foot marker. Clark recovered and threw to Koenig as Slim Hollis swept around the bases with smooth greyhound speed. It was close at home but Koenig's quick relay was a little out of line. As Markland reached into the diamond for it Slim Hollis hit the dirt in a reckless slide, hooking behind the catcher in a storm of dust, and dragging his left toe across the rear of the rubber. Storey was on second, and we were ahead 5-4.

I looked at Harshany as he peeled off his jacket. "Pinch hitter?" I asked him.

The Horse smiled and shook his head. "Over my dead body," he said softly. "You said this was on my head, remember?"

Harshany was a good batter for a twirler, but I would have let him go if he couldn't hit a lick. He got hold of one good, too, slicing an outside curve to right field, but Polk made a fancy running catch on it. We went into the last of the ninth leading by one run.

Lou Gorman was up, looming big and immovable as the Rock of Gibraltar. When Lou turned on the first pitch and pulled it foul past first base at a mile-a-minute clip, Alderson started to holler at Harshany. Everybody was surprised then as Keniscott asked for time and walked in

to speak to the Horse. I learned afterward what the Indian said:

"Don't cover me any more, Horse. Pitch like you had a third-baseman now."

So Harshany pitched away from Gorman for the first time that day, Lou laced a grounder at Slim Hollis in the short-field, and Slim threw him out.

With the right-handed Lambert up, Harshany pitched him tight to the hands, and he was so surprised to see one inside that he missed it by inches. He hit the next one but only got a little piece of it. Keniscott threw him out.

Joe Digan was looking for something inside that he could pull into the left-field seats and tie the score, but Harshany curved him wide and low until the count was two and two. Then the Horse reared back, kicked high, and came down with a blazing fast ball on the inside. Handcuffed as he was by it, Digan took a healthy swing, but his bat only flailed the air.

There it was—the ball game, the pennant, and a shot at our first Series.

IN THE clubhouse I saw Alderson, Rebel and Coaker draw Harshany aside.

"But what the hell were you trying to do, Horse?" they wanted to know. "Pitching that way to those sluggers! They never hit a ball toward left until the last inning. On our side of the field a guy needed a suit of armor."

"Keniscott was a sick man today," Harshany said. "If anybody else was as sick as that Indian they would be in bed or maybe in a hospital."

"What was he playing for then?"

"He had to play," Harshany said patiently. "I can't explain just why, but he had to."

"I'll have nightmares," moaned Alderson. "I'll see the Lions up there swinging on those inside pitches!"

"Forget it," laughed Harshany. "We won, didn't we?"

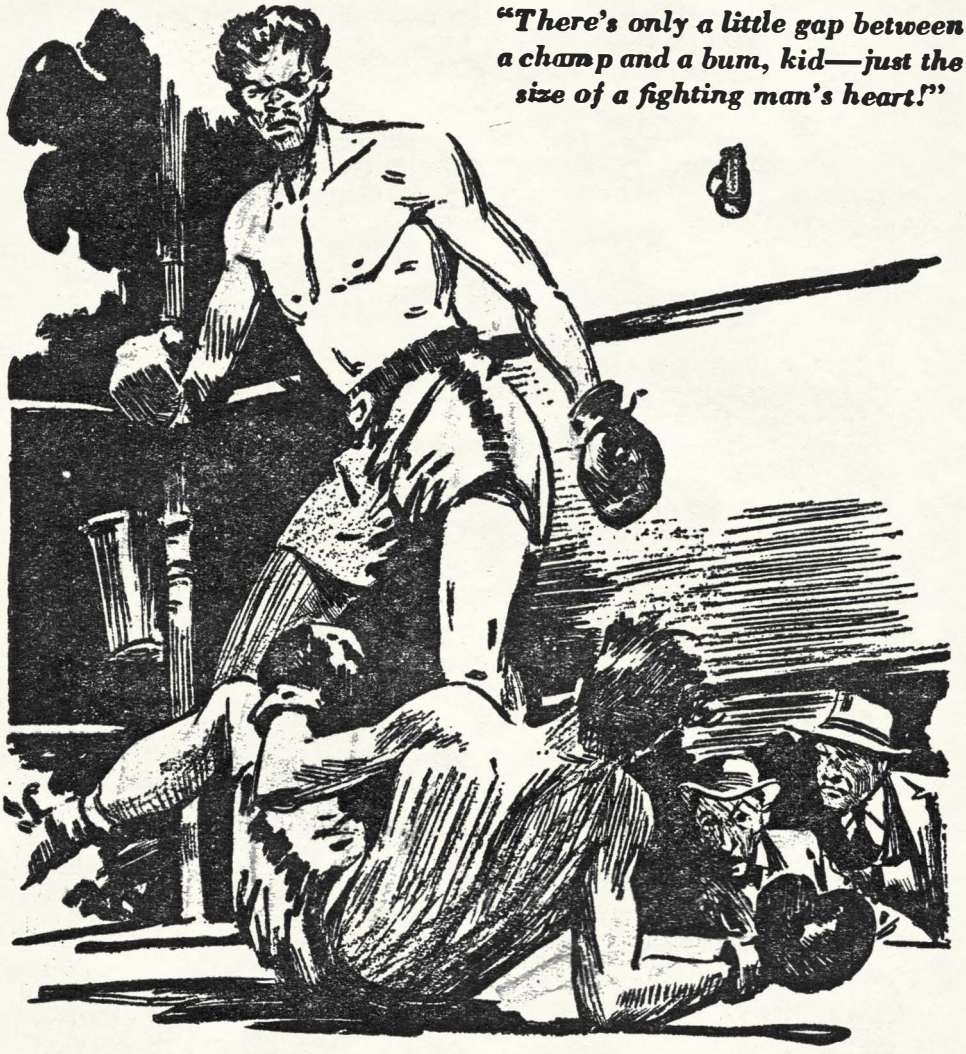
They all laughed.

So you see what I mean about Harshany? The kind of a pitcher he was and the control he had?

Yes, we won the Series, too. And Keniscott got his divorce that winter. We held that club together a good many years after that, and we won some more flags. But never again did Harshany have to pitch to keep them hitting away from the Indian.

YOU GOTTA KEEP

"There's only a little gap between a champ and a bum, kid—just the size of a fighting man's heart!"



Maxie shot with the right, and knocked Driver onto his back. . . .

MAXIE BEVO swung his bag down from the train and stepped onto the platform. Smoke from the factories hung over the city, smudging the buildings and coloring the air. Millvale was a tough town. Maxie surveyed it briefly, then walked to a taxi stand. He was a middle-sized, slope-shouldered man, no longer young. His nose was askew in a brown face, his brows were corrugated with scars. His gait was somehow not quite normal and his eyes were a little too bright.

A voice called softly, "Maxie! This way."

He wheeled and stepped towards a small, inconspicuous sedan. The driver was hunched over the wheel, hat pulled

PUNCHING

over his sharp nose. He was an older man than Maxie, graying and wizened. His mouth was sharp, his chin pointed. He looked like a greedy man .

Maxie said, "Hiya, Dropper?"

"Good—good," said Dropper. They drove through the factory section of the city, turned onto a road which led abruptly to a reservoir, went uphill and looked out over the blue water. The air was better here. Dropper stopped the car and said, "The kid'll be runnin' up this way in a little while. I wanted you to get a gander. This has got to be right. If this goes right we get the champ, see?"

Maxie's voice rasped hoarsely. "Your boy's too green. He's a year away yet. What's your racket, Dropper?"

The little man said, "Racket? Look, Maxie, you are through. You got nothin' left. I bring you down here, I give you a big shot. This town will absolutely sell out the ball park to see Driver fight you. You ask me what's the racket?"

Maxie said, "Were you ever without an angle?"

"I got this comer, this Bobby Driver. He fights the champ if he beats you. You ought to know I protect my boys. You cut his eyes? You maybe pull one of your tricks? No—you put on a show. You go into the drink. You talk like you never tanked before!"

Maxie's face did not change. "Okay, Dropper. I take a dive for your boy. You pay me ten grand. The gate is good. I retire. That is all understood." He fell silent, watching the road. After a moment, with Dropper still talking about the crowd, the money, the coming championship fight once Bobby Driver had kayoed the veteran boxer, Maxie Bevo, a figure came into sight, running lightly up the road around the reservoir.

Dropper called, "Bobby! Bobby!" and the boy turned and came toward the car. He saw Maxie and grinned. He was a fair-haired boy, gray-eyed, taller than Maxie, long-limbed, unmarked by his profession. Dropper said, "This here is Maxie Bevo."

Bobby Driver said, "Nice to meet you, Maxie. Hope we have a good bout."

Maxie said, "Sure, kid. Swell."

Dropper said, "Shadow box a little, then take it easy going back."

Obediently the kid began moving, stabbing at an imaginary opponent, sidestepping, advancing, retreating, his hands moving quickly and cleverly in the motions of the ritual. Dropper said, " 'Nough. Go ahead, kid."

The boy waved at Maxie, still grinning, and jogged out of sight. Maxie sat unmoving in the front seat of the car.

"You see? Fast. Clever. Not much punch, but enough," said Dropper. "He'll make a showing against the champ."

"A year away," repeated Maxie. "He needs work. Hard work."

Dropper said angrily, "You are getting paid to dive, not think. Look at you! Maxie, one more hard one and you'll be walking on your heels for good. You ain't far from it now. Be glad that I give you this break for old times' sake."

Maxie said, "I'll go down to the hotel, Dropper. Leave me off near the station. I'll get a cab. It'll look better."

As he yanked the bag from the tonneau of the sedan Dropper said, "Remember, it's gotta look good. This is a big one. You been a great tanker, Maxie. Make this your best, ha?"

By DAVID CREWE

Maxie said, "Don't come around until after the fight. So long, Dropper."

Dropper's voice changed, grew hard. "Remember, Maxie, this town is my town. You cross me and you not only don't get a dime—you better get out fast."

Maxie grunted and got into a taxi. He went down to the hotel and the room they gave him was high above street noises, and pleasant enough. He stretched on the bed and stared at the ceiling.

HE WAS thirty-four. Fourteen years he had been going up and down the country, plying his trade. He had become very good at it, but never quite good enough. There was a reason for this.

At twenty he had fought Vince Dundee. He had been knocked out. He had then fought Lou Brouillard. He had been tko'd. Somehow things had never gone right after that. He had never got untracked. He had never been satisfied with a single one of his performances, even the winning ones. Something was gone from his bright eagerness after those two early fights. A cynicism had set in and overwhelmed him.

Then he had slipped over his physical prime. For awhile he had not noticed this, but finally it had come to him—and the discoverey came when he was broke, as usual. So he had done some business.

But he was not a crook, not in his heart. He would like to wipe it all out, go back and undo those things.

There was a tap on his door, and he said, "Come in."

A tall, very thin man entered the room. He was balding, dapper, and he always seemed to be smiling. His voice was very soft and smooth, "Hello, Maxie."

Maxie swung his feet down from the bed. "Lightley! What in hell are you doin' here?"

"I heard about the fight," said Lightley. "I heard you had some green comer on your list. I came down to make some dough."

Maxie said, "Oh. Bettin' on the kid, huh?" He knew better. He got up from the bed and walked to a chair. Lightley's hand never got far away from the slight bulge under his immaculate jacket.

Lightley shook his head. "On you."

Maxie said, "I see. On me."

"My old enemy, Dropper, is betting on the kid," Lightley explained. "I'm covering him. He doesn't know it. But my money is covering his. I have a couple of my boys with me. You know my boys."

Maxie said, "Like that, huh?"

"A tough spot for you." Lightley nodded. "Very tough. Dropper pays you to go into the tank. I do not allow you to do that."

Maxie said, "That is tough. For me."

"Especially tough because I do not pay you to win. If you lose to this punk kid, I will take care of you." Lightley tapped the gun. "If you win—well, you get your percentage of the gate. Maybe you'll bet on yourself now. But—I never pay off crooked fighters."

Maxie said, "I know you, Lightley."

"You do, indeed," said the tall man. "I happen to know you can beat this boy. He is a year away."

Maxie said, "I am four years away from what I was, and come to think of it, what was I?"

"A good bum," said Lightley, "with all the tricks."

"It's a local referee," said Maxie. "He won't let me pull any stuff."

"I am not here to argue," said Lightley. "I am here to tell you. Win—or else."

He had not ceased smiling falsely since entering the room. He bowed to Maxie and went out the door without further words. He was not a man to waste anything, even conversation, Maxie knew.

Maxie sat down and put his rugged chin in his hands. His eyes were even brighter than before. After a while he had some food sent up. Then it was dark and he put on his hat and coat and went

quietly out of the rear exit of the hotel.

He found the house he sought in a decent, middle-class section of the city. He rang the bell and a huge, white-haired man came to the door. Maxie said, "Hello, Cal."

The big man peered and opened the door wider, so that the light fell upon Maxie. Then he said, "It don't look much like you, Max."

Maxie said, "I got to talk to you, Cal."

The big man said, "I dunno. I've heard things, Max."

"That's what I want to talk about," said Maxie.

The big man said, "Well, come in."

They went into a bright, comfortable living room. Maxie sighed, sitting in a deep chair, looking around. "Cal, I made some mistakes. Now I'm in a spot and I want to get out right. I want you to handle me for this fight."

The big man said, "Me? Handle you? Are you crazy?"

Maxie said, "Do you know a man named Lightley?"

"No, but I make this Dropper," said Cal Gale. The corners of his mouth turned down. He was a square-faced, rugged man in his fifties.

"Does Dropper know you?"

Cal Gale shook his head. "I've been retired. He's new here."

Maxie said, "Listen to me. Then you can handle me or not. I'm layin' it on the line for you, Cal. You knew me, years ago. I wouldn't lie to you. You know that."

The big man said slowly, "No, you wouldn't lie to me. Go ahead, Maxie. Tell me about Dropper and this guy Lightley."

Maxie talked. When he ended he said, "This kid looks like a nice kid. This Bobby Driver."

"I know his folks. He is a fine boy," said Cal Gale.

Maxie said, "Will you handle me Cal?"

"You know what it means. I'm retired. You know what it means to me, to my wife, if anything goes wrong?" The big man's face was grave.

Maxie said, "I know. It's askin' a lot, Cal."

The big man said, "I'll call you tomorrow. I'll think about it. I always liked you, when you were a kid, Max."

Maxie said nothing.

After a moment Cal Gale went on, "You helped me then, so I'll call you tomorrow, Max."

"Okay," said Maxie. "I feel better after talkin' to you, Cal."

"We all make mistakes. I made mine, back there. I'm not forgetting." The big man went to the door with Maxie. "I'll call you."

Maxie's step was lighter, returning to the hotel. Cal Gale would handle him.

THERE were only a few days of training, for Millvale to see that he was in shape, that he was really Maxie Bevo, who had fought them all in his day. He had some pretty good boys. Cal Gale, looming, square-built, and calm, was impressive as his manager. Maxie worked well—he was always in shape, and his timing came quickly, an old habit returning.

Dropper called on him the night before the fight, secretly. The little man said, "The ninth round. Make it good until the ninth. Then—dramatic, see? A show. You got this stooge handlin' you. That's good," said Dropper. "Who is the guy?"

"Just a guy," said Maxie.

"Well, so long as it looks good," said Dropper. "I got every dime I own ridin'. I don't want the commission holdin' up no purses. I got a reputation here." He looked virtuous. "I'm established here, see? I got this good boy, I'm somebody. He'll fight the champ—"

"He'll get killed," said Maxie. "Haven't you got a conscience, Dropper? The champ'll ruin that kid. He's a good kid, but he's green. The champ carries murder

in his mitts. I think I ought to know."

Dropper said, "You boxed the champ four times, and you're still alive."

Maxie said, "Twice I lasted. Then—you know that story."

Drooper said, "My boy is too clever. He could beat you anyway, I think. But we need a kayo, and I know nobody can kayo you on the level." The little man was thinking aloud, Maxie realized. "I hadda bag it. Say, you know that dirty dog Lightley is in town?"

Maxie said, "Is he?"

"He should live so," said Dropper. "I hope he is betting on you."

Maxie said, "He's sharp. Also, he's dangerous."

Dropper said, "I'll show him. This is my town. He can't come in here and get tough." But Dropper was scared. Maxie could feel it. Dropper could not handle Lightley and his boys. Dropper knew he would get hurt if he attempted it, and nerve was lacking in the foxy crook.

Maxie said, "Lightley's a gambler. He's always around."

Dropper nodded and went away, creeping like a fox from a hen house.

In a little while Lightley came. He said blandly, "Understand, Maxie, I do not ask you to knock out this boy. You are not that good. I note that you are beginning to suffer a bit from too many punches. Your step is uncertain, your eyes too bright. You should see a doctor—after the fight. But meantime, you will win. You have enough left to outpoint Driver. I am betting that way, of course. I am also laying four to one Driver does not knock you out before the tenth . . . Strange that there should be such odd money around!"

Maxie said, "All sorts of things happen around a big fight."

"This manager of yours—a local stooge?"

"I knew him back home," said Maxie vaguely. "He's not even a regular. You never heard of him."

Lightley said, "If anything goes wrong, he better watch out. My boys get careless when we are double-crossed."

Maxie said, "This boy may be too good for me, Lightley. You better drag down some of that money."

Lightley said, "I will be content with dragging you down, if you lose!" He walked out.

Maxie called Cal Gale. He said, "They both been here. Lightley's two boys are Groaner and Peewee. They'll be around after the fight—win, lose, or draw."

Cal Gale said, "Go to sleep, Max. I'll see you tomorrow."

Maxie went to sleep at once. He felt ready for the fight. He felt strong, and if there were butterflies in his stomach—well, he had been afraid before.

The ball park was a morass of darkness, with only the brightly-lit ring as relief. Maxie's eyes became accustomed to it and he could see the fireflies which were cigar and cigarettes burning in the night, burning in quick puffs as the excitement mounted.

Cal Gale handled the pail well enough. He had a kit for patching cuts, a sponge and a towel. There was no other man in Maxie's corner. They did not want anyone else. The referee called them to ring center, stared quizzically at Gale, then repeated the litany. "A clean fight, that's what I want. No hitting on the break. Shake hands now, and come out fighting."

Maxie looked into the blond boy's eyes. Bobby was nervous, but game. He said, "Good luck, Maxie."

Maxie went back to the corner. Cal Gale climbed down, a big, agile man with craggy, imperturbable features. Maxie could see Lightley now, in the front row with his two hoodlums. Lightley gave no sign—he was too smart for that.

Across the ring Dropper was admonishing his boy. Maxie began to think about Driver. This strange kid, tyro at the profession, with only thirty bouts behind him,

shoved into the ring with a veteran like Maxie, not knowing that the fight was bagged. They never knew, these eager, green kids, that the fights were fixed by managers like Dropper.

A quick build-up, a sensational kayo or two, and the kids were thrown against the older men, the men who could whip them. That was the racket. Maxie had been through the racket. He bit into the rubber mouthpiece and stared down at the honest, unblinking eyes of Cal Gale.

THE clang was suddenly loud in his ears. He turned, sidling, taking off on the angle, avoiding the initial rush of the younger man. Bobby had a dipping, gliding style, left hand snapping out, right always cocked on his chest, relying on skill and speed to get him an opening. He landed a left on Maxie's head.

Maxie slipped inside, tied up the kid with ease. He pounded one hand to the body, turned Bobby, shoved him away. He led with his own left, propping Bobby off, stabbing him into a corner. The kid was fast getting out and threw two lefts to the head.

