

10¢

# ACE SPORTS

MONTHLY

JANUARY



## HOOP HOKUM

*Basketball Novelette*

## HOCKEY HOROSCOPE

*Special  
Feature*

*By*  
JACK KOFOED



## CHARGE of the ICE BRIGADE

*Rink Novel by* JOE ARCHIBALD



OUR SENSATIONAL NEW 1938 CATALOG NOW READY! NEARLY 600 PAGES OF UNUSUAL NOVELTIES, SEND 10c FOR IT!

**BROADCAST thru your radio TALK - SING - PLAY**

**BROADCAST** Your voice on programs coming through your own radio set—make announcements from any part of the home—speak to guests, sing and play records. Imitate radio stars, practice crooning, singing, radio acting, etc. Do a "Ben Bernie" or a "Judy Vance."

**World Mike**

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**DELUXE MIKE**

Larger, substantial, all-metal mike. Perfect for studio, home, or broadcast. Price \$2.00. Price Postpaid 25c.

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Home-kitchen results—amplified reception. Pick up stations from anywhere. Code, short wave, foreign and domestic broadcasts, etc. Each set complete with all accessories. Price \$1.50. Price Postpaid 25c.

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**How To Be A Police Reporter**

Price 25c.

Send 10c for 600 page paper covered edition, or 25c for complete DELUXE cloth bound library edition

Johnson Smith & Co. Dep. 8G1, Detroit, Mich. 1938 CATALOG - 600 PAGES OF UNUSUAL NOVELTIES



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## — A FIELD WITH A FUTURE



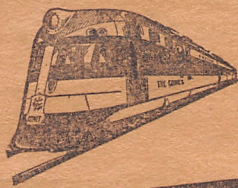
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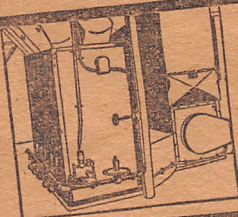
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★ Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your booklet, "Who Wins and Why," ★ and full particulars about the subject *before* which I have marked X:

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☐ RADIO

☐ DIESEL POWER

☐ AIR CONDITIONING

☐ ADVERTISING

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- ☐ Electrical Engineer
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- ☐ Welding, Electric and Gas
- ☐ Reading Shop Blueprints
- ☐ Boilermaker

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- ☐ Machinist
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- ☐ Patternmaker
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- ☐ Automobile Mechanic
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- ☐ R. R. Section Foreman
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- ☐ Secretarial Work
- ☐ Spanish
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- ☐ First Year College
- ☐ Business Correspondence
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- ☐ Civil Service ☐ Mail Carrier

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- ☐ College Preparatory
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- ☐ Cartooning

Name..... Age..... Address.....

City..... State..... Present Position.....

If you reside in Canada, send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

Please mention ACE FICTION GROUP when answering advertisements



# ACE SPORTS MONTHLY

January, 1938



Vol. VII, No. 1

## COMPLETE ACTION STORIES — NO SERIALS

- CHARGE OF THE ICE BRIGADE** (Rink Novel) . . . Joe Archibald 10  
*Paulson had to come back the hard way—via the outlaw route.*
- PIGSKIN JUGGERNAUT** (Gridiron Story) . . . Don George 35  
*How a rampaging juggernaut took football lessons from a girl.*
- THE SPORTFOLIO** . . . Joe Archibald 46  
*Illustrated oddities of the sport game.*
- HOOP HOKUM** (Basketball Novelette) . . . Nelson S. Bond 48  
*In the suicide corner, Zip Connors had to learn new hoop hokum.*
- ALTITUDE COMEDOWN** (Pole Vaulting Tale) . . . Cliff Howe 64  
*Pat Harmon gambled on failure pushing him over the record bar.*
- HOCKEY HOROSCOPE** (Special Feature) . . . Jack Kofoed 74  
*Predictions for the season's hot-ice demons.*
- TWO-WAY SHARPSHOOTER** (Bucket Drama) . . . Ron Broom 79  
*Being a shock absorber was Bucky's martyrdom.*
- FIGHTER'S FIASCO** (Boxing Story) . . . Louis L'Amour 89  
*He had the sock, but he didn't care when he used it.*
- AGE TAKES A HOLIDAY** (Fact Article) . . . William J. McNulty 97  
*Grandfather Time outraces youngsters up athletics' top rungs.*
- DOUBLE-BACKED PUCKSTER** (Hockey Yarn) . . . Ralph Powers 98  
*Sportsmanship led Tillingworth to battle opponents and teammates alike.*

Cover by Rafael M. de Soto

**This is an ACE Magazine—See Page 8**

Published monthly by Magazine Publishers, Inc. Office of publication, 29 Werthington Street, Springfield, Mass. A. A. Wyn, President. Editorial and executive offices, 67 West 44th Street, New York, N. Y. Entered as second-class matter October 8, 1935, at the Post Office at Springfield, Massachusetts, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Trade Mark Reg. U. S. Pat. Off. Copyright, 1937, by Magazine Publishers, Inc. Manuscripts will be handled with care, but this magazine assumes no responsibility for their safety. For advertising rates, address Ace Fiction Group, 67 West 44th Street, New York, N. Y. Twelve Issues, \$1.00; Single Copies, Ten Cents.





WISH I COULD GET A DECENT JOB

WISH I COULD AFFORD TO DRESS BETTER

WISH I COULD AFFORD A NEW CAR

WISH I COULD MAKE MORE MONEY

WISH I COULD GET OUT OF DEBT

WISH I COULD AFFORD TO STEP OUT A BIT

WISH I COULD SUPPORT A WIFE

# STOP Dreaming START Earning



## Learn to Make \$30, \$50, \$75 a Week

### I will train you at home for good spare time and full time JOBS IN RADIO

Many Radio Experts Make \$30, \$50, \$75 a Week

DO you want to make more money? Radio offers you many opportunities for well-paying spare time and full time jobs. Broadcasting stations employ engineers, operators, station managers and pay up to \$5,000 a year. Spare time Radio set servicing pays many \$200 to \$500 a year—full time servicing pays many \$30, \$50, \$75 a week. Many Radio Experts own full time or part time Radio businesses. Manufacturers and jobbers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, servicemen, paying up to \$6,000 a year. Radio operators on ships get good pay and see the world. Automobile, police, aviation, commercial Radio, loud speaker systems offer good opportunities now and for the future. Television promises good jobs soon. Men I trained have good jobs in all these branches of Radio.

J. E. SMITH  
President  
National Radio  
Institute  
Established 1914

Many Make \$5, \$10, \$15 a Week  
Extra in Spare Time  
While Learning

Almost every neighborhood needs a good spare time serviceman. The day you enroll I start sending Extra Money Job Sheets showing how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your training I send plans and ideas that made good spare time money for hundreds. I send Special Equipment to conduct experiments, build circuits, get practical experience. I GIVE YOU A COMPLETE, MODERN, PROFESSIONAL ALL WAVE, ALL PURPOSE RADIO SET SERVICING INSTRUMENT TO HELP SERVICE SETS QUICKER—SAVE TIME, MAKE MORE MONEY.

Find Out What Radio Offers You  
Mail the coupon now for "Rich Rewards in Radio." It's free to any fellow over 16 years old. It points out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities, also those coming in Television; tells about my training in Radio and Television; shows 131 actual letters from men I trained, tells what they are doing, earning; shows my Money Back Agreement. MAIL COUPON in an envelope or paste on penny postcard—NOW!

J. E. SMITH  
President  
National Radio  
Institute,  
Dept. 8AAS,  
Washington,  
D. C.



J. E. SMITH, President  
National Radio Institute, Dept. 8AAS  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Smith: Without obligating me, send "Rich Rewards in Radio," which points out spare time and full time opportunities in Radio explaining your 50-50 method of training men at home in spare time to become Radio Experts. (Please write plainly.)

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Address .....

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Accountants command good income. Thousands needed. About 16,000 Certified Public Accountants in U. S. Many earn \$2,000 to \$15,000. We train you thoroughly at home in your spare time for C. P. A. examinations or executive accounting positions. Previous bookkeeping knowledge unnecessary — we prepare you from ground up. Our training is personally given by staff of experienced C. P. A.'s. Low cost — easy terms. Write now for valuable 64-page book free, "Accounting, the Profession That Pays."

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Dept. 149-H  
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**LOWEST TIRE PRICES**

600 YEAR-FIRESTONE-GODDICH-USA-OTHERS

**190 1920**  
1940-21 1945-19

**All Other Brands**

**You Get More for Your Money**

Save 1¢ having from us under a positive LEGAL AGREEMENT to replace any tires that do not give 12 mos. service at 1¢ purchase price. We can do this because STANDARD BRAND tires when reconditioned with Boyd's expert workmanship, finest material and new methods do the work, as proven by thousands of satisfied users, all over the U.S.A. Convince yourself. Order Now.