Maxie danced, feinting. He feinted with his head, his shoulders, his elbows. He could not get the kid out of position, so he led. He felt the counter-punch come into the body. He moved away. Bobby was pretty good, at that.

Maxie tincanned. Bobby came in. Maxie landed a straight right to the jaw. The kid took it without blinking and forced. Maxie tied him up. The bell rang.

Maxie was already in his own corner. He watched the kid walk all the way across the ring. The trick was automatic; Maxie had a time clock in his head. He saw Dropper scowl. He was supposed to make the kid look good. He knew he had not done so.

He went out for the second round. He moved easily, shuffling. The kid danced a lot, a habit he would have to overcome. Maxie let him dance, then banged a left and a right as the kid got set to rush. Bobby backed off, frowning a little; another bad habit. Judges notice things like that. Maxie's face was a greased mask. He crouched, feinted, threw a hook.

The kid pegged the hook, threw one of his own. It was a cat-blow, lightning quick. It caught Maxie on the eye, and opened an old scar. Maxie went into the ropes.

He was utterly amazed. The kid was smarter than he had thought. He fought off Bobby's rush, came to ring center and tried to beat the boy to every punch. He failed. He found himself using everything he knew.

He was backing up—fighting, but retreating. He could hear the roar of the crowd. Bobby's eyes were blazing with conquest, he was rushing. Maxie went down under a flurry of blows to the head.

He rested on one knee. Dropper was scowling. Dropper had a wad bet on the ninth. He wanted Driver to have a workout before the end.

Maxie wheeled slowly. Lightley had not changed expression, but his two hoods were leaning forward. Maxie got up at nine.

He weathered the round. He sat on his stool and Cal managed to patch the cut with collodion. Cal said, "You got careless."

"The kid's better'n I thought. I think he can beat me."

Cal said," It's your fight, Max."

"And I'm fightin' it my way," Maxie nodded.

He went out for the third. The kid was fresh, strong, and anxious. Blows slammed against Maxie's head and body. He accepted them with the stoicism of the veteran. He slid through until the last thirty seconds of the round. Then he suddenly put on a burst of speed. His left shot out, once, twice, three times. It

landed on the astonished face of Bobby Driver. It sent the boy back, confused.

Maxie went in with a hook, then a right cross. He held Driver close and worked on the body. He shoved him away, propped him up and the bell rang. He dropped his hands. Driver, over-excited, threw a big right hand.

It caught Maxie flush on the button. He fell as thought shot through the heart. He lay there, all unknowing, while Cal Gale rushed to pick him from the floor and help him to the corner. Dropper was jumping up and down, pleading with the referee. The local man hesitated. Bobby, tears in his eyes, was repeating, "I never heard the bell, honest I didn't. Give him an extra minute."

They argued. Maxie woke up with his face to the moon and the stars. He licked at the water on his dry lips. Cal Gale was saying, "Can you go on, Max? Can you make it?"

Maxie said weakly, "I'm all right."

He wobbled when the bell finally rang. He saw Driver coming and instinctively moved to the kid's left. He worked in close, and hung on. He took in huge gulps of night air, resting, his weight on the boy. He suffered body punishment, but his ribs were oaken and his belly ribbed with muscle.

He got through the fifth and sixth, and he began to come to life in the seventh. He saw Driver coming, saw the left dart out. He saw that the kid was slightly arm weary. Driver's right glove had dropped an inch or two from its former position. Maxie's heels touched the floor. He pulled the trigger on a straight right cross above the extended left.

He felt it go home. He walked away and his knees were not as rubbery as before. Driver was on the seat of his pants, gaping. Maxie draped himself in a neutral corner, utilizing every precious second of rest. Dropper was screaming something, pounding the ring with his fists.

Lightley still had not changed expression. The hoodlums were sitting back, licking their chops. Cal Gale was calm and silent, watching from the corner. The referee counted to nine and Driver got up.

The kid came rushing, enraged. He let the kid come in, then smacked him lightly with lefts, blinding him. He led him around with a long jab, making Bobby look silly.

The bell rang. Maxie was again in his corner, waiting for Cal to slip the stool beneath him. The kid wavered, going across to where Dropper was bellowing at him.

MAXIE was very tired. He was too old for this pace, he knew. His heart was pumping strangely, his breath was short. But his arms and legs seemed strong enough. He crouched, accepting Cal's ministrations, his mind working with great coolness. Three more rounds were all he had to go, according to the program. The eighth, the ninth, and the tenth.

In the ninth he was supposed to go into the tank. If he went for the splash, there were Lightley and his gunsels. He drew in deep breaths, and nodded to Cal Gale. The big man clambered down at the whistle. The bell sounded, and Maxie went out for the eighth.

The kid was coming all the time, coming fast. But somehow he was not landing. He had clearly won the five rounds in which he had been atop the veteran. But now he was not winning.

Maxie was not there when the punches came in. He was swinging his torso out of reach, nodding his head to let punches go by. He had solved the kid's timing, his rhythm. He was counter-punching, using the boy's eagerness, picking off blows and exchanging short stabs of his own. He was keeping Driver off balance. He piled up points.

The round ended. Maxie sat down. Cal

Gale said, "Well, this is it coming up. Dropper will expect you to catch one in this round."

"Don't remind me," said Maxie.

"Ten thousand dollars," said Cal. "It's a lot of money."

"I'm damned if I do, and damned if I don't," grinned Maxie.

"It's your wagon," said Cal Gale.

"Thanks for being here," said Maxie suddenly. "Thanks a lot, Cal."

"You're pullin' the wagon," said Cal Gale. The whistle blew him down. Maxie stood, awaiting the bell. He saw Dropper get down and turn and glare at him. He felt the eyes of Lightley and his playmates.

At the bell the kid came like an express train going downhill. That was the way Dropper would want it. The kid coming, the veteran fading, collapsing.

Bobby Driver was providing the barrage of blows. But Maxie was weaving with them, sneaking in short ones. He let Driver's blows slide off his shoulders, caught them on his forearms. He ducked, drew away, and came back with startling suddenness to explode a short right under Driver's chin.

He heard Dropper howl. He went forward as the boy went back. He feinted and threw another right. The kid shook it off and stood toe to toe, foolish and brave. He fogged in a blistering right. Maxie went down, floundering. Again the amazement rose in him. This kid had courage and strength. He was good.

The referee was counting. Dropper was leaping with joy. Maxie lay on his side and heard the count. He scarcely stirred. The referee said, "Eight . . . nine—"

Ten thousand dollars, if he lived to collect it. Lightley would be betting much more than that.

Maxie came to his feet in a single leap. He was across the ring before Driver could set himself. They traded blows along the ropes, and they fell through onto the apron.

The crowd in the ball park, already hoarse, went stark, raving mad. The two fighters, back in the ring, whaled away at each other. Driver began to bleed from his nose and mouth. Maxie's face was covered with gore. They slugged and ducked and fought all over the canvas.

Dropper crouched, muttering curses, his face livid. At the bell he almost did not climb into the ring. Maxie laughed at him, waving his mitt.

Cal Gale said, "Well? Now you done it, so what?"

Maxie said, "Two hundred bouts I've had. Two hundred and this makes one. It's been a good bout, huh, Cal?"

"Yeah," said Cal. "I never was a fan, but I guess it was good."

Maxie said, "Now we'll see how smart I am. Now we'll see."

Cal said, "Okay, Max."

The bell rang. Maxie went out. He met the kid, touched gloves to begin the final stanza. Dropper was pallid and shaking with rage. Driver rushed.

Maxie did not go into his crouch. He stood straight up. He shoved out the left, getting his shoulder into it. Driver was bouncing and dancing and swinging. The straight left caught him mid-center. He dropped his hands, blinking.

Maxie shot with the right, and knocked Driver onto his back. He walked away, looking over his shoulder. The kid was all right. He would get up. Maxie rested on the ropes.

Driver got up. Strong as a young horse, he came prancing. Maxie counted up—they were even on knockdowns. He tin-canned. He made the boy miss, led him into error, punished him, but not too hard. He brought the boy all the way around the ring, then stabbed him straight.

For a moment the kid was helpless. He was tied in a knot. His eyes were glazed. Maxie went in close and grabbed him.

They waltzed a moment, then the kid was fighting again. Maxie left-handed

him, jerked away, again crossed the right, pulling it just a little, missing the button. The kid turned and staggered. Maxie went close.

The kid had strength to fight in close. They struggled, head to head. Maxie's breath came very short. Bobby's body blows were robbing him of his strength. If the kid backed up, if he made Maxie run—

That was the thing he had feared. Husbanding his strength, trying to rouse himself, he had been afraid he would run out of steam. He knew now that he had. There were maybe thirty seconds left, enough for the kid to score a kayo. Weariness enveloped Maxie like a blanket.

The kid felt it. He shoved Maxie away. He danced, eyes bright. He propped a left under Maxie's jaw.

Maxie grinned. He said, spitting out the mouthpiece to make himself clear. "Yau want to fight, kid? Come ahead. I love that!"

He braced himself, hands at his sides. He knew that if he lifted either glove the trembling of his weakened limbs would betray him. The time clock in his head had never failed. He said, "Come on, kid, and get it!"

The kid had brains. For a moment he hesitated. He scented a trick—he had learned many tricks in that ten rounds, good clean tricks of the ring. To walk in now and get cold-cocked . . . . when he was winning—to catch it now would be terrible. Maxie could imagine these thoughts running through the alert young mind as clearly as though he himself were Bobby Driver.

Well, once he had been Bobby Driver, or so much like him there was only a difference of pigment and structure. He grinned, staring straight into the young eyes, watching the indecision there.

The bell rang. Bobby dropped his hands. Then he said, "You were great, pal. You taught me plenty in there. This has been the best bout I have ever had."

MAXIE said sharply, "And you need plenty more, kid. I coulda had you. Twice I had you lined up. Take advice from a fool, Bobby. Tomorrow you go see Cal Gale!"

"Cal Gale? Your manager?" Maxie was walking the kid to his corner. Dropper was snarling, but Maxie just grinned.

Maxie said, "You see him tomorrow, or he'll come and see you. So long, kid."

He wheeled and went back to his own corner. Cal Gale had his sweater ready. He had purposely not worn his robe that night. The referee was gathering the slips. Cal said, "Well, what do you think?"

"You'll see," said Maxie. "Two hundred and one fights will pay off."

The announcer had the slips, peering at them. Someone handed him the field microphone. The announcer said, "Mr. Harold Jay, judge, votes five rounds for Driver, five for Bevo—a draw. Mr. Joe Smith votes four rounds for each fighter—two even. The referee votes five rounds for each man. The verdict, ladies and gentlemen—a draw."

Maxie said, "Pulled it kinda fine, but I made it. Nobody collects on those bets now. Except Lightley on his four to one I ain't kayoed by the tenth—and that can't be much."

Cal Gale said, "So you did it. Now look out. This will be dangerous."

They went down out of the ring. They walked into the dugout, to the tunnel which led under the stands. Maxie had removed the gloves but not the bandages on his hands. The three men must have traveled fast and got the decision from the rear of the park. They stepped out, blocking the way. Outside the park a motor roared, as someone revved up a powerful automobile.

Cal Gage suddenly had a gun in each hand. He said in a harsh, crisp voice,

"You're all under arrest. Make a move and I'll blast hell outa you."

Lightley said, "Get him, boys!"

Maxie stepped forward. He swung from the ground. He clipped Lightley full on the chin. The tall man folded like a tent pole. Maxie said, "Don't try it, boys. There are cops all around. Cal Gale's a special deputy tonight."

Uniformed men came up, panting. Cal Gale said sharply, "You're late. Handcuff these men and take them in for carrying concealed weapons. I'll be down to prefer other charges. Out-of-town hoods can't come to Millvale and pull their stuff."

A policeman said, "Okay, Captain. Just like old times, Captain."

Maxie and Cal Gale went into the dressing room. Maxie said, "I'll collect my end of the gate. I got maybe one, two fights in me, square fights. I'm savin' every dime, Cal."

The big man said, "Okay, Max. I've been thinkin', lately. Retirement, after all those years on the force, is not excitin' enough. We could open a gym or somethin', couldn't we?"

There was a pounding on the door, and Cal opened it. Dropper fell in, shouting, "You dirty, double-crossing—"

Maxie said, "Have you met Captain Gale?"

Dropper said, "Hirin' cops! You crooked—"

Maxie said, "Dropper, you were my manager once, when I was a kid like Bobby Driver. You fixed fights for me, but I never knew it. You shoved me up there and made a lot of money off me. I was never right, after that. But I ain't punchy. Belladonna makes my eyes that way when I want. I been waiting for this chance at you, Dropper, to pay you back for your dirty way of livin'. I hope you're flat broke. I hope you haven't got a dime and never get another fighter. Because you haven't even got Driver, now. I'm seein' to that. In fact, after Cal gets through with you, there won't even be a license for you in this state."

"I'll take care of you—"

"No, you won't," said Max softly. "You won't do anything except holler. You're yellow. And if you're not out of town tomorrow, Cal will take care of you."

Dropper sputtered. Maxie took him by the neck. Cal Gale opened the door, and Maxie threw the little man clear across the room and out into the corridor. Cal closed the door.

Maxie said, "You know what, Cal? Driver will be in to see tomorrow. Maybe you better arrange for me to get a manager's license. I'll go make those fights, then I'll come back and we'll have a beginnin' for our gym, a nice, comin' middleweight contender. But, Cal—don't let him fight any good boys until I get back!"

Cal Gale said, "Max, you sometimes do make sense, at that."

"Such a nice kid, too," said Max. He rubbed his sore eye gently. "And what a puncher!"

PIGSKIN SPOILERS

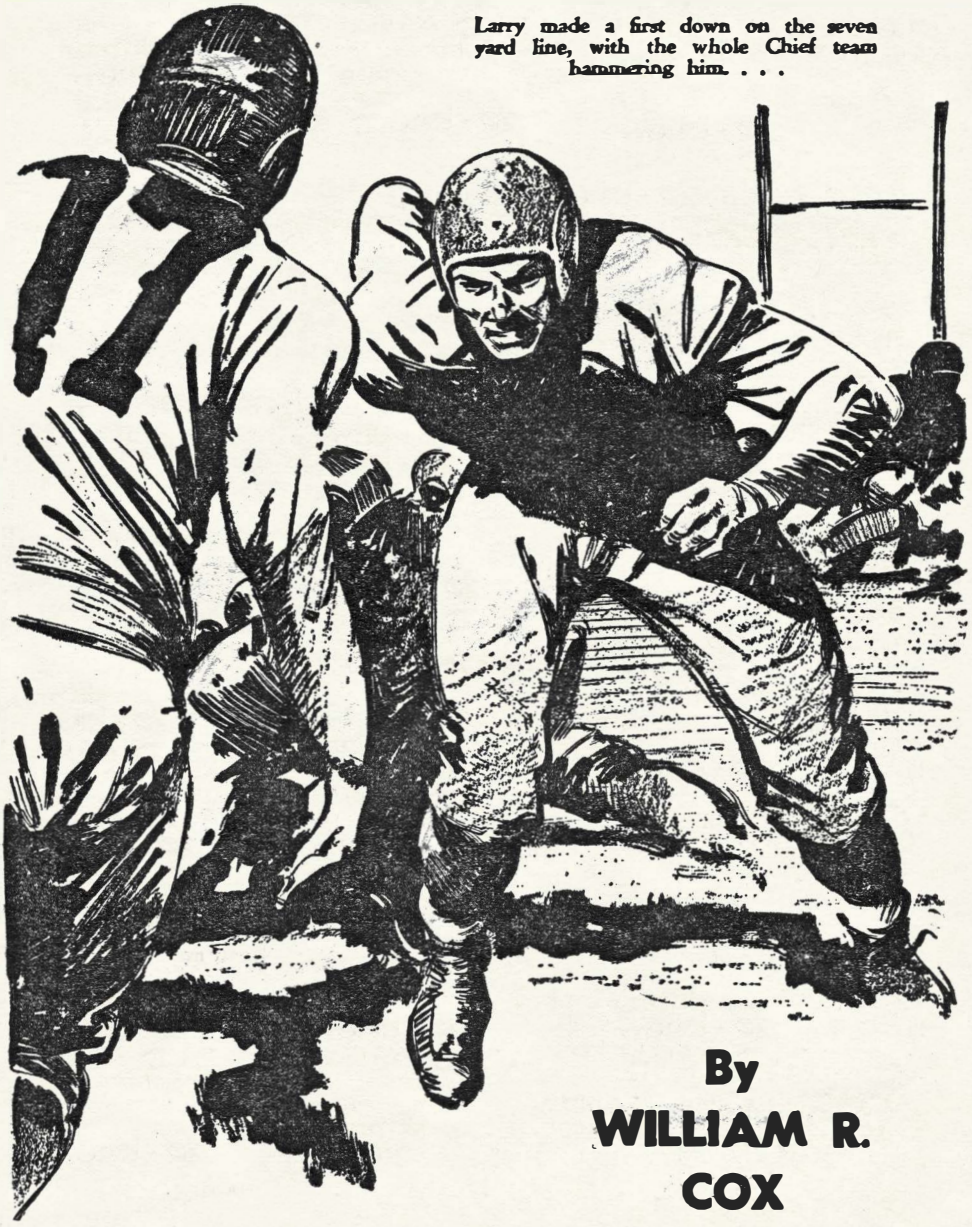
THE greatest scoring season ever enjoyed by any collegiate football squad came to Harvard in 1886, when they played 14 games, piled up an amazing tally of 765 points, and held 12 of their opponents scoreless.

They shellacked M.I.T. three times, Tufts twice, and Pennsylvania, Dartmouth, Wesleyan, Stevens, Andover, Exeter, and Graduates once each. At the end of these 12 games Harvard had rolled up 761 points and had not been scored upon even once.

Then came the payoff. Princeton trounced the proud team 12-0, and Yale bowled them over 29-4, thus marring the greatest scoring run the game had ever witnessed.

—David C. Cooke

BREAKAWAY

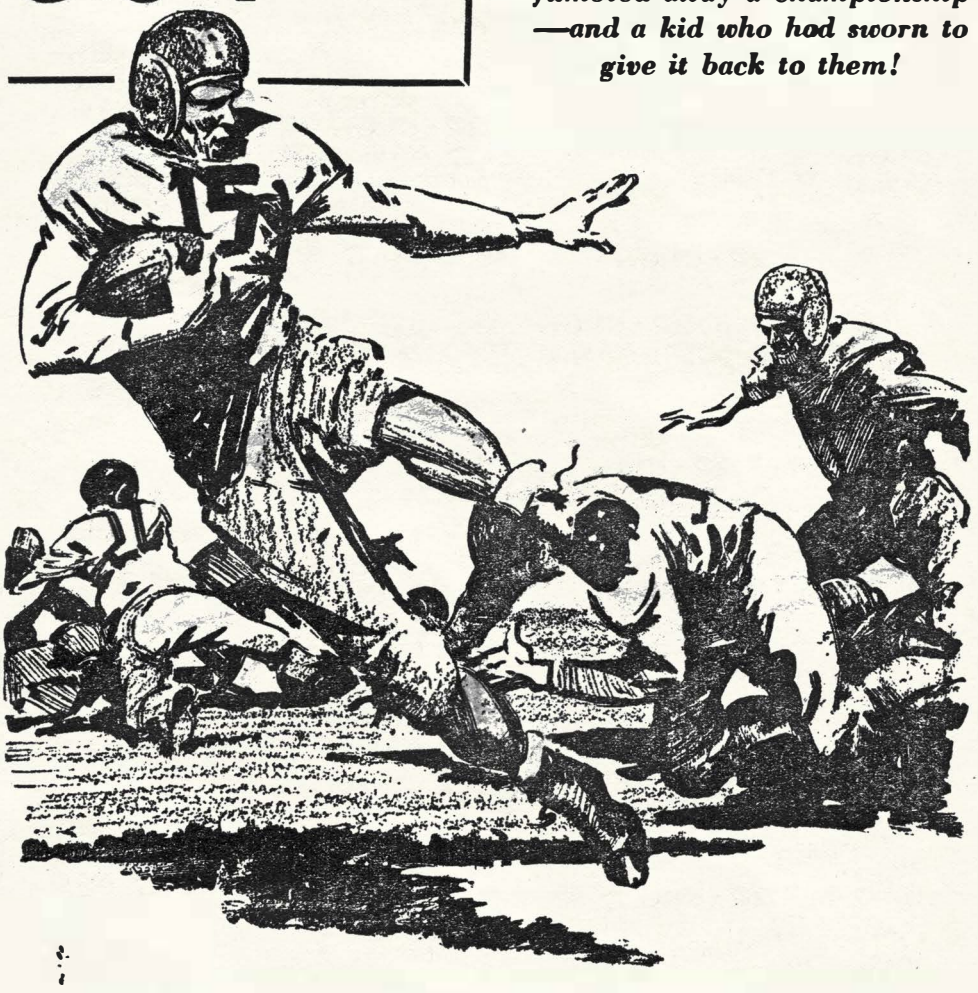


Larry made a first down on the seven yard line, with the whole Chief team hammering him. . . .

By
WILLIAM R.
COX

GUY

Battered, bone-weary, they crouched for that last fateful play—ten men who had just fumbled away a championship—and a kid who had sworn to give it back to them!



LARRY DEAL stuck his head in the door of the office and eyed the stalwart, grizzled man behind the desk.

He said, "I dunno. Maybe I might as well just say hello and good-by. You look too tough for me."

Pappy Hall blinked. Then he roared, "Come in here, you blankety-blank bum, you no-good fumbler, you signal-crossing jerk!"

Larry Deal said, "That's better. Real tough guys don't talk like that."

He carefully closed the door of the inner sanctum of the owner and coach of the Mastodons. He sat down on a straight chair. He was a slender-seeming man, no longer youthful, but not old in his grin or his greenish, slanted eyes.

He said, "I'm listening, Pappy."

The big man wheeled back his chair. His voice rumbled in a lower key. "I

bought some insurance. You're it. It probably was a hell of a bad buy—but, by Harry, I won't own nor coach a losin' team, you understand that?"

Larry Deal said, "I've heard that before. And in case you don't know it, your Mastodons are sinking a bit."

"They're the best football players in the world," roared Pappy Hall.

"But the Chiefs don't believe it," Larry Deal pointed out.

"The Chiefs knew enough to get rid of you! They sent you to the minors and didn't even give you a coaching job. You, 'The Brain'. . . ."

Larry said, "Let's quit the horsing around. You bought me. For what?"

The old man made a steeple of his gnarled fingers. He had been a great tackle in the old days, when the Mastodons were young. He had never left the club, had saved his money, had bought an interest—and the years had been kind to him. He was an old champion, all right, and his teams were always up there, in the playoffs or close to it. He was tough, smart and ruthless, people said.

"I need this division championship," he told Larry Deal quietly. "The Mastodons are good, but they're not drawing. I know what's the matter with them. I'm not telling—maybe you'll learn, if you do like I say. Otherwise I don't want anyone to know. Are you willing to take a job as reserve quarterback and play when I put you in there?"

Larry said, "I'm pretty old for that, you know."

"I know all about you. I know you're a rebel, a smart guy, a clubhouse lawyer. I know you're a troublemaker and that you second guess the coach," said Pappy without heat. "Maybe you'd make a good coach."

Larry said, "You trying to say you'll make me one if I play cop for you?"

Pappy shook his head. He said wearily, "I don't want a spy. I want someone to understudy Danny Kong on the team."

"You want me to do a job you're not even going to outline for me?"

Pappy hesitated. Then he said slowly, "Yes. I'm not sure of you—I never could make up my mind about you. Now, as you say, the Mastodons are slipping. I'm offering you a good contract. Take it or leave it."

Larry said, "It's a funny way to get together, but I'm taking it. I can use the money and, like you, Pappy, I don't go along with losing teams."

The old man said, "This is for just the remainder of the season, you know. I can send you back to Paterson any time I get ready."

"It wasn't so bad in Paterson," said Larry blithely. "We won games."

HE LEFT the office and went down on the field in the big ball park. It had been a strange interview. Pappy Hall, the most straightforward plain speaker in pro football, had hedged. Larry wondered what was wrong with the Mastodons. It had to be something bad. Pappy would never have called up a tired old quarterback of ten years' experience to understudy his brilliant Hawaiian signal caller, Danny Kong, for any simple reason.

Larry went into the clubhouse. Some of the boys had arrived early. There was a game that Sunday with the Orioles, those perennial Eastern challengers. The Mastodons had to win this one in order to get at the Chiefs, who were a cinch in the Western division.

Larry thought about the Chiefs and about Lonny Toole, who had sold him down the river after a decade of service with that great club. Lonny Toole was a hard man to shave. He was a good coach, a fast man with a buck when it involved buying stars, and a slow payoff to veterans. Lonny was hard as nails, and had a temper.

Larry sighed. He had tried Lonny's

temper once too often, that was all. That bag of water he had dropped on the coach's head after the losing game with the Packers had finished Larry's big league career. It had also decided Toole against letting Larry be a coach. Too much levity in him, the report had said—too rebellious, too independent, too unorthodox.

Buck Howe, the big all-league center, straightened up as Larry came into the light. He drawled, "Well, if it ain't The Brain. Walking around in an old, tired body, trying to be somebody."

Gimp Lacey, the guard who had been wounded in the war and limped when he walked, but, incredibly, could run like a deer, had been in close conversation with Howe. They pulled apart, staring at Larry. Tom Grover, left end, had been in the conference.

Grover, a two-hundred-pound speed boy and pass catcher, said, "He has come to save us. We tied a game and Pappy is having fits. He imported The Brain to boost our morale. Cute lil ole Pappy!"

There was something about the way they said all this. Larry shrugged and grinned. He said, "You don't like Pappy?"

Howe, a giant, paused in strapping on a shoulder harness. "We don't like Pappy's cops!"

Grover said sharply, "Shut up, Buck."

Larry, heading for the locker to draw a uniform, pretended not to hear. Chigger, the old trainer, dealt out paraphernalia to fit. The blue uniform with the white stripes was momentarily distasteful to Larry. He laughed at himself for the aversion to the colors he had striven to crush in the mud of many a gridiron, and helped himself to a corner locker. Chigger said, "I see you got your own shoes. . . . Smart. You always was smart, Larry"

"There's some doubt about that. It's not smart to wind up in Paterson, playing three quarters of every game in your old age."

"You're back, ain'tcha?" Chigger winked and nodded. "You'll be okay, Larry."

Larry said casually, "What's griping the heavy boys over there?"

Chigger's face went blank. He said, uneasily, "I don't know nothin', Larry. Not a thing, see?"

Larry put on the unie. He had Chigger tape his weak ankle, just so. He fiddled with headgears, finally got one that fitted securely and would not slide off in scrimmage. A coterie of burly men surged into the room.

Danny Kong came over at once. He held out his hand and said, "Boy, am I glad to see you! Pappy promised me some relief. These other quarterbacks we got are dumb bunnies from way back—"

"Nix," growled Will Boyd, the blocking back.

The stocky Hawaiian made an impatient gesture. The other back crowded in to greet Larry. Rim Farnswell, the lithe running star, Keg Smith the dashing fullback. They were the regulars, the offensive stars. Boyd played on defense, too. The other defensive men were Blondy Dagget, a rookie; Lil Abner Cone, the hillbilly veteran; and Conny Gill, fullback, who had once been with the Chiefs.

Frowning, Larry went around seeking the linesmen he had played against—Bogan and Hooper, the tackles, Savitsky, the other guard; Dick Haven, the defensive end; Mike Healy, DeVallis, Conahan, and the rest. They spoke civilly to him. He chatted with them all and was conscious of a strong reserve in them.

He groaned when time came to go on the field to warm up. The crowd was already filtering in. He chucked a ball around—his passing arm was one thing which had not faded—and ran through some signals with the second string backfield. He knew the single wing system, although of course he could not fit into it right away, and they gave him the

numbers. He had a mind like blotting paper and could remember the signals without effort.

The team went back inside and Pappy appeared. Pappy's face was lined. The Orioles had Lank Newton, Sorry Cain, and some others, and were as hot as firecrackers. The Mastodons had that tie game on their record and had to win today. Pappy roared and raved and challenged and snorted. It didn't go over, Larry thought, listening. The Mastodons didn't give a damn about Pappy. They might be interested in bonuses, in playoff dough and other increments of the championship, but Pappy wasn't getting to them.

They went out and took the field. Larry sat on the bench and watched. The Orioles won the toss and Danny Kong came and sat beside Larry. The smooth quarterback said, "It's in the line, Larry. They think they are too good."

"The oldest story in the game," Larry said. "Rockne once had the Seven Mules deliberately lie down on the Four Horsemen. Notre Dame almost lost the game—but the team got together and was great after that."

"It's not that simple," said Kong flatly. "We know all that college stuff. It's just that Howe and them are too old." He broke off.

"Yeah. That's me, too. Old," said Larry. On the field the Orioles were coming out of the T, champing and full of ginger. They made a first down on the Mastodon thirty-five yard line. Larry made a trumpet of his hands. He had a peculiar, high yelling voice. "Get under it, you big guys! Go smear 'em, Mastodons."

Up and down the bench the reserves stared at him. Larry came down on his knees, crawling toward the sideline as the Orioles swung into action on first down. Suddenly he shrieked, "Buck! Back up, Buck!"

Lank Newton had a great fake, raising his arm as though to pass, then watching the backers-up. If they retreated the big guy would smack the line in a quick-opening T-play. If they stood, he would pass to Sorry Cain, the scat back who always seemed loose as ashes.

Buck Howe instinctively backed up at sound of the sharp admonition. Newton threw the pass. Howe blocked it, almost intercepted. Two plays later the Orioles had bogged down and were forced to kick.

Danny Kong said, "How the hell did you know he was going to pass?" He was adjusting his headguard, ready to enter the game when the Mastodons got the ball. The other offensive stars were warming up. The practice of playing two teams had become accepted tactics in the past few years, with few dissenters. Larry did not answer the question.

Lil Abner caught the good punt and could only get back to his twenty-eight with it as the Oriole ends nailed him. He came off, with Blondy and Conny. They sat on the bench near Larry, and Conny said, "How'd you know he was gonna chuck it, Larry?"

Larry shrugged. "He tips it. He pounds it twice when he's really goin' to pass. Once when he's fakin'."

Conny said, "I never seen it. I been playin' against him five years."

"It's something for the linemen to know," said Larry. He spoke for a moment or two about certain other Oriole weaknesses. The husky linemen were bending close, listening.

Someone muttered, "That's why he's 'The Brain'."

Larry said, "I've got brains enough to know linemen must be alert as well as strong. Buck just missed a block. So it's no gain."

The Mastodons had to kick. Pappy Hall strode up and down in front of the bench, cursing beneath his breath. The game dragged. It lacked color. Neither

team could do anything on offense. The customers began shouting insults. The half ended without a score.

PAPPY raved at them. He called them fighting names. The Mastodons sat around sweating and lumpy, like elephants, unmoved. Larry talked to Howe for a moment. Then he talked to Rim Farnswell, the running back. Will Boyd growled at him, "Say, are you hired as coach or player?"

"Who, me?" Larry let the question fall into the pause. They were all staring at him, even Pappy. Larry said, "Why, I'm the beat-out brain. You guys oughta know that—you helped beat it out!"

It was Danny Kong who started the laughter. They went onto the field still chuckling. The Orioles kicked off. Rim criss-crossed, took a hand-off from Will on the old fakeroo and streaked down the sidelines to midfield. Kong faked, then threw a short pass to Grover. It went for a first down.

Larry was on his knees again, his strange voice crying above the noise from the stands.

"Nail 'em down. You got 'em. Slip it to 'em, you big bums!"

Rim got five. On a set-up play, Grover came around and got four. Buck Howe opened a tremendous hole and the squat Kong slipped through for a first in pay dirt. They went three times at the desperate Orioles for five, then Kong fell back.

Buck held and Danny calmly booted three points through the uprights. Larry sat back on the bench. He did not openly shake his head. He just sat and thought.

There had been nothing intrinsically wrong with the Mastodon offensive down close that he could detect. Yet it had not clicked in the promised land. He felt Pappy's brooding gaze upon him. The offensive players were coming off. The burly Boyd was still on the field, but the ends and back were out, and Buck Howe with them.

The game went on. The Orioles threatened at all times. Newton's fake pass wasn't clicking, but everything else seemed good. Finally, in the third quarter, Sorry Cain ran for a touchdown. The crowd woke up and began to root.

Will Boyd had been taking a beating. The teams changed goals for the fourth quarter. They battled for five minutes, the ball changing hands on the third down as the Orioles battled to hold their lead. The Mastodons punted deep.

Larry made a decision. He reached for his headguard, and his fingers trembled a little as he fastened it. He weighed about one-sixty-five and he was old. Kong and the others trooped off. Larry went over to Pappy and said calmly, "Boyd needs a rest."

"Not backing up the line," Pappy said in a low voice. "I'm not askin'—"

Larry said, "I'm here to help if I can." He trotted onto the field. Will Boyd gaped at him. Buck looked done in. He shrugged and ran off.

Newton squinted at Larry, who went into defensive backer-up on the left wing, the strong side. Sorry Cain always ran right on the payoff plays. He was a streak of light when he got blocking to start him. Newton called a play with Cain flanking, shoveled the ball out.

It started on the Oriole twenty. Two men reached Larry. They tried to pinch him up. Larry used quick hands. One man fell on his face. The other somehow or other tripped over his teammate. Larry ran wide, holding the play inside as the blockers roared.

Then he ducked in. Weaving like a running back, he took a swinging elbow in the face to get his hip against Sorry Cain. Someone came in behind him. There was a pile-up.

Larry got up and looked at the sideline markers. One yard gain was all the

Orioles could muster. Conny Gill muttered, "I seen you had him and come in. That's smearin' the blockers, pal."

Larry nodded and slipped close to the line. He whispered to Ed Bogan, "Slash in. He won't pass. He's protecting the lead."

Grover, the end, could not slash, as it was not his style. He was really not a very good defensive end, Larry worried, and Pappy should have taken him out. But on the other hand, Grover was smart.

Newton was barking at the Orioles. They wheeled in the T, and shoved. Newton was coming through himself. Larry got over and doubled himself, rolling into the hole. Newton fell down for a two-yard gain. Larry reached out hands like talons. He grabbed the ball, loose in Newton's grasp. He rolled free, hunching over the precious sphere.

The whistle had been late—a thing Larry had noted previously. Newton was bellowing like a calf who has lost the moo cow. The Orioles were fighting Larry, but his grip was death-like. The referee came in and made the rolling motion toward the Oriole goal.

Larry stood up and grinned, relinquishing the ball. He started for the bench. Danny Kong and the others were coming on. Their eyes were bright and hard. Larry said as he passed them, "Let's see your guts, varsity!"

Kong sent a furious, plunging play at center. The Mastodon line heaved and the Orioles cracked. Keg Smith carried for ten.

The same play formed up. The Orioles shifted to protect their suddenly weak middle. Kong, spinning, held the ball. He handed-off to Rim. The graceful running back skirted end for the distance. He went over with Sorry Cain hanging on his back, to score the winning touchdown.

The Mastodons came into the clubhouse laughing as hard as when they had left to begin the second half. Will Howe said loudly, "Larry, you may be beat-out, but you're a lucky slob. You really lucked onto that ball at the right time. Lemme touch you. Maybe you're our mascot."

"Yeah, that's right," said Grover. They rushed him, touching his hair, his skin. They were full of horse play and good spirits.

Conny Gill started to say, "Why you dummies—" Larry stopped him. Gill whispered, "Why, you stole that ball. Newton got careless and the whistle was late and—"

"Let 'em believe in luck," Larry said. He had noted that certain linesmen were celebrating together while the offensive stars held apart. Now he sensed that the defensive backs and ends were pulling toward him, as though they had been only seeking a leader to form a third group. He was extremely careful what he said and to whom he spoke. He showered and tried to be natural and easy with them.

They asked a thousand questions about the Chiefs, whom they had not met that year. He answered them, off-hand. He told them flatly that the Chiefs would beat them to death, the way they had played the Orioles. They did not like that. Buck Howe growled, "Mebbe you oughta still be with them."

Larry, dressed, was at the door. He jibed, "You want to know the difference? If I made a crack like that in the Chief dressing room, I'd be mobbed!"

He went out quickly and down toward the gate of the ball park. A big man detached himself from deep shadows and fell in step with him. They got in a taxicab which seemed to be waiting and Pappy Hall said, "Well?"

Larry settled back on the cushions. His face smarted where he had caught the elbow. He said, "It's your own fault, partly."

"My fault? Are you nuts?"

"You've lost your hold on them," said

Larry calmly. "They're veterans. They're good, and they know it. So they form cliques, each jealous of the other. Damn silly stuff. Toole would fire them all and start over."

"I can't do that," said Pappy. "I'm no millionaire, like Toole's backers. I'm a shoestring guy. I got to make money every year. My payroll would choke a horse."

Larry said, "I'm just givin' you my opinion. I may be wrong. And I've got one other little idea—"

He unfolded it, and Pappy Hall listened.

VIRUS-X is no respector of woman, child, or athletic man. It struck Pappy Hall, he tried to fight it, and they lugged him unconscious to the hospital the day the Mastodons had to leave for the West to battle the mighty Chiefs.

There were three assistant coaches. They went into a huddle—worried, beefy men who had been dominated completely by the old czar who had fallen ill. Larry Deal's heart was heavy within him.

It had been a tough ten days. He had worked out with the backfields, both of them. He had remained in the backer-up job on defense, calling signals from that position against Chief plays he so well remembered. The Mastodons had slaved under the lash of Pappy's fretful tongue. Yet all the time the plan had been forming, the plan known only to Larry and the old coach.

Now the dynamic old man was shunted aside by fate, and the plan could not be put into operation without the personality and authority of Pappy to back it up. What this meant to Larry caused the heavy weight within him.

He worried about the canny Toole, who would be well aware that Larry had defenses for the tricky Chief repertoire of stratagems. Toole would be ready with new stuff, with the power of his great line and huge fast backs to make them count. Doug Wickett, brilliant passer and faker, would be calling them from the T, with Ham Graham, Gabby O'Brien and Toots Fetzer to tote the mail and block. Up in front would be the fearsome Rod Tellegan at center and flanking him the ape-like Al Grant and the giant Lou Faire. On the tackles, playing sixty minutes each, all things equal, would range Jay Johnson and George Mount, great flankmen who could switch inside or out as occasion demanded. On the ends, would be Fred Natah, the pass-snatcher, and Jake Alexander, the sweep-smearer. Oh, yes, Larry Deal knew them all, from A to Izzard. They were the best.