**12 Months RE-D WARRANTY with Each Tire**

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Size	Rim	Size	Rim
28x4.40-21	\$1.90	30x3 1/2	\$2.10
28x4.50-21	2.10	31x4	2.70
30x4.50-21	2.15	32x4	2.70
28x4.75-19	2.20	32x4 1/2	3.00
28x4.75-20	2.25	32x4 1/2	3.10
28x5.00-19	2.60	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.00-20	2.50	32x4 1/2	3.20
28x5.25-17	2.65	32x4 1/2	3.20
28x5.25-18	2.65	32x4 1/2	3.20
28x5.25-20	2.65	32x4 1/2	3.20
31x5.25-21	2.95	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-19	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-20	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-21	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-22	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-23	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-24	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-25	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-26	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-27	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
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30x5.50-30	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-31	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
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30x5.50-74	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-75	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-76	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-77	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-78	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-79	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-80	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-81	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-82	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-83	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-84	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-85	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-86	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-87	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-88	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-89	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-90	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-91	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-92	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-93	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-94	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-95	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-96	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-97	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-98	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-99	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20
30x5.50-100	3.00	32x4 1/2	3.20

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4821-23 Cottage Grove Ave., CHICAGO, ILL.

## Sends Treatment for ASTHMA

### Paroxysms on Free Trial!

I will send any sufferer a regular \$1.25 bottle of Lane's Treatment by prepaid mail. Used by thousands and this bottle does not cost you a single penny until you are relieved—then only \$1.25. If not your report cancels charge. D. J. LANE, 268 Lane Bldg., St. Marys, Kansas.

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Shoots as fast as you can pull the trigger. Protect your home with one of these \$15.00 guns at our close out price only \$8.95. A few genuine Haenel 25 auto 7 shot \$12.75.

Holster 60c, Box of Cartridges 65c. Write for catalog of Rifles, Guns, Colts, S & W, Binoculars, etc. \$2 Deposit required on C.O.D's.



HUDSON SPORTING GOODS CO., 50 Warren St., New York

## Stop Drink Habit

Just not tasteless Cravex in his coffee, tea, liquor or food. He won't know and soon his craving for whiskey, beer or wine should disappear. New, proven treatment—physician's prescription. Tones nerves—aid nature stop habit. Safe—no upset stomach. Thousands benefited. Satisfaction guaranteed. Mailed postpaid in plain wrapper for \$1.00. C. O. D. if desired, plus a few cents additional charge. Order today.

**GRAVEX CO. Dept. 197 P. O. Box 942 Burbank, Calif.**

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WANTED AT ONCE! Mother, Home, Love, Patriotic, Sacred, Domicile or any subject. Don't delay—send best poem today for

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**Send NO money**

**CHAIN AND KNIFE FREE!**

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**A COURACY** guaranteed by 160-year-old-million-dollar factory. Solid Gold effect case, guaranteed 25 years. It has a handsome locomotive crown, time-keeper dial, railroad back. Compare with a \$20 watch.

**SEND NO MONEY**—When your watch arrives pay postman \$2.97 (plus postage). Examine watch carefully. Your money back if not amazed at the value. If you order at once, you can get a second watch for only \$1 more. Sell it to a friend for \$3.97 regular price and your own will cost you nothing! No string to this offer, no catch in it! But you must act **AT ONCE** during this special Expansion Sale. Send coupon or postal today! **FREE** knife and chain to match with every watch!

Dept. E-171 **NATIONAL WATCH CO. of WALTHAM, MASS.**

**YES!** ☐ Ship one R. R. model watch at \$2.97. ☐ Ship two R. R. watches for total \$3.97.

I will pay on arrival. Nothing more to pay. Money back if not delighted. **I RISK NOTHING.**

Name .....

Address .....

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# Arrest Him, Officer!

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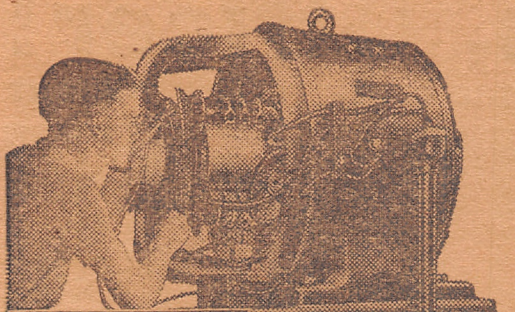
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We do not publish our users' letters unless we have their permission to do so.

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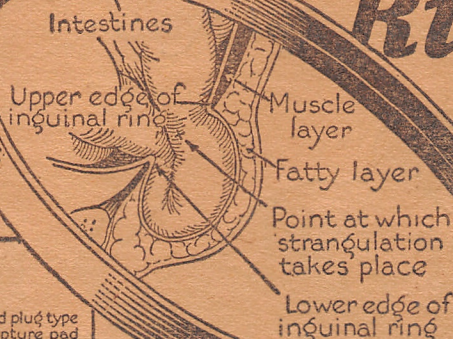
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When you wear a stool truss and stand erect the pressure of the spring is greatest. In this position some truss pads will push into the opening.



**RIGHT WAY**  
In the Brooks, however, the natural resiliency of the soft rubber in the Automatic Air Cushion and the gentle pressure of the pliable supporting bands provide continuous protection without gouging.

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**DO YOU** see that bulge of intestinal loops pushing out through the muscular wall of the stomach (abdomen)? That's what inguinal rupture looks like.

The outside wall is skin and fatty tissue. The black wall inside that appears to be broken is the muscular wall. It is not broken. It has a natural opening called the inguinal ring. It is through this ring that your inguinal rupture first appears. Sometimes this ring will close up. If it closes up while your rupture is out you have a "strangulation" and an immediate operation is imperative. If the rupture is being held back at the time the ring closes, then you have what the doctors call a "spontaneous cure." Over 22,000 Brooks users have given voluntary reports of such results.

Now this so called Spontaneous cure is nothing more nor less than the work of Nature. Not in all cases, but in many, Nature will strengthen the muscles and close the opening so that the intestine is held back without further need for any kind of support.

**WARNING** Because of the success of the Brooks invention there have been many imitations. Brooks Appliances are not sold through stores, agents, or by other mail-order houses. Protect yourself by ordering direct under our fair Ten Day Trial Plan.

But if you will look at the first small picture you will see that such a thing is impossible if the pad presses into the opening. It is also impossible if the pad doesn't fit just right as it will let a part of the rupture push out.

The Brooks truss invention for the support of Rupture holds in exactly the right position as shown in the second small picture. It is especially designed with this in mind. The soft rubber AIR-CUSHION never presses in—yet it never slips. It gives comfortable and firm support in every position of the body whether you are asleep or awake. Actually it helps Nature Heal for it does not prevent a natural flow of healing blood to the weakened muscles. You can wear a Brooks Appliance on trial and see for yourself whether or not it helps Nature in your case. If it doesn't, you owe nothing. If it does, the Appliance costs you only about as much as you would pay for an ordinary "store truss."

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Over three million Brooks Appliances have been sold on the Trial Plan. This proves their satisfactory performance. Over six thousand doctors have ordered for themselves and their patients. You can join this great army of happy people. Send the confidential coupon today for Free Information.

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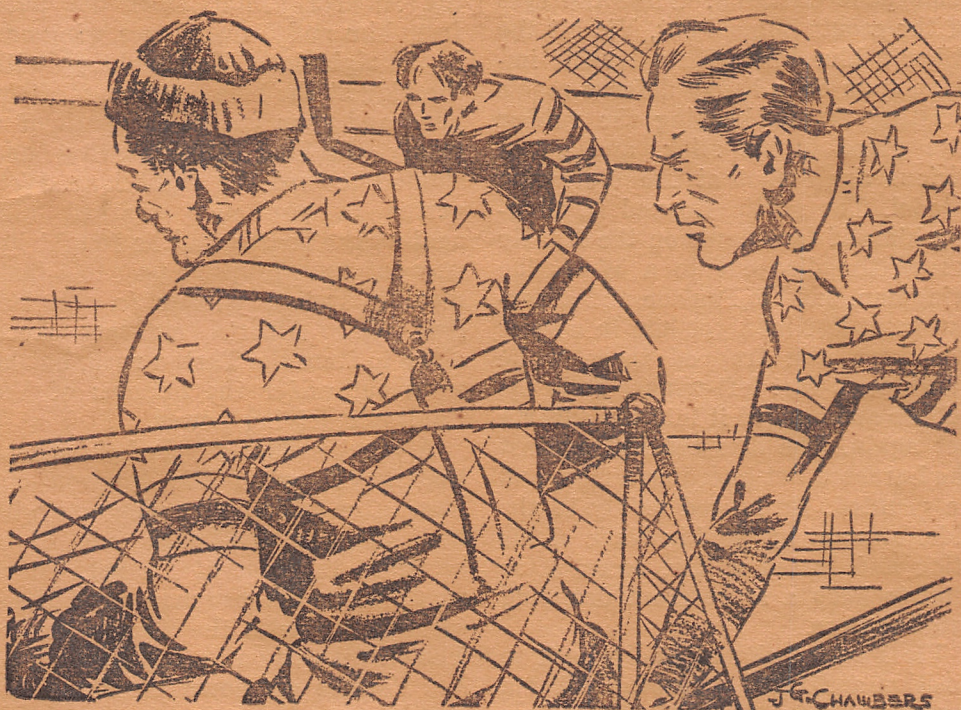


# Ice Brigade

*By Joe Archibald*

Author of "Silk-Hat Socker," "The Phantom Touchdown," etc.

*A smashing, stick-swinging rink marvel was the Vikinglike Vic Paulson. But they said Paulson placed a stumble-bum limit upon the game of games, and even his teammates checked him off the ice. So he had to come back the hard way—via the outlaw route—to try to square himself.*



**T**HE AMERICAN GROUP scouts had come up to Winnipeg to get their eyes full of young Vic Paulson, center-ice for the Tartans, and they knew before the first period of the Winnipeg-Alberta tussle had ended that their trip was not wasted time. The Chicago Condors had been starving for young blood for two years, and word of Vic Paulson's stick handling had been

trickling down to big time for the past season and a half.

Vic Paulson was not a husky man, but he made up for a deficiency in bulk with speed that blinded many rugged stick handlers. He had an abundance of what boxing fans call "moxie," and the Dominion League fans continued to marvel at his ability to give check for check with the burly front lines of opposing sextets.



He was the kind of player about whom big time pilots dream dreams, a man who skated from the hips and who could shoot the disc at the net from both sides.

Blond thatch, blue eyes and squarish face betraying Nordic forebears, Vic Paulson was going to town with a vengeance against the Alberta Wolverines. Second period was a minute under way. From a face-off he took the rubber and leaped clear of a Wolverine wing, streaked like a frightened rabbit down the middle lane with the enemy center trying futilely to cut him down and get in some poke checking. While the eyes of the scouts bugged out, Vic hit the Alberta blue line with a terrific impact, spun off a heavy defense man's twisting frame, keeping the rubber disc glued to his stick, and got a vicious angle shot at the Wolverine citadel. The goalie stopped it, flinging himself face down on the ice. He tossed the disc out to a Wolverine wingman, but Vic Paulson and a Tartan front-line man got him in a hoist and kept him trapped there while Winnipeg's fast left-winger stole the rubber and banged it into the Alberta net again. The disc cracked against the harassed net guardian's ribs, and he grunted. He lunged vainly to the side, brought up the big blade of his stick and batted wildly, seconds too late, to keep a score from dropping into the cage.

Vic Paulson skated easily back to position and faced a gasping Alberta center-ice man. The Wolverine clipped, "Looks like you're goin' out of this league, kid," and he grinned. "But don't forget the jinx that trails a guy who goes to the Condors from this league. Better get yourself a bodyguard of mounties, Paulson."

The young puck ragger set his lips hard, said nothing. For the past three days he had been thinking that same thing, had been fighting hard to drive the mental hazard out from between his ears. The Canadian papers had already started to play up that story,

the tale that haunted young stars who were getting ready for shipment to big-time rinks. Not ten days back a goalie had gone from the Edmonton Club to take charge of the New York Unicorn cage, and he had laughingly said to sports writers who interviewed him when he hit the big town: "Ha—feels good to be here. For a while I thought I might get a call to go to the Condors."

VIC PAULSON'S play suffered a little when hostilities were resumed. He went down ice with the rest of the Tartan front line when the Alberta center stole the puck from him and drove it to a wingman in the right lane. He caught up with the play at the blue line, snagged the puck and spun out of the path of a madly checking Alberta wing and slanted toward the right lane. Wolverine defense men crashed him against the boards, but he fought his way out and whipped a pass to a fast-moving Tartan winger in the left lane. One Alberta stalwart stood alone to stem the Tartan rush, but he went out under the impetus of Vic Paulson's driving power.

A scout suddenly yelled, "Look at that guy!" when Vic Paulson cut loose after a Wolverine wingman who had snagged the puck out of a scramble in front of his net. There was but one defense man down there to stack up with the Tartan goalie. The crowd was on its feet howling as Vic Paulson cut down the flying Alberta forward.

He caught the player before he hit the scoring zone, back-checked him viciously and stole the disc right from under his nose. He whipped a pass to the right lane when the Wolverines pounded down upon him, laughed as he spun toward the boards from a body check and watched the Tartan crack right-winger split through the defense and drive the disc at the enemy net.

Eluding a lashing enemy stick, Vic Paulson wheeled away from a cata-



pulting Alberta defense man, leaped on the disc when it bounded off the side of the net, and smashed it right back at the desperate goal tender again. It hopped over a desperately lashing hickory war club, crashed against the twine and made it bulge for another score. . . .

In the dressing room of the Tartans the players were slapping Vic Paulson on the back. "You're as good as up there, all right, son," the old trainer enthused. "Yep, them scouts have seen plenty. We'll rest you up next period. It's a long trip to Chicago from here."

Paulson looked at Jules "Papa" Cardonne and noted that his enthusiasm was somewhat lip service without an accompanying smile on his rugged, scarred face. "You're thinkin' of that jinx, Papa, yes? I can read it in your face that you wish I was going to some other big-time club. Forget it, Papa. I'm not superstitious—not a bit."

**M**ANAGER JOE GRUNEAU shifted a cud of tobacco from one side of his face to the other, spat and then shook his head. "Funny about that, though. The last two star players that reported to the Condors had somethin' happen to 'em. There was Clipper Sundra who was the class of the Dominion defense men three years ago. He was sold to the Chicago Club an' what happened? In Duluth he gets pushed down a flight of stairs in his hotel an' breaks his skull. Then there was that McMillan college star, Jack Lane, who set the Canadian Minor Circuit rinks afire before the Condors called him in. He stops over in Milwaukee en route and gets held up in a side street. Somebody bends an iron pipe across his right arm an' breaks it in two places. He don't play for a year an' when he does he finds he's washed up. Maybe it's what eddicated guys call coincident, huh? But two of 'em! The best players. Sure a lot of fair players got to the Condors, but they

never meant much to any team's chances in hot competition."

Vic Paulson laughed nervously. "Then you admit I'm a star, huh, Joe?"

"Yeah," Gruneau said, "sure. But you got to remember somethin'. There's gonna be a lot more stars where you're goin', kid. You'll just be one—"

"If he ever gets there," a heavy-browed Tartan sub grinned, and the manager yelled angrily at him.

"I'll get there," Vic said. "Just because two guys celebrated a little on their way to big time, an' came to grief, is no sign I'll break a leg. Huh!"

Vic Paulson's rise in hockey circles had been rapid since he had left Gwinnell College in the States. An Ontario semi-pro hockey enthusiast had offered him a job in a big paper-box concern with a salary that depended on his ability to deliver the goods for the company's hockey team. From there he had gone to a small pro league, where he was ultimately snatched up by the Winnipeg Tartans.

Manager Joe Gruneau bawled at him: "Out of them spangles, Vic. Get into your street clothes an' watch the rest of the game from the stands. I ain't takin' no chances of losin' ten grand. The Chicago Club said I got to deliver you as sound as a granite doorstep or the deal's off. You've showed 'em plenty."

Vic Paulson wanted to get in there for another period, but the managerial thumb stayed down. He took off his skates, discarded his padded regalia and was hustling into his street clothes when the Tartan players thumped out over the rubber matting in the corridor on their way to the rink. They were getting a stand-off when Vic went into the stands and took a seat behind the Winnipeg bench. Without the spark plug in there, the Tartans coasted, content to gamble on a four-goal lead. It was just another hockey club without Vic



Paulson. The flash heard a remark to that effect from a fan before the customers rose up and saluted a Wolverine score with a thunderous cheer.

Paulson watched his replacement face off with the visitors' center, gritted his teeth as he saw the man lose the rubber and get off to a slow start. The Wolverine offensive began working like a well-oiled ice machine without the pestiferous Paulson in there checking and skating them to death. The Tartan goalie began to sweat plenty in that last period, and Vic Paulson itched to get in there and stop some of those enemy drives.

"Pardon me, Paulson," said a man, leaning over from the aisle. "I'd like to talk to you. I work for John Kilbride."

Vic smiled and nodded. Everybody in that part of Canada was glad to talk with anyone who represented Kilbride. He practically kept the Winnipeg Hockey Club on the ice through good season and bad. He was the biggest man in the Manitoba metropolis and controlled a dozen enterprises. When Kilbride spoke in western Canada, men jumped and said: "Yessir." Vic Paulson had learned quickly when he had first reported to the Tartans.

The man dropped into a seat next to Vic and the star looked him over. He was tall, well-knit, with a coppery face and a well-groomed black mustache. Vic had seen him once or twice and suddenly he was able to place him. Alex Strang was his name and he piloted Kilbride's plane whenever the magnate found a long trip necessary to any part of the Dominion or the States.

**T**HE HOCKEY PLAYER'S eyes narrowed a bit, and he said: "Go ahead and talk, but I don't see what business Mr. Kilbride would have with me."