Yet somehow he felt that the latent power of the Mastodons was as great. If something could happen that would weld this bunch into a unit, a fighting, inspired, surging team, the game would be a toss-up. Larry was sure of it. The Mastodons had not proved it in their play of the season, but there is always more to football than the mechanics, he asserted to himself.

He had been a footballer all his life. At twelve he had organized his own team. High school, two years of prep, college; yes, he had always been a footballer, and he had always been a field general—The Brain. He had taken a fearful beating, he had slowed down, sometimes he wondered if he had good sense when he dared take the field. But he would always take the field, so long as he felt able to help his team. That was a thing he had to do, a thing he could help no more than he could help breathing.

If Pappy had not been stricken—but that was water under the dam, he grimly told himself. He did not try to infringe upon the worried conclave of the trio of assistant coaches. He sympathized with them—they had a tough row to hoe this trip. Larry satisfied himself by making jokes with linesman and back alike, to promote the fraternization of rookie and veteran. He had, he thought, gained a

little ground with them through his undoubted knowledge of the game they all loved—for no pro ever played unless he loved the game. He played upon their love of football, telling them anecdotes from another day, remembered tales of the great Chiefs among whom he had been a raw rookie. He told japes upon himself, and even surly Buck Howe laughed. Then they came to the big city in the West, disembarked, and were on the threshold of the payoff contest of the football year.

The unrest of the team was evident as they took their workout the day before the game. The big stadium field was perfect, everything was done for their convenience and comfort, but Buck Howe growled, and Gimp Lacey, Tom Grover and other linesmen joined the chorus. Danny Kong snapped back, acting as unconscious spokesmen for the backs. Conny Gill hung around Larry and grumbled.

The three coaches were helpless. Good technical men, they doggedly clung to fundamentals of football, hammering home their truisms. Larry held his peace. A sadness settled in him, a nostalgia for the thing that might have been, that Pappy had consented to try. He fought it, maintaining a resolute gayety, mocking the Chiefs and their greatness with jests in which he did not believe. . . .

They came to the big day, and the stands were jammed to the topmost shelf. The Chiefs in their white jerseys loomed big as a subdevelopment of houses, bands played, banners unfurled, the cold air was crisp and clear, and a smiling sun shone down.

Larry was early at the dressing room, talking quietly among the Mastodons. They were nervous. They were not beaten, they were game enough. But they were terrific underdogs, whether they admitted it or not they missed the gruff old pirate, Pappy Hall. They dressed in silence. Danny Kong tried to talk it up, but his voice lacked brass that afternoon.

One of the three coaches slammed into the room. In his hand was a yellow piece of paper. His face was a study in perplexity, dismay and suspicion. He barked, "This is from Pappy. It says that Larry Deal is to take charge of the team. It says he's head coach for the day."

Larry jerked around, staring. He saw the bafflement, then the conflicting emotions of them all, written on their faces plain as day.

Buck Howe rumbled angrily, "So it's true. You are Pappy's cop."

"Yeah," said Gimp Lacey. "Talkin' it up like a high school kid."

"Passin' out all that con," added Grover. "Teacher's pet, huh?"

"Why, you tired old half-brain," Buck Howe said, "I won't play for you."

Conny Gill leaped up. "You dopes. Pappy knows what he's doing. This kid is smart, see? He's been learning about us and teachin' us about the Chiefs, and look what he did to the Orioles. Stealin' that ball—"

"And you're his stooge," snarled Buck, taking a step toward Conny. "You and a few more worn-out plugs—"

The coach read sharply from the telegram, "Anyone going against Deal's orders today will be fined five hundred dollars and traded from the Mastodons." He paused and stared at them. He said, "Okay, Deal. Pappy's the boss. You take over." There was a great relief in his voice.

Larry struggled to his feet. He said, "I didn't ask for this. Nor expect it. Understand that—"

"You didn't want it, I suppose, you rat?" Buck Howe said.

Larry took a deep breath. He had been holding it in ever since he had come with the Mastodons. He had been determined to repress it, to be what Pappy Hall wanted, to make something of himself, to become a respected coach, a solid figure of the game. He had applied all his will

power and considerable intelligence to this end. Now he felt it going.

He exhaled. He said, "So you don't remember me? You forget about me, huh? You forget I was brought up with Eph Hale and Donie Collander, huh? I keep telling you about the old Chiefs, the gang who bred the spirit that makes them four to one over us today. Why, you—"

He was across the room in two jumps. His dark green eyes had changed to a fiery color which could not be described. He had Buck Howe by the jersey, and he was crowding the huge center against the lockers. His left fist darted out and slammed against Howe's jaw.

The big man feebly struggled, yapping, "Hey! Take him off. Hey!"

"You yellow fat hunk of lard. You half-time football player. You and all the rest of this punk ball club." The eerie, high voice clanged in the room. "Get out there! Get movin', you over-rated chunks of blubber. Snap out of your dopes! I'm king for a day, and brother, am I going to snap the whip over you lazy, double-dealing bunch of hawgs!"

His arms flailed the air. His voice curled over them as though he truly wielded a whip. They found themselves jumping, and some of them found that there was a chill going up and down their spines.

Larry Deal said, "You'll see what football is today—if you're not too yellow. You'll get beaten, because no bunch of fiddle-faddle sissies can whip the Chiefs. But you'll be close to dead men, some of you!"

HE RODE them right to opening whistle. He sank back, breathless for the moment as the Chiefs won the toss. He watched them, the great Chiefs, laughing and slapping one another as they joyfully prepared to receive. Suddenly he came off the bench. He called out the kid defensive quarterback. He adjusted his helmet, running on.

He was calling as he went, "Play upstream on this. I know this one. They're pulling the hand-off on it."

Grover, ears burning, stood sulkily on the flank. On the other end Dick Haven, a thoughtful giant, glanced at Larry, nodded. Blondy, Lil Abner and Conny Gill all uttered words of encouragement, but Larry shook them off, intent on the play. Buck Howe put his toe to the ball. It was a good, deep one, high enough to let the ends down.

On a hunch Larry trailed Grover. He saw the nice machination of the Chief fake. He saw Grover cut when he was faked, saw the blocking shoot outside left end, where Grover had deserted. Then he saw that Haven, taking a chance, had lagged, circled to pick off a blocker. He sailed in and bumped the ball-carrier at the twenty-five, forcing him out. It was Gabby O'Brien, who said, "You better get outa here, turncoat, or we'll murder you."

"Sure," said Larry, pleasantly.

Gabby glared, but did not respond. The Chiefs formed up and began coming. Doug Wickett, called the perfect quarterback from the T, was mixing them from the start, knowing Larry was in there. And Doug knew enough to throw power at the slender Larry.

They came rolling. They smothered him. They got to his weak ankle, about which they knew everything. He was limping as they came over midfield. He got to the sidelines and called time out.

He snapped, "Danny! Boyd . . . Keg . . . In there."

The pair of offensive backs, Kong and Keg Smith, stared. Will Boyd, accustomed to playing defense, opened his eyes, but went in. Then the other two started out. Larry said, "Now let's see if you're ball players."

He pulled out the others, protesting, and sat with them on the bench. Tom

Grover glanced over, but he was leaving Tom in, too. Haven seemed content enough—that was good. Buck Howe, scowling and swaggering behind the line, was already deep in the game.

Gill said, "How you had the nerve to tackle Buck, big as he is—"

"Buck's no fighter with his fists," said Larry absently. "Remember that from away back. Tellegan challenged him one time. He almost took Tell apart on the field, but he just don't like to fight. . . . Watch that fast-breaker, Conny. Left tackle, see? Always left tackle. Gabby can run to his left."

They watched. Down on the twenty, Doug Wickett sent a line plunge at the Mastodons, but neglected to send the ball with it. Instead he deftly leaped and tossed. The ball sailed out in the flat. Gabby O'Brien went skyward, topped it, caught it, lateraled to Natah, the Indian end. Nobody touched Natah as he ran over the goal line.

"They never gave it up," groaned Conny Gill. "They pranced over."

"They'll do it again," Larry promised.

The Chiefs kicked off. Larry sat taut on the bench. Farnswell took the ball behind the goal line. Blocking formed and Rim came roaring out, long legs scissoring. He ran up the funnel, reversed and hit for the sideline. Buck Howe put a block on Tellegan, but the Chief center bounced, shoved Howe away, and ran Rim into a hole. He was knocked out on the twenty-two.

Larry stood up, throwing aside his wind breaker. The Mastodon reserves stared at him in silence. Danny Kong ran a play off tackle which gained three yards. Larry sat down again, without removing the headgear he had donned. Kong shot Keg Smith inside the guard.

Larry's lips went thin and white. He sprinted for the field. Kong gaped at him as Larry thumbed the quarterback off the field and took a time out. The team huddled. Larry snapped at them, his voice quivering, "Like a bunch of scared bunnies! Howe, you missed a block. You didn't open up for Keg on that plunge and he had to shift over and only made two. . . . Boyd, dammit, are you going to get in there?"

They glared at him. He said, "Forty-two and make it good."

He stepped into position on the short punt. The ball came to him and he was perfection itself faking the punt. The Chiefs knew him as a quick-kicker and the backs retreated. He stepped to one side. Grover was free, but he deliberately faked to Grover and threw downfield to where quiet Dick Haven waited. Haven never received passes except on the short side. Now he grabbed this one and ran.

They caught the fleet end on the Chief thirty. Larry was already there, trying to block, swaggering, shouting. The Mastodons lined up. He saw the smouldering sulkiness in them. He snapped. "Sixty, and I'll take it."

It was suicide and he knew it, but he also knew that the Chiefs would be angry, hot and ready for anything the Mastodons could try. Rim was needed for later, Keg Smith and Boyd were valuable men—potentially, he amended, taking the direct pass, spinning, then going for the tackle slot.

They rose up and mobbed him. He felt them hit, squirmed, got loose from two of them, straight-arming viciously, slowing the whistle. He shot off, fighting them, all alone, with giant Chiefs thirsting for his blood. He made four yards after he was hit.

It was his voice, that quarterback voice, as much as anything. He slapped it in their faces. He snarled signals, daring them. He took it again, heading in behind Howe on a reverse. He yapped, "At least get outa the way, you hulk!" Howe threw Tellegan five yards from him and charged. Larry made a first down on the seven yard

line, with the whole Chief team hammering him.

He came up easily, laughing through the pain. His ankle was going again. He yelped to his men. He started into the line, humped and scurrying like a mole digging a tunnel. Then he wheeled, shoveled back.

Rim, who had been flanker, had not drifted on this play. The ball came solidly to the tall runner. Boyd and Smith were checking, waiting. They were escorts deluxe, smacking the tackle, outside after Natah had been decoyed.

Doug Wickett, Gabby O'Brien and Toots Fetzer all were in line when the avalanche struck. Wickett picked his way among the strewn bodies. Larry threw a tremendous block on Ham Graham on the last white stripe. Wickett leaped over, free and untouched.

Larry's voice pealed like a bell. "There's your damn touchdown. Now show me something! These bums are just bums like yourselves!"

He walked off the field. He even managed not to limp. He sent Danny Kong back, defense or no defense. The Hawaiian looked peculiarly at him but said nothing as he joined the fray. The Mastodons kicked off and again the Chiefs began to march like the legions of Rome.

It was murder—but it was beautiful. Gripped in the emotion of watching his former teammates steadily chopping down the Mastodons, Larry scarcely noticed the ministrations of old Chigger. Conny kept groaning, "Ain't there any way of stoppin' those guys?"

"Certainly," murmured Larry. "Pit your strength against theirs . . . and show the spirit. The flame!"

Chigger said, "Your ankle, Larry. It's swellin' through the bandage."

"Re-bandage it," snapped Larry. The Chiefs were down on the twenty again. Howe was waving long arms, the guards were bunching. But Tom Grover went in, like a shot from a gun, and dumped a play behind the line.

Then it was Gimp, smothering a sneaker play before it got started. The Chiefs were at third down with eleven to go.

Doug Wickett deployed his team, faked and feinted, got away from Haven and Bogan. He threw a pass. Gabby O'Brien was on it, snapped it up and went over with Chuck Howe hauling, tugging, trying to pull him back into the field.

It was fourteen to seven. Chigger worked on the ankle. Larry stared over the humped back of the trainer, his face lined deep with care and pain. No one knew better than Larry that he was too old and frail for this game.

The Mastodons received. Rim got it again by crossing over, and ran it all the way to the thirty. Danny Kong worked the left tackle. George Mount, on that side of the Chief line, was not quite as strong as Johnson on sudden thrusts. Keg broke over for five on second down and it was three to go.

They lined up in kick formation and Larry's heart sank. Then he almost kicked Chigger onto his back. Danny had the ball and was fading. Tom Grove was circling in the flat, in front of the backed-up Chief defense. Kong whipped the ball to Grove.

The lanky end grabbed it. He squeezed. He had a clear field.

It was like the plop of a damp orange pip beneath a prodding finger. The ball was rolling on the ground, incomplete. Every man on the Mastodon bench turned and stared at Larry.

Larry was smiling. The Mastodons had to kick. But Larry was relaxed, grimly happy.

Again the Chiefs came. But somehow they did not roll like the legions of old. They stumbled. The failed to score. The Mastodons went back to their task and the ball see-sawed through the remainder of that first half.

THE game was wearing thin. Larry Deal tested his ankle. On offense and defense he had left Danny Kong and most of the others in the game. He had removed men only when they showed signs of injury or weariness from the titanic struggle; it had been a knock-down, drag-out battle since the second Chief score, with neither side having the advantage.

Larry had said almost nothing at half-time. He had submitted to care from Chigger and let the others jabber. The assistant coaches had read off the leads they had picked up. The other Mastodons had done the talking.

Now Danny Kong had given almost his all. It was the Chief's ball on their own thirty. Larry said, "All right, Conny." He had kept Gill out until now. He got up and without limping ran onto the field, the sub fullback at his heels. Keg Smith and Kong, bloody and reeling, went off.

Larry looked over at the puissant Chiefs. He snapped, "You don't look like any conquering heroes to me. Come on, guys, let's nail 'em down."

Doug Wickett was wearing a bruised eye. Gabby O'Brien wasn't talking. Tellegan, the great center, had a rent in his jersey and a cut lip.

As for the Mastodons, they looked as though a cement crusher had just disgorged them. But Buck Howe said hoarsely, "We been waitin' for you."

"Get that ball," growled Larry. "Get it quick!"

Wickett was trying to delay the game. He sent plays into the line, slowly, freezing the ball. Howe and Gimp tore into the plays. Wickett suddenly found he had to kick from his thirty, having gained nothing in three.

Rim and Gill went back. Larry stayed up, midway, watching a chance to block. Natah came swiftly down covering the punt. Larry hit him, drove him, hit the big Indian again, hammering him out of bounds. Natah threw a hard fist. Larry ducked it and laughed. The ball went to Gill, and the fullback came on a straight line with Rim crossing over and taking out Mount.

At midfield there was a clatter of cleats and heavy bodies. Rim went beneath them but came staggering up, his eyes deep-set and steady. Buck Howe gasped, "Come on, Larry! Come on, boy. Give it to us."

Larry said, "They're set for a pass. I'll run while Rim rests. Sixteen play."

He doubted if he could run. He took the ball, faked to break up the defense. Mount was mouse-trapped. Larry slid into the hole and criss-crossed, as Howe smothered Tellegan and Fetzer.

Gimp moved out ahead in that peculiar style of his. He laid a man low. Larry found himself on the sideline, with his ankle buckling and the field clearing up ahead. He heard Conny Gill shouting behind him, felt the pounding of the fleet fullback's feet. He wheeled and slid the ball in a short arc. He threw a great block on Gabby.

Conny, fresh as a daisy, always a fast boy, set sail. Tom Grover and Haven had got together. They blocked and Conny ran. Conny skipped all the way for a touchdown and the partisan stands fell silent as the tomb.

Howe removed his helmet. His face was white. This point decided it—would the Mastodons tie, or were they beaten? Only three minutes remained in the game. Boyd bent to hold the ball. Howe took a step and swung his leg.

A breeze sprang up like magic. The kick was a close one. The wind caught it and spun the ball away. It missed!

Larry's voice clarioned, "Not your fault, Buck! Lucky break for us, though. Now we got to score again!"

A Chief linesman snorted with laughter. The Mastodons had to kick off. The three remaining minutes would find them busy trying to keep the raging Chiefs

from winning. Little chance they would have.

Howe kicked clean over the goal line. Gabby O'Brien tried to run it out. Haven and Grover and Gimp, weary as they were, came in like a trio of furies, and slammed Gabby down on his fifteen.

Larry's confident, brassy voice, said, "Nail 'em down, the bums. The front runners. Nail 'em down!"

It was Howe and Gimp, lancing through, spoiling the play. The Chiefs lost five. They bunched up Wickett coolly, calling the play. The Mastodons humped themselves, the backers-up crept close.

All but Larry. He knew his Chiefs. Gallant, gambling gents, they were, never playing for a tie. He saw Natah streak for the outside and yelled, "Pass!"

It was a clean, pro gamble with the defense pulled in and set up. It was a scoring play if it went. Wickett was sweet, he was sure. He pitched the pass as true as a batting practice hurler feeding the star slugger a fat one.

It was as good as gold. Larry, sprinting, hurtling, forgetting weak ankle, everything in the world but that ball, was desperate. He threw out both hands, batting, intent only on warding off defeat. He struck something, collided with somebody. Pain hit his ankle. He fell.

He rolled over, coming to his feet, some thought in mind of chasing the fleet Indian end. Then he saw Natah, running the other way, toward his own goal line.

He saw Conny Gill, then, Conny who had been listening to him all season, shadowing him. Conny, the guy they had called Larry's stooge.

The sub fullback had the ball. It had deflected into his hands as he followed Larry at the sound of Larry's call of "Pass."

It was a personally escorted tour, every Mastodon taking part. Reversed in their tracks by Larry's warning, they had formed a caravan. Through it Conny threaded his way, battering, beating at any Chief who dared attack. Over the goal they went—nine of the Mastodons around the man with the precious pill!

IN THE dressing room Larry kept saying, "Get a messenger boy. I want to wire Pappy."

In the hubbub and confusion one finally appeared, awed and delighted, staring round-eyed at the heroes. Larry took the pencil. His leg was propped straight out in front and the lamp was on it, but he felt no pain. He wrote and wrote. Then he raised his hand and silence fell.

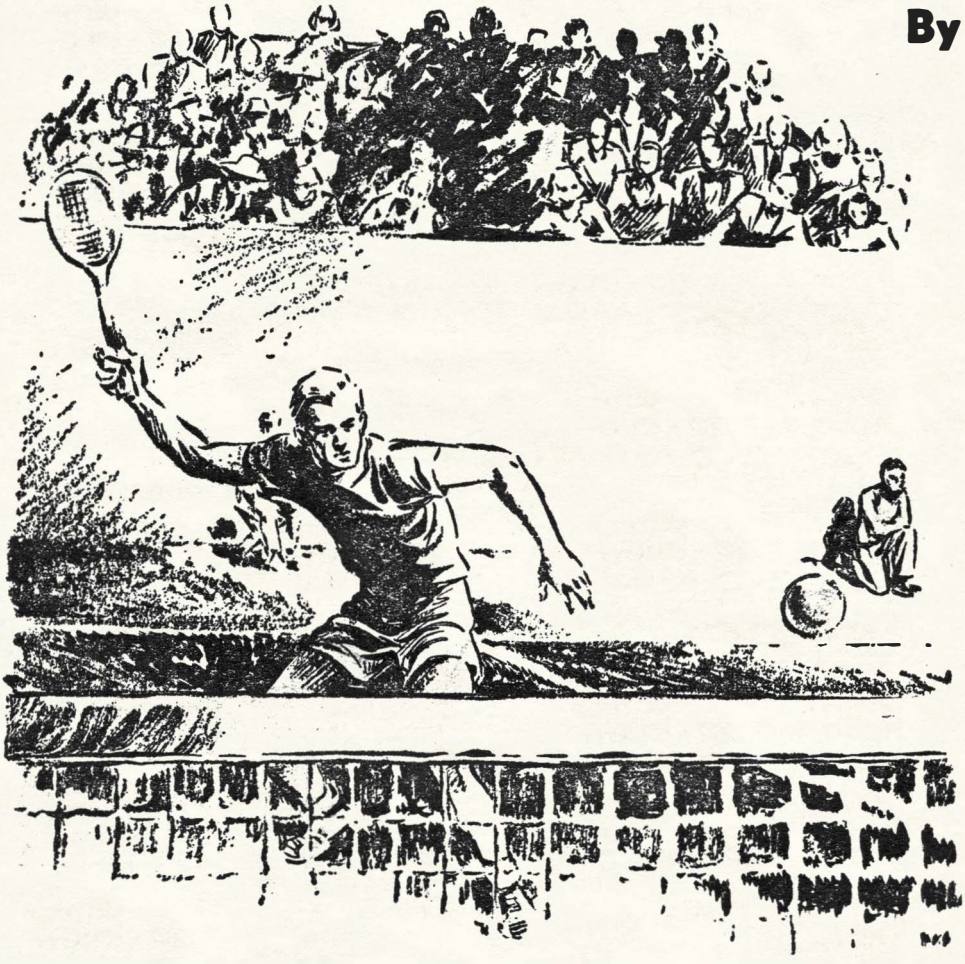
He read, "Dear Pappy: We have met the enemy and they are ours. You have now got yourself a ball club. If there are any more cliques or differences after the bloody field of today, I am a Hawaiian and Kong is a Choctaw. Larry Deal."

He turned and grinned at them, the strain and pain gone. He directed the messenger, "Send that straight wire to Polyclinic Hospital to Pappy Hall . . . collect!"

They whooped with glee. He lay down and let Chigger work on him. He had come home where he was appreciated. He had lost his temper, but he had made it good. He was a solid citizen, the old beat-out brain.

COURT

By



THE champ's second serve came booming over the net, kicked up chalk in the far corner and, almost egg-shaped with heavy spin, bounded wide of the court. Doug Revere moved with deceptive laziness, and was on top of the ball like a cat. He got his backhand on the ball while it was still rising, and drove it hard across court with a sharp flick of his wrist to hold it in court.

It was not a well-thought-out shot—for Doug, at any rate. He had made the same return thousands of times, in practice and in matches as crucial as the one in which he was engaged. Like the rest of his game, it was the product of the plump, balding man with the inscrutable gray eyes behind gold-rimmed glasses, who sat in a box at the far corner of the turf court.

Dick Marden, the champ, was ready for it. Storming the net behind his serve, the lanky Californian got his racket on the ball

CANNONEER

SAM MERWIN, Jr.

You can play tennis by another man's book—but you write the last chapter yourself—with the sweat and cold nerve of a champion!

Again Wascyk got his first service in, but it was just a little slower than it had been. . . .

and volleyed it sharply and crisply to the other side of the court. It was a clean placement and the crowd in the half-filled stands pattered an appreciative applause.

The usual tension surrounding a Davis Cup trial match was missing. The tenniswise few who had turned out knew what to expect from a Marden-Revere meeting, and were having their expectations fulfilled. Marden, the hard-hitting, ever-attacking Californian who had been dominating the amateur tennis picture, was leading Doug, the human tennis machine, by 2-0 and was in the process of piling up a lead in the third.

Games stood 3-love in his favor and the point score was 40-15. After making a contest of the first two sets, Doug had dropped his service twice already in this

one as Marden anticipated his every move. It was an old story, one which had been repeated scores of times in recent seasons.

Doug was a perfect tennis player. Picked up in his early teens by A. Selmer Willis, a businessman until then unheard of in court circles who had made an exhaustive study of tennis, Doug played every shot perfectly—but none of them quite well enough to give him the edge over the real top-notchers.

Experts had long since grown tired of predicting the championship for him. He had promised for years now, and had won dozens of cups, many of them in big-time tournaments, but had yet to cop a major title. In an era without truly great stars he might have been the world's number one player.

Doug continued to play his puppet role while A. Selmar pulled the strings. He owed his mentor plenty—good schooling, tennis training, a chance at a way of life he never otherwise would have seen.

As he set himself for the right court service, he glanced at another sideline box. Anne Cannon was sitting there, her skin tanned, her blond hair streaked by the sun—in combination providing a vivid contrast to her white pique tennis dress. Her head was turned away as she chatted with tall, black-haired Tony Frick, Doug's chief rival for the number-two singles spot on the Cup team.

Doug felt sudden annoyance at her lack of interest, annoyance salted with a pang of jealousy at her interest in Frick. Then he reminded himself that she had no reason to be interested in the match he was playing. Stirrings of rebellion that had been rising within him more and more frequently surged to the surface.

He wondered what it would be like to play his own game, rather than the percentage-sound, predetermined, safe game A. Selmer had long since laid down for him. Suppose, on that last service return, he had slapped the ball straight down the line instead of cross court. The champ would have been caught flat-footed.

As the next service came in, close to the center line corner of the court, a sudden, irresistible impulse overcame him. The book—A. Selmer's book—called for a sharply dropping drive straight down the middle to Dick Marden's feet, followed by a counter-sally to the net.

Marden would be ready for it—he should be by this time. He would either volley or half-volley the ball deep to a corner. If Doug got his racket on the shot at all, he'd simply return a setup for which the champ would be ready and waiting at the net. He'd be behind at no games to four.

But if the ball were undercut wide to Marden's forehand it would not be so easy to return in court. The spin, if it didn't force the champ to net, would force him to hit it so hard for clearance that he'd be lucky to keep it in court. It was strictly against the Willis system, but—

DOUG hacked at the bell savagely instead of hitting it flat and down—he could feel his racket strings bite into the nap as it left his bat at an angle. Caught off-guard, Marden lunged for it, barely got his racket on it and dribbled it into the bottom of the net. He looked at Doug with a lifted brow.

"Nice shot, Doug," he said and the remark was almost a question.

Doug waved his thanks, carefully avoiding A. Selmer's eyes. For the first time in his career he felt like his own man. After all, a good showing was of vital importance in these trials, even a good losing showing against Dick Marden.

Determined to close out the game, the Californian lashed out with a tremendous first service, this time to Doug's forehand; and Doug, instead of again returning the ball down the middle, popped a silly little drop shot just over the right-hand

side of the net. Marden never even got his racket on the ball.

"Deuce," droned the umpire from his high chair. Doug grinned. He felt good. He was in perfect condition and the two sets already played had hardly constituted a workout. He could go on all day.

Marden netted his first serve, put his second, without a reverse twist, deep to Doug's forehand corner. According to A. Selmer's system, this called for a sharply hit crosscourt drive. So Doug hit it hard, right down the line for a clean passing shot. A moment later the surprised Marden double-faulted to lose his service for the first time in the match.

He dropped another after Doug had held his own service and the set was even at three games each. As he prepared to serve in the next, Doug heard A. Selmer talking to him from his box in angry sibilants.

". . . stay in there and play your own game, stupid . . ." was what it sounded like. Doug resolutely closed his ears and went to work He ran out another serve to take the lead, four games to three. And from then on in it was a contest that had the crowd on its feet. Marden rallied and the set went to deuce, with neither man holding the edge for long.

Finally, with the score tied at nine-all, Doug had a run of bad luck. One of his rare double-faults was followed by a bad fall on the grass chasing a deep Marden drive and, before he could recover from the shaking up, the champ, operating with his usual ruthlessness, had run out the game. He held service, though Doug forced him to deuce five times, to take game, set and match.

"Doug, you old so-and-so," said Dick Marden as they shook hands at the net, "Where have you been hiding that stuff? If you hadn't taken that tumble—" He shook his head. Off the court the champ was about as nice as they come—with no indication of the rough, tough competitor that he could be across a tennis net.

"Just thought I'd fool around a little," said Doug. "I had nothing to lose. You're doing okay yourself. You've got that forehand sharpened."

"I thought so too," said Marden as they picked up their towels, blazers, and spare rackets from the table by the umpire's chair, "until you started cutting it to pieces. Wonder how the Aussies are doing at Longwood?"

"We'll soon know," said Doug, starting toward the exit that led to the locker rooms. No one had much doubt of the outcome. In the Interzone Final of the Davis Cup matches at Longwood in Chestnut Hill, the ever-challenging Australians, led by Jack Bromwich, were playing against the winners of the European Zone, a Central European team which had sprung a couple of surprises in winning its way so far.

Tony Frick, rackets in hand, was standing in the entrance under the stand ready to take the court for his trial match against Norman Hart, the other American team selection. Anne was standing beside him, looking lean and cool and graceful. She gave Doug a grin he hadn't seen in a long time—not since early in the year when they had had their quarrel.

"You should have started sooner," she said, putting a strong little hand on his shoulder. "You might have . . ." She saw Marden there and went silent.

"Never mind what he should have done," said the champ. "He had me going."

"Yeah," drawled Jack Frick with a grin which contained a hint of insolence, "but what will A. Selmer say? You kicked his book into a cocked hat."

That put a damper on the proceedings. Anne turned away and Doug and Dick Marden went in and showered and changed, saying little more. For the first time Doug felt full awareness of how A. Selmer, the man who had cleaned up on

a game he had never played, was resented and disliked around the circuit. He felt also full awareness of how anomalous was his own position as A. Selmer's protege. And, despite his new-found courage, he wondered what his mentor was going to say.

HE FOUND out in short order. As he finished dressing, a page boy wearing the West Side uniform came into the locker room and handed him a note. It merely stated that Mr. Willis would very much appreciate seeing Mr. Revere in their rooms at the hotel at his earliest convenience. Doug sighed, tore it up, and put the pieces in the towel bin at the end of the row of lockers.

A. Selmer Willis was as angry as Doug had ever before seen him. He was pacing the carpet of their suite in the hotel—he had made it a point that they should never stay in the great nearby private houses as many of the other players did. When Doug shut the door behind him, he barely gave his protege a glance through his gold-rimmed spectacles, but kept on pacing for a full minute. Finally he came to a stop and regarded Doug, who was still standing just inside the doorway, as if he were a familiar specimen under the microscope—a familiar specimen that had suddenly developed a strange and repellent mutation.

"Revere," he said, cracking Doug's last name like a whip, "just what did you think you were doing out there in that last set this afternoon?"

"Trying to pull out a hopelessly lost match as best I could," Doug told him quietly. "I wasn't winning the way I was playing, so I—"

"I shouldn't have to talk to you like this," said Willis with a tired sigh. "Not after all the years we've worked togteher." He paused, allowing the unspoken implication of how much Doug owed him to sink in.

"But you know as well as I that winning is secondary now that you have a sufficiently high spot in the national rankings," he went on. "It's how you win that matters. You've got to win according to the system to do us any good—and if you lose you've simply met a better player. But you still play the system. Have you got that?"

"Yes," Doug replied, "but I'm not so sure Dick is a better player."

"Nonsense," said A. Selmer sharply. "He's the champion, isn't he? The shots, tactics and strategy I have worked out are good enough to beat anyone—if executed by a sufficiently good player. You may win a fluke match or two with shots no average player can hope to duplicate. But the system is predicated on the theory that any average club player, with practice, can make himself at least a local champion by playing according to the book—my book."

"Yes, sir," said Doug, wondering why he had never before noticed how puffy A. Selmer's cheeks were before, how round the corporation under his well-tailored double-breasted jacket.

"I suppose I'm as foolish as a million men before me to expect loyalty and gratitude," the mentor continued. "I've sensed that you were getting ready to stick a knife in my back. I can't hold you, of course. You're strong enough now to discard me, to put all my work to naught. But, Doug—" he came across the carpet to put a plump hand on his protege's shoulder and look up into his eyes—" somehow I didn't expect this from you."

"I—I'm sorry," said Doug. Suddenly memories of the dreary life from which A. Selmer had lifted him flashed before his eyes. He had been barely fourteen, son of a hard-working factory foreman, and motherless, when A. Selmer had spotted his steadiness in a public court tournament in the Middle West. Willis had made a deal with his father, who had died a year later in a plant accident.

Thenceforth A. Selmer had been all the family had known. The expert had sent him to private schools for polish, had obtained the best pros to work on his game, had patiently brought him along, first as a junior, finally in the lesser adult events, ultimately in the big time.

Suddenly Doug felt a sense of shame for what he had done that afternoon. He felt his face grow hot and looked down at the carpet, scuffing his feet. The older man continued to regard him with an almost hypnotic stare.

"I know you are, Doug, my boy," he said with a sudden flash of fellowship. "I must remember how young you are. You really can't be blamed for what you did out there just now. After all, if you didn't want to win, you'd be a pretty poor specimen to represent us. But remember, the end never justifies the means. You won't let it happen again, I know."

Before Doug could reply the telephone shrilled. A. Selmer picked it up, listened a moment, then handed the instrument to Doug. On the other end of the wire was Julian Adams, non-playing captain of the Davis Cup team.

"Doug?" he said and he sounded excited, a little disturbed. "Word just came through from Longwood. Lewis took Hatch, and Wascyk followed by trimming Bromwich in five."

"Then the Slavs meet us in the finals," said Doug, the import of Adams's news sinking home.

"Exactly," said the tennis mogul. "It means a complete change of plans. We knew where we were with the Aussies, but these boys are an unknown quantity. The movies are being flown down right away. We'll be showing them in the clubhouse—closed team session—tonight at eight. I want you to be there."

"Yes sir," said Doug, a queer stirring of excitement rising within him. America was facing a new and totally unexpected challenge. "I'll be there."

Glory Drive 2

THEY sat there in the darkness of the impromptu projection room—Doug, Dick Marden, Tony Frick, Norman Hart (Frick had, as expected, beaten the less aggressive Hart that afternoon in four sets) and a couple of the kids who had been named to the squad as alternates. Barely visible in the faint light from the screen, and a little to one side, sat Julian Adams.

The pictures that flashed on the screen in front of them were revealing. They showed vividly the emerald green of the Longwood turf as it had appeared that afternoon, the grandstands packed with a tennis-wise colorful crowd, the white lines that marked the courts, and the linesmen in their chairs.

But none of the audience was in a mood to appreciate the beauty of the setting. All eyes intently watched a tall, heavy-chested, long-legged individual with receding, dark curly hair, clad in white flannels and polo shirt, who was weaving tennis magic in front of them.

Stanislaus Wascyk, hitherto a virtually unknown quantity in the international tennis picture, performed brilliantly. His shots, hit with the flat Continental grip, almost from the half-volley, had effortless fluidity.

"Oh-oh," said Dick Marden as the Slav fluffed a return to his deep backhand. There was a murmur of interest. But on the very next exchange, Bromwich hit a ball to the same spot and followed in to the net—only to stand there helplessly as Wascyk drilled a whiplash crosscourt drive past him at an angle that made it impossible to reach.

"You men have your work cut out for you," said Julian Adams in his quiet, cultured voice. Raising it only a notch, he

asked the projectionist to run the shots over. There was a sigh as the watchers saw once more the aggressive perfection of Wascyk's second shot.

"You begin to see how Lannier lost in straight sets," said Adams. "The chaps who claimed he had an off day evidently didn't believe their own eyes."

And so it went. The best tennis minds and arms in America were studying this unexpected threat and probing for a possible weakness—some vulnerable spot in the Slav's game which might crumble under concerted attack. They found none.

"How come he didn't compete at Wimbledon?" Tony Frick wanted to know when the lights were turned on. Julian Adams permitted himself a faint smile. In his mid-forties, he was a lean, almost ascetically handsome man with a body tempered by an entire life as a gentleman athlete.

"I suspect that Wascyk has to do as he's told," said Adams quietly. "They probably figured the Cup was more important, and decided to hold him for a surprise. But that's not all the bad news, gentlemen. His partner, Lewis, is almost as good."

Almost—but not quite. Watching the Slav number two player defeat Hatch, the onlookers felt less tension. Lewis was good—certainly. He revealed a polished, well-rounded game, with no apparent weaknesses. But the tremendous and unrelenting speed, the delicacy, the all-around magic of Wascyk's play was not present. He was a fine tennis player, but no superman.

"He's tireless, though, and he can get 'em," Adams told them when once more the lights were on. "He's a lot better than Brant on his best day and some of you may remember how many good players he upset in his career."

There were murmurs of assent and then Adams spoke again. "I might as well tell you men now that Dick Marden is our number one singles man," he told them. "He's beaten all the rest of you all season and in the trials. The number two singles spot—" he paused briefly, eyeing Doug and Tony Frick narrowly—"is still open. It will be decided tomorrow. Dick and Norman will play the doubles."

This was hardly news. Norman Hart, while not a first-class singles player, had the fleet adaptable well-rounded game that made him one of the best American doubles players. He and Marden had already put the National Doubles title under their belts two weeks before at Longwood.

So, Doug thought as he moved toward the door, it was between Tony and himself. He caught his rival's eye on him with a trace of mockery in it, turned away and then jumped slightly as Julian Adams called his name.

"Yes, Mr. Adams?" he said. The others had moved on and they were alone in the projection room. Adams regarded him with a faintly quizzical look.

"For a few minutes this afternoon, Doug," he said, "I had a dream. I saw a young fellow who looked something like you out there against Dick. He appeared to have the match hopelessly lost but it didn't bother him. He threw a lot of preconceived notions overboard on the spot and played the smartest, headiest tennis I've ever seen on a court. It couldn't by any chance have been you, could it?"

"I—" Doug stammered, confused and embarrassed. Julian Adams might have been a gentleman sportsman, but he had more than doubled his inherited fortune, had commanded a bomber group for three years in the South Pacific and was a shrewd and subtle judge of men. He smiled faintly.

"Doug," he said, "we're going to need every ounce of stuff we've got to hold on to this cup. Apparently it's turning into a matter of international prestige that puts the Olympics to shame." He paused.

"I have a crazy hunch that it's going

to depend upon you," he went on. "That man is dangerous. Speed won't beat him, he thrives on it. It's going to take a lot more."

"I've still got to get by Tony Frick," Doug said levelly. "He's beaten me four times out of seven this season."

"I hope, for the sake of all of us, you even the score tomorrow," said Adams. "Take care of yourself, Doug, and—follow your own convictions."

Walking along a clubhouse corridor alone, Doug felt confused and unsettled. He was being pulled in more directions at once than anyone had a right to be. If he didn't play A. Selmer's way he'd be doublecrossing the man who had given him a chance in life. If he did—he resolved to do the best he could by his mentor's system.