Strang grinned. "The boss has taken quite an interest in you, Paulson. I've heard him say that you are

the best hockey player ever developed in this league. He's heard about that jinx business—read it in the papers. He's going to be responsible for delivering you to the Chicago Club. He's a personal friend of the men backing the Condors. Wants to see you first thing tomorrow at his office."

"Sure," Vic consented, "but they're screwy—all the birds who talk that stuff. Nothin' would happen to me."

"You never know," Kilbride's emissary qualified. He got up and held something out to Paulson just as the big crowd let out a storm of high-pitched hysteria. The new Chicago center-ice man swept a look down on the ice and saw that the Tartans had banged in a fifth score. He grinned, gave his attention again to Strang. "Wish you'd autograph this programme, Paulson. Your last game with the Tartans, and maybe you'll be famous—some day."

The player took Strang's programme and pencil and scribbled his name just below the column of type that gave the crowd the identity of the Winnipeg stick wielders. Strang had printed his own name heavily, adding a furbelow or two such as expert penmen of the mid-Victorian era used to embellish their signatures. He had even dressed his signature up with a flying dove and Vic Paulson grinned as he looked at it.

"I guess I'm what they call a doodler when I get nervous," Strang laughed. "You had me on the edge of my seat in that first period. Well, thanks, Paulson. Don't forget to see the boss in the morning. I've got a hunch I'm to fly you down to Chicago. Hope so. Get my name in the papers."

The cash customers were looking at Vic Paulson more than at the game now. One or two sounded him out.

"They say you're as good as signed, Paulson. Good luck!"

"Worryin' about the jinx?"

"Forget it, Paulson. In a week you'll be knockin' over guys like Tessimond and Quatreille."



The man in the hockey spotlight grinned good-naturedly and waved his hand, then centered his eyes on the play down on the ice. He wished he was in there to stop that tough Alberta flyer who was carrying the mail toward the Tartan net without a man near him. The Wolverine split the defense wide and drove a shot at the goalie that bounded off his arm and kissed the twine where it counted most. Five to two now. The Wolverines had outscored Gruneau's bunch in this period. Vic Paulson sat there wondering what he would do in the big show. He was pretty sure he would make the grade. After all, it was just another hockey league. He told himself that confidence was everything; he also told himself that a man was to curb self-confidence. Sometimes it gets out of a man's hands and does things to his game. It develops into what the sports writers call enlargement of the occipital and frontal skull areas.

When Vic realized that fair Canadian belles were ogling him, his ears began to redden. The crowd was warming up to him, having assured themselves that Paulson did not frown upon familiarity. The last five minutes of the game were blocked from his view by the fans who swarmed past him on the way to the main exit, pausing to wish him luck and get his signature. At the final bell he got up and pressed through the milling mob and reached the passageway leading to the dressing rooms. The Chicago scouts were ahead of him, also a bunch of newspaper writers. Gruneau was shaking hands with the scouts, and Papa Cardonne came across the floor with both hands outstretched, his seamed face made even more lined by a wide grin.

"You go to Chicago, Vic my boy. *Alors*—then you show them down in thees beeg, beeg show, *oui*? But afterward I talk with you, Vic. You come an' see me. Now evereebody want to talk with you."

The Tartans clattered in, sweat-soaked and flushed with victory, and Papa Cardonne had to attend to the cuts and bruises that the players had brought off the ice with them. The goalie, feeling of a loose front tooth with one hand and brushing ice shavings off his seat with the other, limped toward the bench and threw his heavy shin guards into a corner.

"We're goin' to miss you, kid," he shot at Vic Paulson. "Never was so many pucks flying as after you left."

THE DRESSING ROOM was crowded from wall to wall. Sports writers and well-wishing, privileged characters from the stands jostled the scouts as if they were but panhandlers. Gruneau took advantage of the general hubbub to draw Paulson aside and tell the star that everything was fixed for his immediate delivery. The Condor check would be in the mail by midnight, he said, and there was a tell-tale brightness to the burly pilot's eyes.

"You stop that smokin' in here," he roared to cover his emotion. "You guys stop smokin' till part of this crowd is cleaned out." To Vic he said, then: "We're glad for you, kid, but we'll—miss you."

The player wrung his hand and said: "That's nice to hear, Gruneau."

Sports writers even tagged Paulson's heels to the very door of his hotel room. "Heard Kilbride's goin' to offer you his plane, Paulson. That true?"

"Tell you tomorrow!" Vic shot back. "Now beat it, guys, will you? Yeah, I've heard Kilbride—" He shut the door behind him, locked it, then looked into the face of Jules Cardonne, the Tartan trainer and old-time stick wielder.

The French Canuck nodded and said: "You are tire, *n'est ce pas*, Vic. But I got to say sometheeng to you 'fore you get away. Maybe ol' Jules don't have moch time to see you nex' coupla days, *non*?"



"Okay, Papa, what's on your mind?" responded the new Chicago Condor center-ice man.

"But thees, Vic—in thees league you are top man. You are the star, *oui*? Down there evereebody he is star or he don't be there, so you are jus' wan more hockey player. It weel be different an' firs' you have to learn all over once more, *oui*. You are ver' fast, *aussi* you handle a stick, *mon ami*, but there is many others who jus' so fas' as you an' can do the same when they get the puck. So—you jus' be patient an' learn what you have got to learn, an' maybe you weel be bettair man as some of them. Ah, I see you do not quite understan', eh Vic? I weel tell you about man I know wan time."

Paulson stifled a yawn, looking a little bored. Jules Cardonne had a sharp eye, and he sucked viciously on his old pipe until the sludge began to boil. "Tan year ago—lettle more mebbeso—wan ver' good hockey player he goes up to Chicago Condors, Vic. Mos' people they have forget his name, but wan time he was beeg star in Ontario League. I remember some. Boreau, I theenk, was his name, but thees does not matter, *non*. He ees top man in Minors an' he don't want be anytheeng but top man anywhere, *non*. *Mais oui*, he goes up to beeg time, an' when he fin's he ees not top man, he goes, what you call eet, the haywire, an' one week only he lasts. He knock off big-time star so he can play all time instead of bein' spare. But Butch Kohl of thees Chicago team he see heem keek star winger in head in practice game pile-up, an' he keek thees man right out of hockey. Nevair have I hear' of him since. One game he have ver' bad cut on shoulder an' eet almos' go up to his neck. He theenk he ver' tough man, *oui*!"

"Good sermon," Vic grinned, "but I'm goin' to stay on the ice, Papa Cardonne."

The old trainer spread his hands

wide. "Sermon you call heem, eh? So then I say: 'Man who ees beeg splash in leetle puddle an' can go out an' be leetle splash in beeg puddle an' be content—he ees real man.' You theenk thees over, *mon ami*?" Cardonne got up then. "*Mais oui*, mebbe-so I waste the breath, but ver' moch I weesh you the luck, M'sieu."

The news became official the next day. The Chicago Condors had purchased Vic Paulson. John Kilbride's fast airplane would take the star to the Windy City, the Canadian tycoon having completed arrangements with the Chicago Club. The Canadian and American writers put the jinx angle on heavy, and the Chicago Mail top-hand sports authority wrote:

Mindful of the jinx that is supposed to waylay star players en route to the Condors from the Dominion Circuit, the brain trust of the Chicago Condor Hockey Club has hit upon a method of foiling the little imp with the horns that smeared such potential hockey greats as Chipper Sundray and Jack Lane before they even felt big-time ice under their steel runners. John Kilbride, Canadian industrial giant, has put his special plane at the disposal of Vic Paulson and guarantees him safe transport to the Chicago airport. This bit of news falls hard on the heels of several air disasters, and the hockey fans wonder if that isn't the height of something-or-other. A jinx has wings, too, it seems.

The day after the deal had been completed Vic Paulson stood near a sleek cabin plane talking to a group of men who were to see him off. John Kilbride stood out above the crowd. There was Joe Gruneau, Jules Cardonne, the entire Tartan team, and a bunch of sports writers there.

**K**ILBRIDE, after shaking hands with the hockey player, turned to talk to the writers. Alex Strang, the pilot, got into the plane and began to fool at the controls. A husky man, not much over thirty, who had been introduced to Paulson as Kilbride's personal secretary, came out of the cabin with some papers he had been asked to look for in the small mahogany desk inside. He grinned at Vic and held out his hand.



"Good-by, Paulson. Know you'll show them down there. Nice playing—that last game. That hoist you and Dorais got in on that Wolverine puck ragger was pretty to watch. In the second, when you took it off the boards and passed to—"

Vic looked at the man's high white collar, and his eyes narrowed as he chased an elusive thought. "Sounds like you know your hockey, mister," he interposed. The secretary stumbled over his next words.

"Yes," he said, "I played a little—in college. Not much—didn't have quite enough of what it takes. Gov'nor kicked me out—wanted me to be another Lorne Chabot. Well, I forgot about—Have a good trip, Paulson." He shouldered his way through the crowd, his old-fashioned white collar keeping him in sight.