AT THE end of the fourth set of his match with Tony Frick, Doug knew he was going to need luck in copious quantities. He had come on to the court determined as never before in his life to win with the Willis system. It was, as nearly as he could figure out, his one hope of meeting all the loyalties that were tearing him in two.

Heretofore there had been considerable justice in the popular claim that he was a human machine, a player without emotion who performed his court tasks with all the sensitivity of a robot. After his rise to the front rank of American players via the system, he had come to bank on it completely.

Utterly its master, he had simply played by the book—the A. Selmer Willis book. He did what was required of him and, if he lost, it was simply too bad. He didn't lose to any but the best top-notchers, and not often to them. His position on the second rung of the first ten in the national rankings attested to that. His play was automatic, and it wasn't his fault if it failed to win for him.

"Just play your game and you'll be all right," A. Selmer had told him earlier in the afternoon, as he had a thousand times before. Now, as he stood on the baseline, taking a breather while Tony prepared to serve, the words rang through his head with a new significance.

He had taken the first set easily, 6-3, the second after a harder tussle, 8-6. When Tony, his unflagging net attack finally getting results, had copped the third set 7-5, he had not been worried. Tony could not possibly maintain his game at such a pitch.

But somehow Tony had. Instead of weakening, he had lifted his play another notch to take the fourth set at six-two and square the match. Doug slapped the strings of his racket against his leg, silently exhorted himself to lift his own game sufficiently to win. Tony grinned at him as he toed the baseline, but Doug did not grin back. He wished he could wipe the smirk off Tony's face.

The first serve of the set was good, a poor omen. It was, if anything, harder than the champion's, but it lacked Dick Marden's delivery's deadly spin and placing. The ball was a full foot inside the baseline and Doug met it cleanly on the rise, hitting it back down the center and following in.

Tony half-volleyed gracefully toward Doug's backhand corner but Doug was anticipating the shot and volleyed it hard across court, Tony, who had the reflex actions of a born volleyer, got his racket on the ball. But he had to hit up and Doug was on top of it, putting it away, deep to Tony's forehand.

He walked back to receive in the left court, knowing he had been lucky. He had a good volley ball, at times a brilliant one, but he was no match for Tony over the long route at the net—for Tony or the champ. However, it was part of the system that he play the all-court game, which meant he had to come to the net often.

He knew he should stay back most of the time. He had the hair-trigger control and steadiness off either hand to make life miserable for the orthodox California type attack player. His game should be to play deep and to sharpshoot, cutting, driving, drop-shotting and lobbing, making them run until their tongues hung out, only then moving in for the kill.

But no, that wasn't the system. The average player couldn't hope to attain sufficient variety and mastery of stroke for such a game, so he was not allowed to do it—even if he had run the champ ragged for a few games with such play the previous day. He glanced briefly at Willis' box, then at Anne's.

A. Selmer was sitting there with a smile on his fat features, nodding his approval. Anne was not looking his way at all. This time she was talking earnestly to Julian Adams, who was looking as disgusted as his impassive face permitted.

Tony served then and aced him cleanly. A moment later and he had run out the game as Doug made two errors on service return. They changed courts and Doug paused to mop his streaming face with a towel and pour ice water on the nape of his neck. Tony scorned such assistance and moved directly into position to receive service.

Doug had a fine service—he had three of them in fact—which he used to full advantage. But somehow he was not at his best. His confidence was shaken, and he could not get his first ball in. Before he realized it Tony had broken through for a 2-love lead.

Ten minutes later it was a 4-love lead and Doug once more prepared to receive.

He glanced at A. Selmer, who still smiled encouragement from behind his gold-rimmed glasses. Doug looked a moment longer than he should, drinking in his benefactor's smug complacency and, for his pains, was aced again.

But he smiled as the referee droned the score and smiled for the first time in the match.

What he had to do was obvious. He had to drive Tony back from the net, make him afraid to come in. When it came to a baseline duel Doug knew he could give his rival fifteen a game and take him by almost any score he chose. The thing to do was to get busy and break up Tony's volleying game.

Tony got his first serve in, kicking high to Doug's backhand. Doug took the ball high on the bounce and chopped it back sharply across court with heavy underspin. Tony tried to volley it but the unexpected shot fizzled off his racket into the net. It was 15-all. Tony scowled at him before serving again.

"And you're another," Doug muttered under his breath, smiling. He felt a sudden joy in the problem that faced him, a new freedom that freed him of fatigue. For the second time in his career he was using his own brains, his own tennis savvy and talent rather than those of his mentor.

Tony tried too hard and missed his first serve, which was out by a foot. He scorned easing up on his second try and landed a terrific cannonball in the outer corner, racing in behind the serve. Doug, with his deceptive casualness, caught up with the ball and sent a beautifully masked low lob arching just above the tip of Tony's frantic racket. It was 15-30 in his favor.

His brain working on all sixteen, Doug decided that Tony would not come in so fast on the next, fearing another lob. So when the serve came in, once more to his backhand, he hit a short, sharply angled cross-court drive that raised chalk dust where service and sideline met and caught Tony flatfooted.

Tony laid back on his next service and Doug cut the ball down the sideline to his rival's backhand corner. He was smiling now, although his concentration was complete. Tony essayed a deep cross-court

drive but Doug had anticipated it and backhanded a little dropshot over the closest portion of the net, once again catching his rival twenty feet out of position.

He had broken Tony's service with ridiculous ease. As they changed courts between games Tony looked at him oddly. His eyes were a little haunted.

"Teacher won't like," said Tony, mopping his face with a towel.

"Neither will Tony," said Doug. He was still chuckling as he took his place and, abetted by his newly won confidence, scored a clean ace with a flat twist which Tony did not expect. He cut, hacked, lobbed, drop-shot and only occasionally hit a hard flat drive, as he ran through the next three games to knot the count. His aim was to break up the pace of Tony's attack and, by the time the games were 4-all he knew his opponent was thoroughly bewildered.

Then, in the final two games of the match, he went all out for speed himself. It was part of the Willis system never to sacrifice control for dazzling speed. Steadiness and control were the twin buttresses upon which the system stood. As its leading devotee Doug had never been known as a powerhouse. But, having discarded his mentor's methods, he decided to lash out with full power.

He won those last two games in eight straight points—scoring two service aces and three placements, and forcing three errors from Tony's wilting racket. The formerly cocky Davis Cup candidate was a gray-faced and shaken young man as he extended a hand to Doug across the net when it was over.

"Dick Marden told me about it yesterday," he said, "but I didn't believe it. Where in heck have you been hiding all this time, Doug?"

"I'm beginning to wonder," Doug told him, putting a friendly arm across his rival's shoulders. In his current mood he liked everyone—with one exception. He looked around for his ex-mentor, saw that pudgy worthy's back as he forced his way through the crowd toward the grandstand exit. For a moment, as he recalled what A. Selmer had said to him the day before, he felt a pang of guilt. Then he saw the face of Anne and Julian Adams as they hurried toward him and forgot all about the fat man.

"I WAS so afraid you weren't going to do it," Anne said to him.

"I couldn't let Mr. Adams down," said Doug, taking the hand the non-playing captain offered him. Adams was openly jubilant.

"Thanks for showing me it wasn't a dream," he said. "You had me afraid I was having delusions the first four and a half sets, though."

"Reality came none too soon," said Tony with a rueful grin. He was standing at the edge of the turf, still eyeing Doug as if he couldn't believe it. "Doug, if anyone had told me I was going to lose today, much less not mind being beaten, I'd have been tempted to bust him one. You earned this one."

"Thanks, Tony," said Doug. He turned back to Anne and Julian Adams and walked toward the clubhouse with them. Adams could not conceal his grin.

"You're playing second singles, of course, Doug, but I don't mind telling you that it's you I'm counting on to take two."

"You think Wascyk will take Dick?" Doug asked, astonished. Adams nodded.

"Unless a miracle happens. And you know we're not overstrong in the doubles. The way things look now you'll play Lewis the first day. Do you think you can play your orthodox game against him, and win?"

"There's only one way to find out," said Doug. He grinned, savoring the strategy Adams had propounded. "I'll certainly

give it a try. And if he does run me ragged I'll have the day of the doubles to rest."

"We'll run Tony against Bromwich in an exhibition," said Adams. He looked at Doug quizzically. "You're sure you're going to be your—your own man from now on? Any backsliding could be immeasurably costly."

"I'm your man, Mr. Adams, while the Cup tie is on," Doug said quietly. Adams nodded, squeezed his shoulder and walked away. Doug looked at Anne, who was still standing there with him, close to the locker room entrance.

She was there when he came out and they walked together to the parking lot where she kept her convertible. "Where to, Doug?" she inquired as she handed the tag to the attendant. Doug pulled thoughtfully at his lower lip.

"The hotel," he said. "I might as well get it over with now."

The door to the suite was open. Doug walked in, faintly surprised, looked around for A. Selmer. But his ex-mentor was not there. The whole suite was curiously gaunt and lifeless. He stood in the door between bedroom and drawing room, scowling as he tried to figure it out.

It wasn't hard to get. There were no suitcases in evidence. A Selmer's silver-backed military brushes and gold-stamped pigskin collar box were not on the bureau, nor was the hand-tooled leather picture frame with the photograph of A. Eelmer and Doug after the latter had won his first tournament at fifteen.

A. Selmer had decamped, bag and baggage.

Suddenly Doug thought of his own stuff. He opened the bureau drawer alloted to his own shirts, drawers, socks and pajamas, found it empty. An unreasonable sense of panic pervaded him. After all, A. Selmer had taken care of his every want for too many years now not to have become a major factor in his life.

His own suitcases, too, were missing. Disturbed, Doug made his way downstairs to the desk. The clerk, who had not spotted him coming in, smiled in greeting.

"Your baggage is in the checkroom, Mr. Revere," he said. "Mr. Willis has checked out. But he left you a note."

Doug tore at the envelope with suddenly shaking fingers. He read—

Dear Doug,

Since you no longer see fit to do things as we planned I see no further need in continuing our relationship. I know you have a few hundred dollars in cash on you and am enclosing a check which should cover any claim you might choose to make against me for share in the book we worked on together. I have taken the liberty of packing your bags.

I trust those whose advice you seem to hold above mine will take care of you as well as I have. Wish me luck in my search for a new protege—I wish you only the best.

Your friend,
A. Selmer Willis.

Doug looked at the check, which was for a thousand dollars. He shrugged, then put it into his wallet where the two hundred and twenty-odd dollars which comprised the remainder of his wealth reposed. He claimed his bags and went out to the car carrying them.

"What gives?" Anne inquired, her dark eyes wide with surprise. He put the bags down on the sidewalk beside the convertible and grinned at her.

"It seems I am an orphan," he told her. "A. Selmer has scrammed. Do you know anyone who would put up a stray tennis bum?"

"You're darned right I do," said Anne, "but if you think I'll tell you you're out of your mind. Now that you're free of that octopus and on the Cup Team the world is yours—the tennis world, anyway. But you're coming home with me."

Anne's family had a house in Roslyn, a big, comfortable, unpretentious place in which, for the first time since A. Selmer Willis had taken him on the tennis trails, Doug felt at home. He relaxed in the atmosphere of friendly security and en-

joyed very much the sense of belonging.

Mr. Cannon, Anne's father, was a magazine publisher, and proved to be a shrewd kindly man who offered Doug no advice until he was asked, after which he proved a thoughtful adviser. Mrs. Cannon was an amiable gray-haired lady who ran her home with quiet perfection. Anne's younger brothers and sisters, who seemed at first to be legion, gradually became identified in Doug's mind as they swarmed admiringly about him.

"There are such an awful lot of us," Anne mourned the evening before the Challenge Round matches began. "I hope you don't mind it—I'm used to it."

"It's swell," Doug told her. "I'm having the time of my life." They were, for a wonder, alone in the living room. He told her something of his own lonely life. Finally he laughed ruefully and sat up.

"I'm boring you stiff," he said. "Let's go for a drive. I'm a bit on edge, I guess. Did you see that Wascyk practise this afternoon?"

"I did," she said, standing up. "But you've got Lewis to worry about tomorrow. You'd better beat him or we're cooked."

"Nonsense," said Doug lightly. "Dick will take both of them."

"I hope so," said Anne quietly. "Come on—let's go."

Her worst fears were almost borne out the next day. Doug, who took the court first with the Slav number two man, found that he had his work cut out for him. Lewis was a good steady player with unexpected pace on his shots—they bounded with deceptive heaviness. Doug, playing under wraps, dropped the first set almost before he knew it.

He got going then but it wasn't easy. Each of the next three sets went into deuce games, service following interminably. But Doug was able to force the break in each and walked off the winner with the applause of the crowd ringing in his ears. He wondered if A. Selmer had been watching. The fat man should be satisfied. Only for the briefest flashes had he departed from the system which had been his bible until the trial matches for the Cup Tie.

"Nice going, Doug," Dick Marden told him in the clubhouse before going on for his own match. "That's one in the bag for Uncle Sam."

"It'll be two before the sun goes down," Doug assured the champion.

But it didn't work out that way. Playing tennis of a caliber seldom seen even in that tennis holy of holies, Wascyk dominated the match all the way. Despite the fact that Marden managed to win the third set, the outcome was never in doubt. And the Slav took the fourth with almost contemptuous ease. The fifteen thousand in the horseshoe stands sat silent, spellbound by the magic of his play, as he tied up the matches at one all.

"He had too much, that's all," said Marden, sitting, still panting, in front of his locker when it was over. "His game looks delicate but even his easy shots are hard."

Then, the next day, the Slavs went out and took the doubles in five hard-fought sets. When Wascyk's final smash bounded high into the concrete stands, the challengers were leading America by two matches to one. Doug and Dick were going to have to win both matches on the final day of play, if the Cup were to remain in the country of the man who first gave it as a trophy for international competition. It was going to be a last-ditch fight.

Case for the Courts 3

DICK MARDEN and Ivor Lewis took the court first. The American champion looked tired, drawn and a little tense.

His dark-skinned rival was his usual imperturable self during the warmup. There was a feeling of high excitement and foreboding in the air. The crowd groaned almost audibly as Dick, playing miserably and reeling off error after error, dropped five of the first six games.

"He'll find himself—don't get in an uproar," said Doug to Anne with a confidence he didn't actually feel. But as if he had heard the words the tall Californian took a deep breath and slammed over an ace. He hit another and another while the packed stands applauded. Lewis got a racket on the fourth serve but could only return a weak sitter which Marden put away with a tremendous smash.

"Now watch," said Doug with a smile. "He's found himself."

The champion had. He began to play his usual whirlwind game, a game which the second-string Slav, good as he was, could not answer. Marden deuced the set at 5-all, dropped a game, then took the next three for an 8-6 win.

That was all there was to it. The Californian ran out the next two without much trouble, utilizing a single breakthrough to take the second set, 6-3, and cracking Lewis's service twice in the third and final set. He had put on a good show save for the first few games, and the matches were all even at two each when he walked off the court with the applause of the crowd in his ears.

"Well, honey, this is it," said Doug, gathering up his rackets and rising. He spotted his tall, curly-haired opponent talking volubly to a group of his compatriots a few yards away. Wascyk was laughing, obviously very much at ease.

Julian Adams was waiting for him, on the way to the court. Doug looked at him curiously.

"How do you want me to play him?" he asked. Adams smiled and shook his head.

"Any way you think you can beat him," said the non-playing captain. "After what you showed in the trials I'd have a hell of a nerve telling you how to play tennis. If I were you, though, I would try to get the jump."

The strategy was sound, of course—if Doug could get hold of the match with his new style of play in the opener he should be able to keep Wascyk on his heels the rest of the way. There was only one trouble—the Slav apparently took the court with exactly the same idea in mind. From the spectator's point of view, it was one of the swiftest, most graceful, hardest-hiting contests ever played.

Down on the court it felt different. At one point, after a long and incredibly hard-fought rally with the Slav, Doug leaned, panting, on his racket handle and wondered why tennis, a game whose strokes look so beautiful, is actually a matter of smacking a fast-moving ball as hard as possible.

Before the first two games were over he had reason to remember what Dick Marden had said about Wascyk's game. The tall European seemed to hit his shots effortlessly, almost lazily, with perfectly controlled length and angles—but they were shots that traveled like large white bullets, hit so flat that they tended to skid almost like chop strokes on the green turf.

If he had one weakness it was in the pace of his drives, the heaviness of their bound. But they were stroked so swiftly that their lack of weight off the sod was a small blessing. Doug, who had won the racket toss and had taken first service, quickly found it broken through at fifteen as Wascyk, taking his serves almost on the half volley, advanced to the net and put the ball away deftly.

It was too fast—especially with the Slav determining the speed—and he set himself to break it up. Wascyk's service was a streak of controlled lightning and Doug had difficulty in getting his racket

on the ball at all, so well was it placed. But at the last moment, on his first receiving point, he let his grip loosen a trifle and returned a drop-shot that barely cleared the net and left Wascyk looking at it stupidly as it dribbled toward the side line.

Thereafter games went with service to 5-all, 6-all, 7-all, 8-all—an on until the usually well-disciplined crowd was standing on its feet, roaring delight after every brilliant exchange. This was the critical match, and players and crowd alike had risen to the occasion.

Somewhere along the line Doug lost track of the games. He was concentrating fiercely on holding his service, working harder still to break through Wascyk's fast game. That break would mean the set and a tremendous edge on the match.

He was mopping himself with a towel during a change of courts when he did happen to notice the scoreboard. To his astonishment he saw that he was in the lead, 18-17, with the Slav's service coming up. He turned to look at his opponent, who was pouring water on the back of his neck. The big European straightened, dripping, and Doug handed him a dry towel.

"A good match, yes?" he said in heavily accented tones. Doug nodded and had an inspiration. He was going to have to do something to crack the amazing assurance of the curly-headed tennis master. He decided on a bit of psychology.

"Let's give them a bit more," he said casually. "I won't break your serve until we change courts again. This is fun."

It was a bare-handed bluff but he saw a sudden look of surprise across the handsome face of his opponent. He turned away, making a grin. He took the first point off Wascyk's next service, then dropped the four that followed. The Slav won them honestly but Doug didn't let him think so. On one occasion, when his foe had honestly placed a ball out of his reach, Doug pulled up a trifle quickly as if he hadn't cared to go after the ball. On another, after nearly having his racket turned by the speed of a drive and netting miserably, he smiled at the Slav as if they shared a secret between them.

He gathered reserve force from somewhere and took his next service at love, putting all four first balls in and scoring a pair of aces in the process. Then, when they changed courts again, he winked as they passed beneath the umpire's stand. The Slav stopped dead and looked after him, scowling.

"Now," he told himself, slapping his racket against his right leg as he prepared to receive, "I've got to make good on it." He relaxed utterly for a brief moment, then put his weight on the balls of his feet.

DURING the long set he had seldom hit with all of his force, and then only when he had a placement setup that demanded speed. Most of his effort had been concentrated on slowing up the swift European. He had hit plenty of hard drives, but they had been interspersed with lobs and chops and drive shots. Not once had he put on an exhibition of sustained speed as he had the previous week to blast Tony Frick off the court.

Now was the time for it—if he had it. He said a little prayer that he could keep the ball in court under full power as Wascyk tossed the ball high in the air for his first service. It came crashing down into the right court, to Doug's backhand along the center line.

Doug stepped into the ball almost before it had left the ground and hit it with every ounce of muscle he could muster for the occasion. The ball left his racket like a bazooka shot, ticking the net with a sharp cracking sound as it cleared, and lifting chalk as it landed untouched in the Slav's backhand corner.