Vic Paulson turned to Strang who was coming out of the plane. "What was that guy's name? Y'know—Kilbride's secretary."

"Barrow."

The hockey star stiffened. What was the name that Papa Cardonne had mumbled? Boreau—that was it. Barrow—Boreau—they sounded a lot alike. Then he shrugged, grinned and exclaimed: "Well, let's get going!"

The power plant of the Sport Air job roared to a deafening pitch. There were the usual good-bys, mostly lost in the noise of the prop and the throaty thunder of the fans who had come out to see Paulson take off. The hockey star got into the cabin, and the door was banged shut behind him. Strang went to the controls and invited Vic to sit beside him. In a minute he had jammed in the throttle and the plane was moving across the field.

The puck ragger sat back, feeling more nervous than he had when playing hockey for the first time before more than five hundred fans. The ground kept slipping away until a bank of fleecy clouds stretched out all around them and only occasional

patches of Canadian terrain were visible below.

"I should think a man who could fly a ship would want to fly for the—er—service or maybe the air mail," Vic said to his companion. "Lot of kick in that."

Strang grinned and looked around at the hockey player. "Yeah? I'm thinkin' of the heavy dough I get an' I'm a pretty important guy to Kilbride. In the army or the mail business, I'd be just another pilot that nobody ever heard of. Up here I'm somebody. Sure."

"Guess maybe you're right," Vic said thoughtfully.

The novelty of the air trip wore off. Weariness crept over the hockey star and dulled the thoughts of the Chicago Condor jinx which had been stirring around in his head for hours. Kilbride's pilot competed with the steady hum of whirling blades, and finally Vic dosed. He awoke with a start, Strang's voice sharp with alarm as it ripped out advice. There was a different sound to the plane as well as in the pilot's voice.

"Hold your breath, kid," Strang was saying tensely. "Keep your fingers crossed!" Rage was twisting the pilot's face as he nursed the plane down. "The engine was conked. We gotta get down. I ought've known somethin' would happen."

Eyes shut, the puck ragger sat back rigidly in his seat and waited. The jinx had reached up into the air for him, and its fingers were like tentacles of ice closing around his heart. He opened his eyes again and saw the horizon tipping at a crazy angle. Torturing seconds passed, and then the plane hit bumpy turf and bounded like a frightened greyhound. Strang fought the controls with all he had in him, but could not prevent the crate from ploughing into a rail fence. It went spinning around with a crackling, crashing sound. Something hit Vic Paulson heavily on the shoulder, and the pain brough moments of oblivion. After a while he opened



his eyes and found himself lying in a field with a few people standing around him. Strang was kneeling beside him.

"How you feel, kid?" he asked. "That was a tough break." He glowered at the people who were pressing close. "Somebody monkeyed with this crate. I'll— Get a doctor somebody, can't you? Any near here?"

A bearded native volunteered the information that he had stopped his flivver just across the field. "If you kin git 'im over to it, I'll take him to the doctor."

Vic Paulson was struggling to rise. "I can walk it, I guess," he said, grinding his teeth with the pain that bored through his shoulder. His days on the ice seemed to be about at an end.

**N**EWs of the forced landing and the injury to Vic Paulson hit Chicago's Loop like a bombshell and rocketed to all corners of the country. Headlines screamed the news:

JINX CATCHES UP WITH CONDOR STAR. INJURED IN CRASH OF PLANE. VIC PAULSON BELIEVED LOST TO CHICAGO CLUB!

Goggle-eyed fans began to believe in the actual existence of the little black devil that had been manufactured inside the heads of newspaper cartoonists. Avidly they assimilated the news of the crackup sent out by the wire services.

Vic Paulson, star Tartan hockey player, was seriously injured today when the plane in which he was flying from Winnipeg was forced to land in a field not far from the North Dakota line. Alex Strang, pilot of the plane, a Sportair job owned by John Kilbride, Canadian millionaire, was uninjured. The Chicago Hockey Club front office told newspaper men today that they will demand an investigation, that they believe there is more than coincidence behind the maiming of a third star player to come up from the Dominion.

Hours later another story hit the sport world and sent Condor supporters into a frenzy of joy. Vic Paulson was on his way to the Windy City

not as badly hurt as at first believed. The doctors had found no broken bones, and he would be ready to play hockey in two or three days. The jinx had been beaten. Chicago fans looked forward to the first American Group title in ten years. A crowd of sports writers were on hand to greet Paulson when he got into the Northwestern Station. The grizzled veteran manager of the Condors, flanked by four of Chicago's biggest detectives, hurried to the gates and held out his hand to Paulson.

"Hello, kid. That jinx you licked is a great sign for us. How you feel?"

"Good," Vic grinned. "Sure glad to see you, Mister Kohl. Didn't think I'd make it there for a while."

Kohl whisked the hockey player out of the station and put him in a cab. Two hours later in a loop hotel the newspaper men got their first crack at the Dominion star. Vic felt pretty good at the attention he received, and answered the barrage of questions as fast as he could.

"How long will I stay in the game?" the blond ice wizard repeated after one writer. "Maybe five years—maybe more. Law is going to be my dish, though. I've got to have money to finish up where I left off with Blackstone. Know a better way to get it?" He laughed then and added: "Women? Don't go for them much."

"Goin' to be a defense man in a court of law, huh?" one scribe shot at him facetiously. "Well, don't do it before you help the Condors to snag a title. After all, they paid heavy for you."

The papers gave Vic Paulson plenty of build-up, more than they would have had he not met up with the jinx. The kid from Winnipeg did not find the spotlight distasteful, but he kept his head. Two days after his arrival in the Windy City he went over to the Coliseum, home of the Condors, and went through a brief workout with the big-timers. After sniping practice at the cage, Butch Kohl, the pilot and once the greatest backliner



in hockey, pointed out a few mistakes the flashy kid had made.

"I banged a couple into the net, though, didn't I?" Vic said with a triumphant grin. "Well, guess a guy can always learn something about this game." Inside, he felt a trifle jittery. He had never skated with such an array of talent. It was like taking the best man out of every top sextet in Canada and throwing them together at a player. He remembered old Jules Cardonne's warning, mulled it over for a while, then hurriedly thrust the Tartan trainer's words into the back of his mind.

"Practice ain't a regular game," Kohl said, eyeing his new man carefully. "You've watched football players snag passes out of the air in a workout. They drop most of 'em in a real game—get most of 'em batted down. This is a tough league, son. They'll all be tryin' to bat you down. You'll be up against Quatrelle and Tessimond, Flying Pete LeBrun, and tough defense men like Mack Lauder and Duke Hollis of the Montreal Leafs. But you do like I tell you an' you'll stick!"

"I'll try plenty!" Vic Paulson said with grim determination, and Kohl nodded, liked the rookie's makeup.

**T**HE CROWD packed the Coliseum the night the Boston Pilgrims squared off against Kohl's six black-jerseyed rink doormats. The Pilgrims had taken the first of the two-game series by a score of three to one, and Vic Paulson was watching from the bench. Ever since hitting the Windy City, his shoulder had been worked on by the Condor trainer, and the muscles were beginning to respond. The papers had forecasted that Vic Paulson would be there for a while in the second tussle. Just before game-time Kohl shot at the Dominion League flash:

"You go in, kid—in Kettler's place!"

The newcomer to the Condor team thrilled at the crowd's ovation as he

followed the other players out to the ice. He gazed at the twenty thousand fans with a trace of awe in his eyes for several seconds. The Windy City crowd took the measure of the new Condor center-ice man when Kohl's six were going through a short workout. They sat up straight in their seats at the flash of his real stuff that showed in his work. The visiting Pilgrims, too, were inventorying him, and they reached the conclusion that Kohl had at last plugged a weak spot in the Condor front line.

The game started with Joe St. Hilaire and Duke Sturm at the wings. Kohl's rugged defense consisted of the veterans Trumble and Granger. In the net was the Condor crack goalie, Mite Jardine, but the Chicago fans were looking at only one man. Vic Paulson, the blond viking from Winnipeg, facing off with Nels True-man of the Pilgrims.

The rubber was tossed in. Vic brought a howl of approval from the seats when he stole the disc and led a swift rush down the ice. The Pilgrim defense line boxed the rookie, and he shot the puck to the left lane to St. Hilaire, who was forced to the boards by a catapulting Pilgrim back-line giant. The puck spun out, and Vic, skating backward, sweep-checked it away from a Boston winger and drove down the middle lane with a Condor forward flanking him. They hit the blue line, were split apart, and Vic Paulson thought he had collided with a truck. He went spinning across the ice, leaped to his feet and saw a Pilgrim three-man attack go sweeping toward the Condor citadel. He gave chase, the big crowd yelling wildly as they got a feast of his terrific speed.

Vic knifed into the play a split second after the Condor goalie had made a miraculous save, and he took the puck as it went rolling toward the left lane, evaded the Pilgrim center and tried to sneak along the middle with two Pilgrims poke-checking him dizzy. He outpaced them, got trapped



by the Pilgrim defense and took an illegal cross-check that spilled him heavily to the steel-raked ice. He got to his feet while the whistle was shrilling and took off his heavy gloves. In a rage he went at the burly veteran Pilgrim defense man who was being waved to the penalty box, swinging both fists while players crowded him to hold him off.

"You big bum!" yelled the rookie. "Wait until you come back!"

"Lay off, Paulson!" somebody yelled. "That's Mike Barres, the toughest baby in the circuit you're—"

"Yeah? I'll split his skull if he ever pulls that on me again."

The crowd went to town for the Canadian kid. They liked a scrapper, and he had showed them that he would look out for himself.

Barres grinned from behind the dasher. The play on the ice became savage. Vic Paulson threw himself at a Pilgrim rush and split it to bits. There was a scramble for the rubber near the boards, and the kid from Winnipeg went in and battled two Pilgrim huskies for possession of it. He worried it out to the middle lane, drove it at Sturm, who was streaking down the right side with a Pilgrim wing riding him hard and checking his head off. Vic swung out of the lunging drive of the Pilgrim center and took Sturm's hard shot near the blue line.

The crowd was on its feet now, as the Boston defense blocked the rookie. The fans howled crazily when the kid carried around the cage. There was a pile-up, but Paulson, wet blond hair shining in the light, came out with the rubber, knifed to the side and tucked the puck into the corner of the enemy cage for a score.

The Condor supporters went a little berserk. A cocky smile on his lips, Vic Paulson skated out for the face-off. Nels Trueman, the opposing center, grinned: "Not bad, kid, but you were lucky. I've got a bad leg. If I were tops tonight, I'd have—"

A GAIN play was resumed. True-man beat the rookie to the punch, and he went down the middle alley like a streak just as the Pilgrim defense man in the penalty box got a tap on the arm. Barres hit the ice like a demon and went out there to give Vic Paulson a chance to knock his head off. The tide of battle swept to the Condors' cage, and the goalie was working like a Trojan to keep flying rubber from hanging up a score. Barres upset a Condor wing who was making a vicious sweep check at a Chicago cage stormer, and then Vic Paulson came in and crashed into him. Barres flopped heavily, slid almost to the cage mouth, where flashing steel blades chipped ice all around him.

The rubber came out over the pile-up, smacked heavily by Mite Jardine's big glove, and Vic Paulson trapped it and started speeding over ice with three Pilgrim whirlwinds trying to cut him down. There was but one defense man up ahead, but he was a good one. He diagnosed the rookie's fake shot at the cage, clung to him like a leech and drove him to the boards. With both men down, Vic Paulson threw his body forward and shoved the spinning puck toward the avid blade of Joe St. Hilaire's stick. It gulped the puck up, and the Condor wingman blazed a terrific shot at the Pilgrim goalie. It went past him, spun into the twine for a second score.

The sports writers nodded at one another and banged feverishly at typewriter keys. The kid from the Dominion had scored one goal and had helped manufacture another, and, with the period about over, the Condors were two up on the league leaders.

Kohl took the Canadian flash out and put in Kettler. With the mighty blast of approval from the crowd singing in his ears, Vic Paulson went to the bench. Despite his success he felt a bit shaky. His body was one big ache, and his lungs were almost



flattened. No, this was not minor-league hockey by any means. Goalies were not so easily fooled. You could not expect to keep on fooling defense men like those who made up the Pilgrim back line. The offensive onslaughts were not as numerous as they had been back in the minors. But when they got going, they were punishing things. A man had to be able to take plenty, and Vic Paulson, for the first time in his life, wished he had been blessed with thirty more pounds of beef.

While he watched the Pilgrim four-man attack try to bang home a score with a bruising drive, he thought of that man who wore the high white collar and worked for John Kilbride. Barrow—Boreau. Those names kept revolving inside his head. Had that man something to do with the jinx that Vic had partially licked? When he had a chance, Vic was resolved to talk a lot more with Butch Kohl. Kohl dated back. He would remember Boreau, the puck ragger who had not wanted to be a little splash in a big pool.

Two periods of blistering hockey failed to add further to the scoring. In the last session the Pilgrims started to attack savagely with the Condors lying back, content to employ

kitty-bar-the-gate tactics. The Pilgrim Pilot sent a five-man onslaught at the Chicago citadel with five minutes to go. Penalties were coming fast and furious. Kettler came off the ice with a deep gash across his left eye, and Kohl said:

"Go in Paulson."

The Windy City supporters cut loose when the new Condor flash went out to center ice. Each team was shy a defense man when the fireworks started again. It was the Pilgrim left wing carrying down the middle with three desperate flankers sweeping a path clean for him—or trying to.

Vic Paulson and St. Hilaire broke it up, and the kid from the north country poke-checked the puck ragger to a state of frenzy and stole the rubber near the Condor cage. He came around the net with dazzling speed, a shower of ice splinters spattering the boards, and digging in, he fairly smashed his way through the Pilgrim defense and went down to drive a scorching shot at the goalie. The net tender banged it clear, and St. Hilaire came in to drive it right back at him. Vic Paulson swung in, crowding the cage closely, then went sliding over the ice when a big hulk, wearing the spangles of the Pilgrims, crashed against him.

## WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU HAVE A COLD



If you're nursing a cold—*see a doctor!* Curing a cold is the doctor's business. But the doctor himself will tell you that a regular movement of the bowels will help to shorten the duration of a cold. Also, that it will do much to make you less susceptible to colds.

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# EX-LAX

THE ORIGINAL CHOCOLATED LAXATIVE



Vic left the ice a little groggy. His senses had not fully cleared when the final whistle blew. He felt a little sick when he followed the jubilant tail-enders to the dressing room. The players showed him that he belonged, however, and he was warmed by Kohl's comment.

"Nice goin', kid," the manager said. "You'll get used to this kind of play. They saw that they couldn't keep you down. They'll start laying off you in a little while. Penalties—they don't help a lot and they know it."

"Sure," the rookie of the ice said. "Yeah—it's no different than hockey where I come from. Not a bit." But he knew that he lied. He was not going to let any of the big-timers know it.

**T**HE CONDOR CLUB won its next three games and the six points put them in third spot just over the tough Detroit Bobcats. Vic Paulson had made the grade thus far, and his name was beginning to mean something in the American Group.

Vic Paulson was riding high, and the feeling was good. There isn't a man living who doesn't like the sweet taste of success. But the sports writers who lift an athlete up to the clouds in a hurry can drag him down just as fast. They were calling Vic the spark plug of the rejuvenated Condors. People pointed to the star in the eating places and in the night spots he patronized. It was the day after his one goal had beaten the Montreal Leafs that Vic Paulson received a letter from John Kilbride.

The Canadian millionaire congratulated the Condor center and then came down to business. He told Vic Paulson that, among other things, he was the owner of a Canadian weekly known as the *Monitor*. There was two thousand dollars in it for Vic Paulson if he would write an article on hockey and send it to him personally.

Up in Winnipeg, Kilbride was saying to his secretary while Paulson

read the letter: "It will no doubt need a lot of fixing up, Barrow. You see to that, and then get the text over to Montreal by air. If Paulson gets it up here in a week, it'll make the next issue, and every would-be hockey star in Canada will rush to buy a copy." He turned to Strang, said: "Let's get going. I have to be in Vancouver by three o'clock."

Vic Paulson thought the letter over for a while in a New York hotel where the Condors were hived up. He told himself that Kilbride expected no alibis from anybody when he wanted something. Other sport stars were getting good money for articles like that—and two thousand dollars was a lot of money. He thought up a fair line of stuff and put it on paper. The next day he would get a public steno at the hotel to knock it off the typewriter for him. The following night he had the copy in the mail, but he said nothing to Butch Kohl. He didn't want the Condors to laugh at him.

**H**OCKEY WARS roared into January with the Condors threatening the Pilgrims' lead. They were but three points behind when they moved into Toronto to battle the Maroons. Vic Paulson had been showing signs of wear and tear, and Kohl was using him less frequently. The Condors had managed to eke out their last two games by dint of the proverbial hair, and Kohl was beginning to get a little worried. His flash had been giving away plenty of poundage to all other center-ice huskies, and the pace was bound to tell. Then the story hit the public several hours before the Condors crossed sticks with the Maroons.

The story in the *Monitor* bore Vic Paulson's by-line, and it told the world that hockey was a game that brutalized men. Due to the heavy punishment the stick wielder takes over seasons of play, he was apt to develop a chronic psychosis. The article declared that hockey players, especially ten-year men, end up on the



stumble-bum trail cluttered with the round-heeled plodders from boxing rings. The Condor star, as the fans believed, cited cases of veteran players whose deaths could be attributed to the punishment absorbed in the hockey arenas. He was quoted by the ghost writer as having said that he would not stay in the game beyond a certain number of years, as he wished to take up a more dignified profession before his mental equipment had been shocked out of one hundred per cent efficiency.