"Got him!" Doug thought and felt the

wine of exultation course through his veins.

Again Wascyk got his first service in, but it was just a fraction of a second slower than it had been—or so it seemed to Doug. Again it was along the center line, this time to his forehand. He laid into it with everything he had, and this time sent a steaming flat drive to the Slav's forehand corner. More cautious, he had laid back and managed to get his racket on the ball, but at the impact the bat flew from his hand to skitter along the grass.

"Tough luck, old man," said Doug, masking a grin. He was ready when the Slav served again, this time a much softer ball with tremendous spin, and hit a tremendous drive to Mascyk's backhand corner again. This time, rallying his powers, the Slav smoked it back and across court. But Doug was on top of the ball and hit a backhand even harder, straight down the line.

Wascyk sent it back along the same line, hoping to put it behind Doug as he moved back to center baseline—but Doug had spotted it coming and drove a long backhand deeper still, this time diagonally across court. The Slav took off after it as if he were wearing seven-league boots.

Doug knew what was coming—another crosscourt backhand—but the shot came back at an even sharper angle than he had anticipated. He put his head down and ran to catch up with it. By the time he did he was wide of the court.

He had one moment of vision before he hit the ball. Wascyk had followed his magnificent shot to the net, and was waiting there to cut off any return from the angle at which Doug would have to hit it. The umpire, in his high chair, was at the other end of the net; but the net-cord judge was sitting at the near end in his collapsible wooden chair. Between his nose and the net post Doug could see an utterly unguarded corner of his opponent's court.

So he hit the ball around the net, into that corner. It passed behind the Slav and game and set were won before he had even a chance to turn around. The score, a Challenge Round record for such a marathon, was 20-18. The crowd stood on its collective feet and let go with a full-throated roar.

That was the match. Wascyk tried gamely to get going in the next two sets, but Doug's play and psychology had taken the heart out of him and he could only call on his magnificent game in flashes. They were not enough. Twenty minutes later the match was over and he was congratulating Doug across the net.

"Tell me," he said, his voice low. "Did you mean what you say about you only give the crowd a match for fun?" His beaded brow was wrinkled.

"What do you think?" Doug replied. "I'm just beginning to enjoy this game."

Then the ceremonies were on. The president of the Tennis Association, Julian Adams, and a host of notables were on hand for the presentation ceremonies. Doug and Dick Marden were photographed holding the huge historic bowl; then Dave, Dick and Norman Hart, who had played in the doubles; then the Americans and the Slavs.

Doug, who was impatient to get finished with the rigamarole so that he could shower and rejoin Anne, managed to smile his way through it. When it was over he tried to break away, but Julian Adams stopped him.

"You made a master-mind of me, Doug," he said. "Thanks, fellow."

"You helped make a man of me," Doug told him. Somebody grabbed him and spun him around. It was Dick Marden. He was grinning like a monkey.

"And I've got to play you next week in the Nationals!" he moaned.

"I'll probably go under in the second round," said Doug, but both he and Dick knew it wasn't so. There was a new number one man in American tennis.

Freddy dove, his flying spikes toward the plate. . . .

The stands hated his guts, and baseball was out for his hide—until nine guys went to bat for a busher who was costing them a pennant!

By
LANCE KERMIT

BUSHER ON A SPOT

THE SILK SOX, those veteran aristocrats of baseball, had Freddy Hagen down in Florida for a look the first year he was out of college. He had thought that a wonderful occasion. He had gone eagerly to the camp, his broad face shining. Every single thing had gone wrong, he admitted sadly when he had time to think about it much later in Wheelville, the farthest flung outpost of the Silk Sox chain. He was playing first base for the Wheelville Miners in June.

The Silk Sox, owned by Millionaire Jock Maxfield, were back in second place in June. Freddy felt that he should be happy about this, but he guessed he was just another Joe College, always rooting for the home club. They had kicked him around in Florida, but they were his team.

In the March sunshine, Florida had seemed grand to the boy from Connecticut. He drew his uniform and the twenty-five bucks they allowed him for spending money and went out to enjoy the climate that very first day. He went over to the airfield because flying was his hobby. He took up a plane and did some stunts, stuff he had picked up in the air corps. Then he rode the bus into town and had a couple

of beers. There were a lot of tanned, nice-looking people around and he beamed upon them. He was a large young man, over six-three, weighing one hundred and ninety pounds. He wore size fourteen shoes and his hands matched his feet. He had short blond hair and white teeth and a big grin, and maybe he looked a little reckless and carefree for a rookie.

At any rate, he had not known it was Cheever in the party at the big table. And when he had bumped into a chair—because of those big dogs—and his beer spilled on the stout, graying man, he had apologized. Only when the man snarled had he said, "Skip it, grandpa. Skip it."

That had been Cheever, the new manager of the Silk Sox, the man they had brought out of retirement to win the pennant for Jock Maxfield and the almost-champion ballplayers Jock had bought at great expense. Freddy found that out next day, in the clubhouse.

Cheever was in uniform then, a bulldog figure with a hound-dog mournfulness in his face. He stared at the hulking first-base rookie, then turned away. He took in all the Sox, the regulars, Porter, Azzari, Olean, Bolton, Moore, Luke; the catchers, Fat Krieger, Landrum, Parkhill; and the assembled rookies. The pitchers kept apart a bit. Freddy recognized Stew Pelky, the sultry and marvelous southpaw star. He saw Bob Snyder, the first-sacker.

Cheever said in his dry, hard voice, "This is a club which should go places. It hasn't. I'm here to see that it moves from now on. I have some rules of behavior. They are—no late hours, no dissipating, no private flying of planes, no fighting among yourselves, no conduct on field or off which is unbecoming to a gentleman. But mainly I have one paramount demand upon you all. I want fight." He shouted the last word so that several of the men jumped.

Freddy never forgot that moment. Cheever was challenging the team, threatening them, daring them—and the Silk Sox did not take it well. They shrugged or they sat immovable and let it go. They were high-priced athletes, each a specialist. They were Jock's boys, darlings of the home town crowds, not quite champions because the Steers were champions, those uncouth bums. But the Silk Sox were disdainfully good and knew it, every man jack of them. And there stood old Cheever, out of retirement after five years, challenging them.

Freddy went out on the field thoughtfully when it was over. He had a big trap of a mitt, and he went to warm up with the infielders. A rookie named Glynn, a jug-eared second-sacker, threw a ball to him. Freddy had a way of trapping a ball in that mitt, wrist loose, which was eye-catching. He threw it back. He was, for a big man, the loosest man ever to hit baseball. His co-ordination was a joy to watch.

Nobody else threw to him. Nobody paid any attention to him. Bob Snyder, Silk Sox first-baseman, was a veteran star, and there were two others around to fight over the utility job. Freddy and Glynn teamed up that day and the succeeding days. Glynn was not expecting to stay either, as Azzari was a hard-hitting keystone man and younger than some of the others.

THE TIME came for hitting practice. Freddy took his turn in line. He had found a big bat—he used a bigger one than anybody. He was lounging, watching the pitcher, when someone jostled him and stepped by to edge him out of his place. Without particularly noticing, Freddy put out an arm and moved the man aside, saying mildly, "Making a mistake, aren't you, pal?"

The man said harshly, "No mistake at all, busher."

Freddy looked, then. It was Willy Bolton, the left fielder who was as tall

as Freddy if not so wide. It was the home run king, the sixty-thousand dollar per year man, the hallowed great man of the Silk Sox. He had a lean, bitter face, eyes set close alongside a jutting nose, and a square, heavy jaw which protruded in a fighting grimace.

Freddy said, "Oh. It's you, Willy. Okay."

Bolton said, "Apology accepted, busher. Get your big feet out from under me."

Freddy said in his mild voice, "Okay, only don't think I'm scared of you or anything like that. I know the rule—the stars hit first, the rookies last. But don't push me, Willy."

"Mister Bolton to you," snapped the outfielder. "And I'll show you—"

Cheever's voice cut like a whip. "Stop jawing and hit!"

Bolton stared, then froze. He stepped to the plate. He cut savagely at the soft offerings and knocked the ball twice over the fence. Then he slammed down his bat and stalked away.

Freddy went up. He held the big bat still, watching the pitch. He swung. He knocked the ball into left field. He hit five of them, all into left field, none very long, just singles. Despite his size he had never been a long hitter. Somehow he just loved to get those singles. He ran out his last one. He could move—he had played end on his football team. He went on into the outfield and shagged flies.

He was amazed when he got a chance to play first base on the Yannigans. This was later, after the pitchers had begun to curve the ball. He did a good job around the bag—he was a natural fielder, fast and with that loose-jointed style which goes with the very best first basemen.

But when he faced Stew Pelkey's stylish left-handed stance he was completely helpless. He could not hit a loud foul. He waggled the big bat, he swung at everything good and passed up the bad ones all right. But he could not hit the curves.

He sat that night playing solitaire on the balcony of the hotel lobby. He got thirsty, arose and went downstairs for a drink. He collided with someone at the top of the stairs. They grabbed each other and fell down the full flight. Freddy managed to keep the other man fairly safe, but he hurt his right arm.

It was Jock Maxfield with whom he had tangled. The millionaire, a touchy young man who had inherited his money, had much to say, all of it profane. The next day Freddy Hagen was on his way to Wheelville.

It would not have been so bad if he had not slanged Maxfield. But even in the Air Corps he had always resented being cursed. Maxfield was lucky at that, because Freddy had almost clipped him.

It was bad in Wheelville. The trips were all made by bus and a big guy like Freddy could not get comfortable in a bus. The infields were choppy, the infielders scatter-armed. And worst of all, he still was not hitting even the puny curves of the bush league hurlers. The manager was apathetic, nobody seemed to care about anything, and Freddy was about to quit baseball. He had a football contract for the fall and enough money for carfare home, and what he had seen of the national game was certainly not conductive to a young man's happiness.

The unbelievable telegram came in early June. Freddy read it and re-read it. Then he wired for confirmation. He got a blistering reply, "You get here tomorrow or you are fined a hundred. Cheever."

He bought the papers and caught the plane. There had been a double header the day before. He read the boxes. Bob Snyder had gone seven for nought. He wondered what had become of the other first sackers in the Silk Sox. He thought of his own hitting average, .250, a weak .250 with no long ones.

He could not make it out. He came into the big city and found the hotel

Cheever had mentioned. There was a room for him and he could sign for his meals, so it was all true. He got a phone call that Cheever wanted to see him at once. He went downstairs and met the heavy-set gray-haired man in the lobby.

Cheever said, "You big, fresh rookie, I meant to keep you down there for a year, then boost you to the Association for another couple years. But every first baseman on this club of dunces has flopped or got hurt."

"Mr. Cheever, I am not hitting," said Freddy flatly. "I—"

"You think I don't know that? Bah! Of course you're not hitting. Nor doing anything else right. But you're a fighter. Anyone with half an eye—and a look at your college record—knows that. I'm I'm going to take a big chance on you. Not on the field—you're not ready. But I want you to do the strangest job ever to be attempted by a rookie. Are you game?"

Freddy looked long into the deep-set eyes of the older man. He saw intelligence and determination there, and he saw down underneath a glowing fire, the banked fire of a real fighter. Freddy said, "If you say so."

Cheever said, "Maxfield is not in on this. No one is, except you and me. We may both be fired for it."

Freddy said, "I was going to—" Then he stopped. He did not dare admit to this hard-bitten great baseball man that he had been about to quit. For the first time in his life he felt a little ashamed of himself. He ended, "I was going to say that I'll go down the line with you, Cheever, all the way."

"Against the whole team and the owner, too?"

"Right," said Freddy.

"I thought you were my man," nodded Cheever. "I knew it when you gave me your lip—and gave it to Bolton, too. Well, here it is—" They talked for hours.

FREDDY HAGEN was late. He paused inside the dressing room door and looked at the Silk Sox, most of whom were dressed and ready to take the field against the league-leading Steers.

The Sox seemed older than they had in Florida. Their faces were seamy and tanned, and their features were heavier. An aura of doggedness hung over them, but without spark. Someone looked up and said, "Oh, my! It's the no-hit busher with the big dogs!"

Freddy said, "Was that you, Bolton? And what are you hitting?"

Bolton started up. He said, "Now look, busher, I don't know what you're doin' here, but—"

Freddy said, "I'm playing first base for a bunch of guys who ain't been any place yet this season. You wanta make anything out of it?"

Bob Snyder said, "You're what?" He was a lean, sinewy left-hander, a great boxer and rough-house man, although on the Sox he had never been forced to show his stuff.

"I'm taking the place of a yellow dog who can't hit or fight," said Freddy plainly. "That's you." Someone ranged alongside him as half the Sox came to their feet. It was Glynn, the reserve second-baseman, and he had a spiked shoe club fashion in his big hand.

Glynn said, "Yahhh. Too snooty to speak to guys, huh? Come on, you silk-stocking bums. Me an' Freddy'll lay you all in the aisle."

The door to the manager's office clanged open. Cheever's voice snarled, "Get out on that field. You know my rule—no fighting. Five hundred apiece fine will make that stand!"

They went onto the field. The Steers came out. Freddy watched the league leaders warm up. They were a tough club, a gang of fighters, all the way through. They had Agent at short, Vines on second for a great double play combi-

nation. The first sacker, Laddy Crane, was a .300 hitter. Ben Pond on third was wide and tough and great. The outfield of Morey Cool, Buck Lane and Tom Steel was a murderer's row at bat, and could throw like three demons. Ossie Kurtz was the best backstop in the league, and the pitching staff was cunning and solid. Red File, the southpaw, would work today —another curve baller, Freddy thought, wincing.

Well, Freddy only had one game to play, he reflected, if Cheever's plan worked. Glynn would be at second to make it a real shake-up. Azzari and Snyder would ride the bench, raging. The Silk Sox would be shocked to the very foundations of the club. If there was any fight in them, it would come out now. Cheever was a very wise gentleman.

Freddy was chewing a wad of gum, not because he liked the stuff very much, but because he imagined it made him seem tough. Glynn chewed tobacco as a matter of habit. Glynn was really tough. They went out and warmed up.

Glynn had a whale of an arm on the double play toss. Mel Luke could wing them over from short with his eyes closed. Don Moore strung them on a wire into Freddy's glove. Mechanically those Silk Sox were wonderful. They made first basing a rocking-chair job. Freddy came in without speaking to anyone but Glynn.

The game finally began. Freddy went to first base and yelled to Pelkey, "Come on, you screwball hook-arm. Dust off a couple of these monkeys. Let's go to town, you bums!"

Glynn took it up, "Get the leadin' lady, Stew. Get to work in there. Everybody's with you—you bum!"

The veterans, with their regular line of chatter thrown off key, growled. Pelky, pallid with rage, faced the first Steer, the graceful Steve Agent, shortstop and expert lead-off man. Fats Krieger knelt behind the plate and gave the sign. Pelkey reared back and let the ball go.

The Steers were all yelling in the dugout. They had the league lead, and they meant to hold it. If they could blast the fading Silk Sox now, they would have less trouble later on. Agent hauled back and struck at the first ball, pulling it toward right field.

Freddy saw it coming. Smack off the bat, first shot, there it was. The ball was a line drive, it was going between first and second, but nearer first. Glynn was hustling back into right field to take the relay if it went through. Phil Olean was steaming in to nail it on first bounce.

Freddy's six feet-three form flung upward and to his right. Half turning, he flung up that sloppy big mitt. The hard horsehide slammed into the net and Freddy thanked his stars.

He came down, lined the ball to Glynn and said, "All right, bums, let's get at 'em. Let's tear 'em down now—"

He stood near the box to take the last of the go-around throws. Pelkey was surly, but he said, "A nice, lucky stop. Thanks."

"Throw something," Freddy urged him. "Get them babies out."

Pelkey threw. His curves were not breaking with jug-handle smoothness, nor had they been that season. Morey Cool laced one down to second. Glynn charged it, made a great stop, momentarily bobbled the scorching ball. Then he whipped it over. Freddy stretched a mile. He trapped the ball.

The umpire said, "Safe!"

Freddy wheeled, outraged. He howled, "Safe? Are you blind, you monster? Why. you grave-robbin' dimwit—" He stuck out his big jaw, coming close to the man in blue. He lowered his voice and said, "You're right, Maloney—This is for the effect. Gimme a break."

The arbiter blinked and yelled, "Play ball or get outa the game, Hagen!"

Freddy waved his arms, walked over

to Pelkey. "They're stealin' it from you, Stew. We had him cold!"

Pelkey took the ball, scowling. He wound up and threw. Buck Lane, trying for a long one, hit into the dirt off the low curve.

The ball hopped down to Luke. He grabbed it, handed off to Glynn. The rookie second-sacker threw overhand as Cool charged into him. Freddy felt the ball smack into his glove and yapped, "How about that, Maloney?"

There was no doubt. A snappy double play had retired the Steers. They went on the field regarding Freddy thoughtfully. The Steers had nice, quiet ways of handling tough rookies.

They also had Red File ready to go. The wily left-hander struck out Kid Porter, made tough Glynn fly to center and whiffed Olean. Freddy, getting hoarse from urging on his teammates, went back afield. Cheever had said little, most of it biting. Cheever had been smart, admonishing Freddy also, along with the others, about fighting the umpires. Glynn's raucous voice was an accompaniment to everything Freddy said.

TOM STEEL, Steer center fielder and clean-up man, was lead-off. He was a powerful man, relaxed and smart. Freddy watched him lay back, ignoring Pelkey's teasers, waiting for one he could use. It came, an outside curve. Steel brought the bat around with consummate skill and force.

The Steers came out of the dugout as one man, yelling deep-voiced cheers. Tom Steel slowed down at first. Freddy growled at him, "Lucky slob!" Steel merely winked, turning the bag. The ball was in the right field stands, and the Steers were one run ahead.

Freddy went over to the pitcher. He said, "He picked on a bad one, Stew. Bear down. We can spot these characters a run."

Pelkey said sarcastically, "You think I pitched correctly to him?"

"Sure," said Freddy blandly. "Get these next guys."

Pelkey gave him a strange glance, then went to work. He got Crane, Pond and Vines in order. The Sox went in, trotting briskly to the bench.

Freddy grabbed a bat. He was in the hole, with Bolton up first, then Don Moore. He said, "All right, Big Head Bolton. Let's see you start something."

Bolton said, "I'll start something with you, busher—after the game."

"It'll cost you five hundred," Cheever butted in.

"It'll be worth it!" The fighting jaw of the narrow-eyed outfielder was taut. "I can take just so much."

"Hit!" said Cheever. "Let's see you get on."

Bolton swung his bats, threw one away, strode to the plate. Red File laughed at him and threw easy, swerving hooks, nothing to get the wood onto. Freddy, nursing a bat he had selected, stared at the redhead. His heart was in his throat now. If Bolton got on—and Freddy failed to advance him—

Bolton grabbed hold of one of the easy ones. It wouldn't sail for him, but he knocked it into right center for a single. He drew up at first and stared long and earnestly at the bench. Freddy knew what that meant.

Don Moore tried hard, but struck out. Freddy got up from the on-deck box and wondered if everyone could see how his knees were trembling. He carried the yellow stick gingerly up there. It didn't feel right in his big, powerful hands. He grinned at File and hoped it wasn't a silly grimace.

Kurtz started right in on him. "Here's the big mouth with the .250 average. The Wheelville Wheel! Here's the big shot, pal. Lay it on him."

Freddy was half-expecting a duster, but

the Steers did not play that way. The ball broke and centered the plate. Had he stood up to it, he could have had a cripple, a round-house sucker curve to hit. He gritted his teeth. On first Bolton was yelling something. Freddy wrapped his hands around the bat. It still did not feel right. File ripped a fast one over the outside corner. It was two strikes, no balls.

Freddy fell out of the box. He cleaned his spikes with care. He tugged at his cap, his belt. He set his jaw. He got back into the box.

File wasted one, and then another. Then he threw his Sunday curve which seemed about to crowd Freddy's ribs.

Freddy, making a guess at the pitch, stood his ground. The ball broke and Freddy whipped his bat. It felt like throwing a straw at a cannonball, he thought. But there was a smack of wood on leather.

Freddy ran. Willy Bolton was also running. The ball was into center, skidding on the grass. Bolton turned second as the coach waved him on. Steel had a great arm, but Bolton's long legs scissored over the ground. The great outfielder hit the dirt with a tremendous slide.

Freddy did not get a sign, but he was halfway down to second on the throw. He saw there was not a cut-off. He rammed his big body into the dirt and slid over the bag, grabbing it as he went by.

He was up in a trice, trumpeting through his cupped hands, "Okay, Bolton. You scratch out those singles, I'll getcha around!"

Bolton, dusting his pants, said nothing at all. Mel Luke, the weak hitting shortstop, was up. Sure enough, Mel made the second out on strikes. Fat, stocky and bow-legged, was wandering to the platter. Fat was an oldster, a great catcher. Freddy howled to the heavens, "Must we die here? Two down, Fat, two down! Get us somethin', Fat!"

The catcher looked over Red File's assortment. He coolly ran the count to three and two. File had to grit his teeth and try to brave one through or else walk him and chance a pinch-hitter—Snyder or Azzari being available. File chose to take a whack at the aging catcher.

Fat came around on it. The ball scratched into left field. Bolton was home like a scared rabbit. Freddy slowed up at third. Then the coach gave him the hand. Morey Cool had fumbled the pick-up. Freddy put down his head and sprinted, then dove with flying spikes at the plate.

He felt a terrific blow, he was rolled in the dirt and stunned. Ossie Kurtz was a plate-blocker and body checker of note. But the umpire was spreading his hands. Freddy got up and laughed.

Cheever let Stew Pelkey hit. Freddy went into the dugout. Mel Luke blurted, "That was damn fine base running. Ossie's punch-drunk now—look at him."

Bolton said, "It was a hit, anyway." His tone was grudging.

"It was a single," said Freddy groaning. "If Bolton can't knock long ones, I got to. And if singles got to get us around, we got to run harder."

Cheever appeared to be paying no attention. The Silk Sox scowled, except Luke and Glynn. The shortstop and second baseman appraised each other, then Freddy. Luke, a truly great fielder, shrugged and nodded at Glynn. Pelkey hit a long fly and was out.

In the field, Luke was suddenly afire. His voice joined those of Glynn and Freddy, barking, snapping. Kurtz laced one down to deep short. Luke seized it and made a magnificent throw which caught Kurtz ten feet away. Freddy yapped with glee and Glynn came in and again Luke talked it up tough.

File struck out. Pelkey, beginning to use more speed, made Agent pop foul along the first base line. Freddy languidly trapped the ball. His loose-jointed grace

was obvious and the fans began to yelp encouragement, their first doubts allayed. The Sox trotted in to the bench. As Freddy passed the Steers' dugout the bench jockeys cursed him soundly. He thumbed his nose at them, grinning.

Porter struck out. Glynn, however, whacked one and got to first. Then Olean hit into a double play, and the Sox were out in the third.

Freddy said, "Phil, that stunk up the place. We ought to be three runs in front. Can't anybody do anything but us rookies?"

Olean flushed. He snapped, "Wait, morning glory. This ain't over."

Freddy went out to first. Pelkey had reached top form. He got the murderers, Cool, Lane and Steel, all in a row.

CHEEVER was sitting on the bench, saying nothing, cap pulled low over his nose. It was now 2-1, for his team, and Bolton led off again to end the fourth. Freddy was needling Bolton. The big outfielder seemed about to burst, but he slammed a double off the centerfield wall.

Moore walked. Freddy picked up the same light-colored bat and went up there. He was scared now. If he hit into a double play that would be the end of it. He might much better strike out, go down swinging, than to mess up with a double play ball. He simply couldn't holler and ride the Silk Sox if he flubbed.

File was really bearing down. His curves were sickening, sharp. He got two past Freddy before the hapless big first baseman could get set. Bolton and Moore were both hollering for a hit.

Freddy dug his big feet into the clay of the batter's box. He scowled, watching File. He saw the waste ball, a wide curve, sailing dangerously near the outside edge of the plate.

He almost closed his eyes, following the ball's course. He snapped everything he had, bringing his powerful shoulders around with tremendous force. He nailed the ball on the nose as it slid for the corner.

He ran like a big panther. He saw the runners reaching up and paused, heart in mouth. Then he saw that Tom Steel was racing deep in the centerfield slot of the Sox stadium, four hundred feet from home plate. Steel turned and hustled, jumping. The ball nestled in his glove for the out.

But Bolton was off. He was down to third like a large rabbit. Moore went on to second and made it with ease. Freddy sighed, turning back. A Steer jockey yelled, "There he goes! All-American out again."

Freddy pointed to the base runners, and laughed. Mel Luke was up. As Freddy went to the bench Mel struck savagely at a curve and knocked it down to short. He was thrown out, but the double play had been spoiled.

Fat Krieger unemotionally knocked a blooper over second. Bolton scored, but Moore was held at third. Again Cheever let Pelkey hit and the hurler again hit a long fly, retiring the side. But the Sox now had a two-run lead and the Steers were raging.

Pelkey was still pitching along. He got by the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth, still going along, rating himself well. Pelkey had the stuff, all right, to be the greatest lefthander in the business. File kept getting into trouble. But he was master in the clinches.

Freddy, grimly swinging the strange bat, scratched a hit off him to start the Sox half of the sixth, but died when File tightened and got Luke, Krieger and Pelkey in a row. The Sox started another rally in the seventh, when Glynn hit after Porter grounded out. Olean got one, putting Glynn on second. But the great Willy Bolton struck out!

Then Moore walked, and it was Freddy again. But he could only hit another long

fly, which finished the inning. He was chagrined, but he already had two hits and a good fly-out which set up a run, so he could still ride the Sox. He did so, with gusto, notwithstanding the two-run lead.

They rolled into the ninth, and the top of the Steer batting order was due against Pelkey. Freddy walked to the mound and said, "You been pacing yourself, pal. Stay with it."

Pelkey said, "G'wan, soak your head, busher." But he grinned a little. "You're too fresh."

"That's right," nodded Freddy. "But we're winnin'!"

Pelkey pitched. Agent was all over the box and Pelkey just did lose him on the three and two ball. The Steers began their chant of victory. Morey Cool wagged a big bat. Freddy howled against the Steer chorus and Glynn joined him. Mel Luke came in. Pelkey pitched to Cool.

Cool reached for a slightly wide one. He lammed it down to short. Luke came in, reaching, eager for the double play. The ball hit something and took a bad bounce. Luke flung himself after it. Both runners were safe.

Freddy ran for the box. "Toughest kinda luck, Mel. Let's get 'em now. Let's get two, and the third man'll fall apart!"

Pelkey was shaken, but Cheever did not take him out. Cheever had his own ideas about this game. His jaw jutted as he sat, staring out from under his cap. Bob Snyder and Azzari moved on the bench, unable to keep still. They had said nothing since the game started. They were waiting for Glynn and Freddy to blow up, or cause Pelkey to blow.

Buck Lane was up. The rightfielder had gone hitless, and was due. Freddy didn't think the Steers would let the big man sacrifice. But he had to play in, just in case. The left-handed swinger could murder him by slamming one down the line, but Freddy could not chance a slow bunt to advance two runners. This was the big leagues, where strategy was laid deep.

Pelkey threw, and then Lane did just what Freddy had not expected. He did square away. As he shifted his grip, Freddy was in motion. So were Pelkey and Glynn. The ball trickled on the first base line.

It came a little deep. Freddy gauged it. He was swift, unleashing the power of long legs and body. He picked up the ball in his bare left hand. He wheeled. Glynn was covering. He whipped it to Glynn, and raced for the bag.

He got there well ahead of Pelkey, and he was at least even with Lane. Glynn, with that terrific arm, whaled the ball back in an attempt to complete the hardest double play in baseball. Freddy, Lane, Pelkey and the ball all came in a little group, each moving in its orbit.

The umpire bawled, "Yer out."

Pelkey took the ball from Freddy, moulded it in his hands. Agent was on third, but there were two down. Pelkey said thoughtfully, "I ain't sore at you any more, busher."

Freddy said, "The hell with that. Get Steel!"

Pelkey tried. He threw all he had into every ball. But Tom Steel was next to Willy Bolton in hitting greatness in the league. Steel laced into one. It soared and soared, and as it did Freddy's heart sank. It was another homer—it tied the score.

Freddy went over to the pitcher. Pelkey said, "Okay, kid." Glynn came in, and the other infielders. Pelkey glanced at the bench, but Cheever wasn't sending in another pitcher. Pelkey said, "It's been a hell of a ball game."

Then, collected and cool, he struck out Crane to end the inning.

THE SOX came in. Freddy put his hands on his hips and stared at them, one at a time. He did not say a word now.

The score was all knotted up and Kid Porter led off the last of the ninth. The Sox glared back at the rookie who had ridden them and showed them baseball.

Porter went up. The graceful centerfielder teed off on one. He knocked it clear to the left field bleachers—but Cool managed to get it.

Glynn said, "Okay, us rookies got to do it."

He took a narrow stance and picked on one of File's best curves. He lanced it over short, ran down to first, and stood there shouting for help.

Phil Olean had hit into two double plays that game. This time he grimly waited, seized a soft pitch, and whacked it carefully into left. Glynn held up at second.

Bolton was up. Freddy, pawing the bats, yelled, "Not a long one today, big shot. Not one! Can't you hit the ball?"

Bolton pawed the ground. File threw him a sailer. Bolton brought the bat around in the famed, powerful, smooth swing from the toes. Freddy jumped, staring.

The bat broke. The ball went fine, but the stuff was gone when the wood gave way. Steel, deep in center, made the catch. The runners advanced, but Bolton was out.

It was up to Moore, who had not hit that day. The third baseman dug in and swung a big bat. File pitched with care. He pitched with so much care that he lost the corner and Moore got his third walk of the day. The bases were all filled up. There were two out, and Freddy Hagen was at bat.

Cheever never moved on the bench. Snyder and Azzari were on their knees, watching. Suddenly Snyder yelled, "Knock it outa the lot, busher! Bale one into the damn' stands! Let's go, busher!"

Azzari wasn't a second behind. "Come on, you big mugg! Lay one out there! Break their hearts, Freddy ol' boy!"

Pelkey, a quiet man, was screaming. Glynn was dancing on the bags. It was like a forest fire. Porter, Luke, Krieger, and the reserves, were all rattling the bats, leaping like monkeys.

Freddy heard them. Gulping, trying to get his heart down out of his throat, he advanced to the plate. The Steers' manager was out consulting with File. The suspense mounted. This was more than Freddy had bargained for. He had agreed to play a part, to make the Sox hate him and fight because they hated him. But now they were on his side, bellowing for mayhem—and he was still a .250 hitter from Wheelville.

He stared enviously at Glynn, wishing he were like that young man, really tough. He had been forced into this role and it was a heavy dramatic part for an easy-going young guy. He pulled at his belt and cap. The bat—he regarded it with something near horror. It felt so strange in his grasp.

The Sox were boiling. Their voices were deep and booming. Freddy stood there with the yellow stick. File threw two beautiful strikes past him.

A voice boomed above all others, "Lay into it, busher. Get that long one you been talkin' about! You can do it, busher."

The voice was not gibing him. It was encouraging him. It was like a pat on the back from a pal. And the man with the voice was—Willy Bolton.

File threw. Freddy watched it. The ball broke nice for the inside corner. File hadn't let him see one of those before. Freddy threw his shoulders into it. Somehow there seemed more snap in his big wrists as he lashed at the ball.

He felt the impact. It stung, but did not hurt his hands. He broke for first base like a startled colt.

The runners were moving. But they were leaping up and down. They were waving their caps. The coach admonished, "Touch all those bases, you big, loud, busher!"

BUSHER ON A SPOT

He went around. He saw fans in the centerfield bleachers fighting for the ball. He touched carefully all the sacks as the crowd came down. He wanted credit for that home run. It was the first he had ever hit in organized baseball!

IN THE dressing room Cheever let them have it. He said, "Tomorrow you go back on first, Snyder, and Azzari goes back, too. But you see what we've got, now. We've got two kids who can step in there any moment and take your places. I'm using them for utility and pinch hitting—you saw what they can do in the clutches. And you came alive, in the ninth— "

"Just a minute, Boss." Willy Bolton was shoving forward. "Lemme save you a lot of jawin'. Sure, we saw. We're all veterans, you know. We were like these kids once. It was a swell lesson, Boss. You brought these bums in and showed us. And I want to say it worked and we're goin' again. And I wanta say we're goin' to win the pennant and the Series and these kids get full World Series shares, too."

Freddy was struggling to say something. The formality of the meeting was gone. The Sox were laughing and horsing each other. Freddy stammered, finally, "Look, guys. Cheever showed me I was usin' a bat too heavy for me. That's the only reason I swung so good today. The light bat came around better. And this was all Cheever's idea." He was pleading with them. "I can't keep actin' fresh like that. It ain't natural with me."

Glynn howled, "Oh, no? Well I'm fresh and I can."

Freddy sighed. "The thing is, you guys like me. I'm just a boob about that. The thing is, I like it here and you like me—and we can whip any damn team in either league."

Bolton roared, "You're damned right."

(Continued from page 31)

still wobbly. He stood there and he watched Bernstein tolling out the count. He saw Duke Montrey standing up, his hands in his vest pockets. Tommy Shane was beyond, yelling his head off.

Georgie Townsend moved his head when Bernstein reached seven. He was flat on his back, arms and legs spread out. He lifted his head from the floor and then dropped it again. He was still that way when Bernstein finished the count.

IN THE dressing room Johnny said to Spindell, "I'm expecting two guys, Joe. One is Marty Howlett and the other is Duke Montrey."

Spindell lighted a cigar.

"You won't see Howlett," he explained, "because Marty is at his desk, poundin' out the biggest story ever to hit the sporting world. I gave it to him, Johnny. It's about Duke Montrey and about us. We'll hope after the fight tonight the public won't be too hard on us, kid."

Johnny started at the fat man. "You gave Howlett the story?" he repeated.

"I got you into it," Spindell said quietly. "Thought I'd try to get you out, kid." He added, "The other guy you're expectin' won't be around either, Johnny. Duke Montrey was picked up right after the fight by F. B. I. men. The Duke is in it up to his neck now on fight fixing charges, dodging the income tax, and a half dozen others."

Charlie Gleason came in, grinning broadly. He said, "Johnny, that Shane kid is outside. Wants to see you."

Johnny opened the door himself. He looked at Irish Tommy Shane standing out there. The kid was kind of sheepish. He held out his hand.

"Johnny, I want to come back."

Johnny Barrett said softly, "Kid, we'll all be doing that from now on." He held out his hand and Tommy Shane took it.

LOSER TAKE ALL

(Continued from page 51)

When the knock came at the door, he called, "Come in."

The man who came in was vaguely familiar. He was a tanned and stocky man with streaks of grey at his temples.

"Jock Drew? I'm Tony Brayton. The Jordon Company."

Jock knew the company. Years before he had used their line, had given his name to their products.

"Come in, Mr. Brayton. Sit down. I know your company."

Brayton sat by the window. His brown eyes were shining. "Jock, I watched you all day. I've never seen better golf."

"It's kind of you to say it."

Brayton shook his head. "What I can't understand, and forgive me for asking, is why you should come out of retirement and take on a whole smear of the best pros in the country."

Jock held a match to his pipe. "I—I had a great need for the money."

"I suppose you signed up with somebody?"

"No, lad. They offered me pennies. I knew that if I failed, all I would have would be the pennies, and if I won, they would have to offer much more."

Brayton jumped up, began to pace back and forth, his hands in his jacket pockets.

"Who buys the expensive clubs in this country? Men in your age bracket. Men from forty to seventy. For years they have been plugging tournament golf as a young man's game. And along you come and almost take one of the fattest tournaments of the year. Why, every duffer in the country was identifying himself with you. He was saying to himself that if Jock Drew can do it, so can he."

"You're building it up, lad."

"Nonsense! Don Jeryde won the tournament, but you won the hearts of the people." He stopped suddenly, smiled.

"I noticed you used Jordon clubs."

"I've used Jordon clubs for twenty years. They have honest workmanship. At our little—I mean, at the little club I used to work for up in Vermont, I sold your products, changed a little."

Jock walked over and took a club out of his bag. He held it out to Brayton. "See? I took the factory grip off. I cut the handle thinner, coated it with putty, held it properly for a moment and then let the putty set. Afterwards I cut it off, and a little plastics company in Montpelier makes the finished grips which I fasten to the clubs. With that grip, you can't hold a club wrong. I did it for the customers up there. Showed them how to hold the club properly while the putty was on the handle, then had their own handles made."

Brayton said softly, "Let Jock Drew personalize your new Jordon clubs! Jock Drew and the Jordon workshop will be at your golf club next Saturday. A limited number of customers can be served. With a personalized set of Jordon clubs, your hand can't slip, your grip will always be right! Take strokes off your score!"

"Are you dreaming, lad?" Jock asked gently.

"Maybe. I don't know. It's up to the big shots in the company to tell me if I am. Can I phone right here? Good. First, what's your minimum for a three year contract?"

Jock thought of his second place winnings. He thought of the grave, unsmiling man who had examined Molly.

"This may seem a shade stiff, lad. Ten thousand flat to use the method. And ten thousand a year to me."

"Stiff?" Brayton said, laughing. "You haven't been around lately."

Jock Drew sat on the bed and Brayton's eager conversation on the phone was only a background to his thoughts.

Molly's face, pale against the pillow. Her arms around his neck. *Good luck, a long roll, and magic on the greens.*

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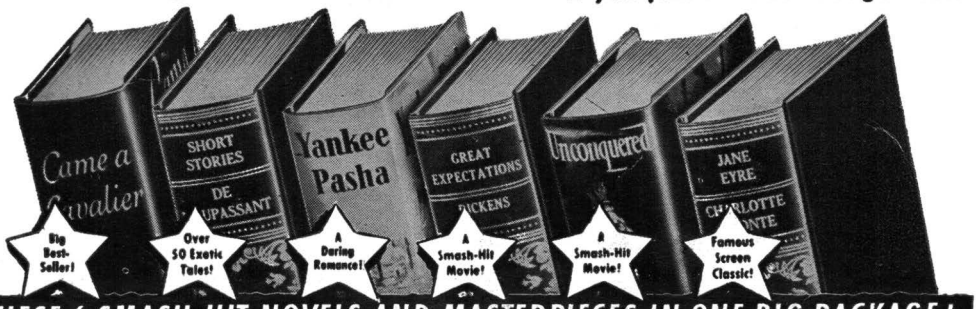

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