Hockey fans raved. Players promised swift reprisal to the upstart who had smeared the ice game. Sports writers included excerpts from the magazine article in their scathing columns and stormed Vic Paulson's room at his hotel for an explanation. Butch Kohl and Sturm and Joe St. Hilaire, seething with rage, banged their way through the press gang in the hotel corridor and crashed in on the stunned Condor first-year flash.

"We oughta ram it down your throat, ya rat! We oughta make ya eat every magazine that printed this lousy stuff. Maybe ya got plenty of sugar for it, huh? Lemme take a poke at him!" hollered St. Hilaire. "I'll make a stumble bum out of him. Hockey won't have to. The rat musta been figgerin' he couldn't take it much longer an' would get a ticket back to the sticks."

Kohl said tersely: "Talk fast, Paulson."

"Listen to me, will you?" Vic ripped out. "I didn't write that stuff. I tell you I didn't. That wasn't the copy I sent up there. The only thing I said was that a guy had to watch himself so that he wouldn't always be out with injuries. Wire Kilbride. He knows that—look, Mister Kohl, it's that jinx. Some guy missed out stoppin' me the first time. This is a frame, Mister Kohl! You gotta believe me, guys!"

Butch Kohl suddenly clamped his teeth together. "Yeah, yo" know I believe you, Paulson, but nobody but

us guys will, see? The public won't, you can depend on that. You'll have to prove it to them, kid. They made a sucker out of you—a sarn. Yeah, that jinx is in again—it's caught up with us. The players and the fans'll ride you off."

"I'll find out from Kilbride about this!" Vic Paulson raged, eyes glistening with brine. "I'll get the rat who pulled this on me. Thanks, Mister Kohl—"

St. Hilaire and Sturm swore under their breath. The Frenchman pawed his unruly thatch of black hair with long, gnarled fingers. "By gar, you don' theenk for ask Mist' Kohl if what you do ees right. You theenk everybodee hones' man an' look what you do. You try out from thees, Paulson. I don't theenk!"

"The kid is right," Kohl stormed. "Somebody has it in for the club, or for me. They got the other two guys, an' they've got the kid here right." He sat down and thought a while, the newshawks pounding impatiently on the door. Suddenly he leaped to his feet, snapped his fingers. "By the Lord Harry, there was a guy once that came up from that old Canadian League. His name was Bra—Bar—it began with a B—"

Vic Paulson clipped: "Boreau! Couldn't be the whole works an' got kicked out. Jules Cardonne, the Tartan trainer, told me about him. Listen, Mister Kohl, there's a guy who works for Kilbride, and he was in that plane before I got in it. His name is Barrow, they told me. He talked as if he knew a lot about hockey. I want somebody to get word to Kilbride and tell him to look for a cut on that guy's shoulder where a hockey stick—"

"Okay," Butch Kohl said. "I'll get the front office to work on it. Sounds like you've got somethin' there. You go on the ice tonight, Paulson. I'll get this story of yours to the papers."

**H**OCKEY FANS laughed derisively at the news. They said Kohl was hanging on to Paulson with more



regard for the title than for the game itself. Maroon players gave fair warning to the Dominion rookie that they would chase him off the ice. The crowd came to the Toronto arena with fire in their eyes, yelling for Paulson's scalp. They had read what a sports writer had rehashed with regard to an interview the rookie had given when he first hit the big time.

Paulson had figured to stick around pro hockey for five years until he got enough money out of the game to carry on the study of law. Those words were in the minds of the fans who set up a mighty, derisive thunder when Vic Paulson skated out onto Toronto ice with the Condors at game-time.

Tessimond, giant Maroon defense man, slid toward him and cracked: "You've got your nerve! We'll knock your brains out."

The rest of the Maroon team, waiting for the puck to be dropped, conveyed their intentions to Vic in no uncertain terms.

A steady, booming thunder in his ears, the rookie stole the rubber at the face-off and drove down the middle alley. A grim-lipped Maroon wingman stabbed at him, deliberately drew a penalty by spilling Kohl's sensational star with a bruising cross-check. The whistle shrilled with St. Hilaire and big Duke Sturm coming in, feverishly ripping off their heavy gloves.

St. Hilaire smashed Tessimond with a vicious right and sat him down hard on the ice with players and policemen trying to separate the opposing battlers. Then Vic Paulson was on his feet, blood trickling down his cheek. He swayed, caught himself and took the stick that Trumble, the Condor defense man, held out to him.

Tessimond went out for the limit, the crowd with him to a man. Joe St. Hilaire went off for two minutes, and Vic Paulson, teeth clamped tightly together, got back into the battle. Helpless rage had its way with him, and tears welled to his eyes as he

stole the rubber in a furious scramble in front of the Condor net a few minutes later. He went down the right lane with all the speed that was in him, and into the Maroon defense. He was crowded to the boards, but fought himself loose like a maniac and gave the hip to a Maroon wingman who had snagged the puck in mid-rink and dumped him off stride.

St. Hilaire came in fast, snagged the mail and set sail for the Maroon net. He drew a slanting wingman out of position, cut in sharply and tore by the only Maroon backliner to rifle a shot into the twine. The goalie, sorely beset now, with Vic Paulson taking the rebound, threw himself bodily at the rubber as it blazed in. Maddened Maroons swept Paulson out of play just after he had smashed the disc home, but they were too late. The score registered, and hardly a sound came from the stands. Instead, the cries went up:

"Take him out of there! Smear him! Knock his ears off!"

Tessimond came back in a minute later, a vicious grin on his face. He looked briefly toward the seats and nodded, then went driving into the tide of battle that was once more sweeping toward the Maroon net as an embittered rookie fought his way through a small hole in the defense. He found his way blocked, drove a pass to Cookman at the blue line, and then smashed against two Maroon wild men and rode over them. Tessimond loomed up in front of Vic, then threw his massive bulk full into the Condor star's face. The roof seemed to fall in, and the hard surface of the rink came up at the same time, trapping the stunned rookie between them. The lights went out, and he drifted into space for a while.

Later, in the Condor dressing room, Vic Paulson opened his eyes and struggled to sit up. Lockers spun around him. The face of the Chicago trainer whirled among them. From a long distance away came a rumbling like the roar of heavy surf. It drew



nearer and nearer and then Vic realized that it was the crowd's desultory thunder. The rookie's head was splitting, and needles were biting into his ribs.

"Take it easy, kid. Lay back there now. A couple of ribs have been—" It was Butch Kohl's voice, and Vic obeyed, wincing as the trainer felt of his sore frame. "Tough luck, kid. They won't let you stay on the ice. Worse luck—the crowd's with 'em. It's a rotten break for both of us, Paulson—you an' me. That jinx has caught up with the Condors, I'm afraid."

The Tartan flash struggled to sit up, although the effort made him sick at his stomach. "I'm not through, Kohl. I'll go back there and—"

"They'd ruin you, Paulson, sure as—" the trainer ejaculated. "We've got to look at things in the face. You're through with hockey unless you prove that you didn't know what was going to be printed in that magazine. In a way you can't blame anybody. The game was pretty good to you. They think you've bitten the hand that's fed you—that you're playing with your tongue in your cheek. You'll be laid up for a while—just long enough so's we couldn't grab a play-off berth even if the other boys wouldn't rub you out. No, kid, it's no dice."

"I'm goin' to get the guy who framed me," Vic ground out. "I'll look for him if it takes me the rest of my life, Mister Kohl."

Due to the penalties incurred by the Maroons in the first period, the Condors managed to battle through to a tie score. Vic Paulson was under care of a doctor when the battered sextet came into the dressing room.

St. Hilaire said, "Sorry, keed!" and Sturm and Mite Jardine slapped him on the leg as they passed.

VIC PAULSON fought against tears that welled up, but they broke loose and trickled down his blood-smeared face. Tessimond had

been unsportsmanlike, but the onus of the whole thing rested on a man who, Vic was certain, was a long distance away.

Word came from John Kilbride an hour later. It was a lengthy communication that sent Vic Paulson back on his heels and spilled over his cup of bitterness and bewilderment.

PAULSON'S ACCUSATIONS AGAINST BARROW RIDICULOUS STOP BARROW TELLS ME COPY WENT TO PRESS AS WRITTEN STOP HAS SATISFIED EVERYONE HERE HE IS NOT BOREAU STOP SAW PAULSON'S STORY MYSELF IN PROOF BEFORE PUBLISHED STOP THOUGHT IT GOOD WAY FOR FANS TO FIND OUT ABOUT HIM STOP HIS KIND SHOULD BE DRIVEN FROM GAME.

KILBRIDE.

The battered Condor center ice man was stunned when Kohl crumpled the wire in to a ball and flung it into a corner of the office. Vic Paulson, not daring to look at anyone, walked out, trying to tell himself that it was not all a bad dream; that his hockey days were just begun—not really over. On the way out he passed a pair of huskies who looked familiar. Sure, the one with the adhesive over his eye was Chuck Yeager, the New York goalie. He got a cold, icy stare for response to his nod. The other stick wielder made believe Vic Paulson was a cigar-store Indian.

"I was itchin' to get a crack at that punk, but the Maroons beat me to it. That big guy, Tessimond, sure showed him the way the whole lot of us felt."

Vic felt as though he were pushing his way through a fog as he went out into the crowded street. It seemed then as if every eye on Eighth Avenue were on him. And that night when Butch Kohl walked in on him in his hotel room, the stunned hockey player was crying like a baby. That made Kohl's task doubly difficult and, as men are when their sympathies are involved, he was exceptionally blunt.



"You might as well stay here, Paulson," he said. "No use for you to go to Cleveland with the club. Let those ribs knit good, an' maybe by that time things'll have blown over an' something may have turned up. I—er—you—you sure showed me game-ness out there against the Maroons. I—well, that's all."

"Yeah, that's all," the injured player said with an almost hysterical laugh. "You can't kid me, boss. You know what they'll do to me if I ever get on the ice again. No, Mister Kohl, I won't be around when you get back."

The manager of the Condors said nothing for a while. Then: "You've got money comin' from the front office. It'll be here tomorrow, kid. And good luck!" He went out, slamming the door behind him.

Up in Red River, Ontario, there was a man who had given Vic Paulson his first job. He had always assured the hockey player that if things broke bad for him any time, Vic was to go back to see him. Accordingly, Vic Paulson did not wait around in a hotel room for his ribs to heal. He took a midnight train out of New York, wondering if the jinx was through with him. He was sure it was still tailing Butch Kohl. Late the next day he called at the office of the man who owned the R. H. Marshall paper-box factory. Marshall was a Gwinnell grad whose hair was gray now, but who had perennial youth in his face. He had practically introduced the ice game at Gwinnell.

"Hello, son," he said to Vic when the player walked in. "Got into quite a mess, didn't you?"

"I hope you don't believe like the others," Vic said quickly. "I swear I didn't know what they were going to print, Mr. Marshall."

"Don't doubt it, Paulson," said the manufacturer. "But you did think you knew all the angles, didn't you, Vic? Like believing that everything people said to a star player was on

the up and up. A man still has a lot to learn even when he gets to the top."

Vic said tensely: "I was framed. They almost got me in that plane. There's a bird who has been knifing Chicago Condor chances for the past ten years. I think it's Kohl he's really after. Some day I'm going to catch up with him."

"You want to keep on playing hockey, eh?"

"Nothing else," replied the disillusioned player. "But I know there isn't a chance. A minor league club wouldn't have me—not even the smallest semi-pro league. I'm poison to the game. So that's that."

Marshall shook his head. "There's one league you can catch on with," he said, "if you want to fight your way back, it's an outlaw league that will hire anybody who can carry a puck. You've heard of it."

"Sure I have," said Vic hoarsely. "So I've come to that—the dumping ground for every hockey outfit in two countries. Players who have been ruled out of decent arenas for crookedness and brutality. The scum of the ice. Ex-convicts and halfbreeds who haven't the brains or the inclination to play a white man's game! Well, it's hockey. How do I catch on?"

Marshall pressed his lips tight. "All you have to do is pick the team you want and see who runs it. They'll grab you so fast you'll hardly be able to catch your breath. And, Paulson," he added, holding out his hand, "I'm betting on you. Always have. I believe your story."

"Thanks, Mr. Marshall," acknowledged Vic feelingly.

**T**HE HOCKEY PLAYER headed for colder climes that very night. Two days later he got off the train at a bleak snowbound station from which hung a weathered sign saying *Barrier Lake*. Off to the left was the town, sprawled on a long, white-blanketed hillside. Beyond and below gleamed the frozen surface of a pine-



rimmed lake with fires flickering on its banks. Moving figures became silhouetted against the fires from time to time, and the sound of massed voices broke the cold silence, which reigned after the departing train whistle had died in the distance. Then a different sound cut through all others and caused Vic's heartbeat to quicken. Hockey sticks were clacking, and steel runners were swishing on the ice. He drew his overcoat more tightly around him and turned toward a native who was driving a pung along the station platform.

"Hockey game down there?" queried Paulson.

"Yah! Everybody know dat. Barrier Lake Beavers an' de Oxbow Bisons. Yump in, faller, if you want go down dere. Two bits."

The player got into the pung and rode down to the lake with the biting wind making his cheeks tingle. He was glad to get out of the sled and stamp warm blood through his tingling feet on the way toward the crowd gathered around a fire. He swept his eyes out over the lake and saw three other fires blazing far out from the banks. Packing cases and boxes littered the frozen surface of the natural rink, and fans were huddled on them. At least three hundred people were watching the game.

Vic went out onto the ice and drew near to a mass of players who were milling furiously around a regular hockey cage. The players wore the orthodox uniform of big-time players, with the exception of the heavily knitted caps pulled down over their ears.

The play was fast and furious. With every rush men went down, slid across the ice. Vic Paulson smiled. It was no soft outfit, this outlaw league. He watched a red-shirted man score a solo dash, waited until the applause had died down from behind the nearest cage, then asked a bundled-up spectator: "Do they play all games outdoors?"

"All but a couple, mister. The St.

Philip Club has an indoor rink, but 'tain't heated. Then they've got a fair outfit at Oxbow. They lead the league—the Bisons, Beavers an' Elk Creek Fishers they play outdoors. Stranger here?"

"For a while." The play on the ice had halted. The hard-breathing and bruised, red-shirted team came to the sidelines and gathered around a fire. They pulled off heavy gloves and warmed them over the flames. Vic singled out the man who had scored the goal and ventured: "I'd like to see the manager."

A weathered, hard-bitten face swung toward him. "I'm him, Georges Flandreau. What you want, feller?"

"Ever hear of Vic Paulson?"

"Paulson? Paulson huh, by gar, I hear 'bout heem. He go to big American Group from Winnipeg Tartans. Sure, sometheeng happen, non? I read papers las' week St. Philip—"

"I'm Paulson. I want to play here."

Flandreau stared blankly for several seconds then let out a yell. "Look, garcons, thees ees Vic Paulson, I am talling you. I see hees peecture in newspaper. You look, too. Who ees that feller?"

"By gar—voila, thees ees man call' Paulson!" exclaimed one of the players.

Fans gathered around, and the other hockey squad pressed closer. They wore black and white jerseys and were a rough-looking bunch of stick wielders. The name of Paulson rippled across the lake, made a complete circuit of it. A big, broad-shouldered puck ragger strode up to Vic and said bluntly:

"I'm Pete Lepine, manager of Oxbow Bisons. You play for me, you mak' more money, Paulson. Flandreau he not pay ver' good. He don' have the crowds."

"By gar, Lepine, I smash you down, you try steal from in thees man," Flandreau roared. "I tall you I fight see who tak' thees man, oui?"

Vic Paulson forgot the cold when he watched that fight. It went on for



twenty minutes with Flandreau on top at the end. Flandreau wiped blood from his chin and grinned at Paulson. "Nex' night we play at St. Philip, *oui*? You play center for Barrier Lake, *oui*?"

"Next week or after, you mean," Paulson corrected him. "I have a couple of busted ribs. If you don't want to wait, maybe Lepine—"

"By gar," Flandreau spat, "that ees all right. We wait, an' you get mend' up. Come on, we go out now an' mak' three goals, *mon amis*. *Alors!*" Vic Paulson took a liking to the big French Canuck then and there. A week later he gambled with fate and lined up with the Beavers against a tough-looking sextet from Elk Creek.

**Q**U' APPELLE RIVER'S banks were swarmed with fans as rabid as anyone could find in big-time arenas. The Beavers were a motley group. Big Flandreau and a swarthy giant named Cojack teamed up with Vic Paulson on the front line. Cojack had once done time for breaking a hockey ref's skull with a stick up in Saskatoon. The defense men, a burly Swede and a dead-panned halfbreed named Jim Longboat, got set and, teeth bared, seemingly tipped forward on the points of their steel runners.

A yell from the crowd on the banks boiled out over the ice when the puck was dropped, and Vic Paulson immediately found out that there were few rules in the outlaw league when the disc hit the ice. The St. Philip center banged into him and knocked him to his knees, stole the puck and went down ice like a maniac. The ex-Condor center, unschooled in hinterland skulduggery, set sail after the Elk Creek puck ragger and caught him ten feet from the Beaver net. He harried him to the sidelines, dumped him over the board markers and whipped the puck out from under the noses of three snarling Fisher defense men. The crowd howled with glee as did Big Georges Flandreau, who drove in to cover the

new Beaver's dash for the Fisher net. He sent two Elk Creek skaters flying, bellowed like a bull and yelled for Paulson to bang the puck home.

The Fisher net guardian was no big-time prospect. He was a battered old-timer with little guile. Vic grinned, feinted him out of position and then drove a shot with smoke on it past him for the first score. The game became a vicious battle. Vic Paulson knew why these men did not mind playing outdoors with the thermometer hitting twenty below. A man did not have time to get cold. Vic's ribs were bothering him at the start of the last period, and Flandreau bellowed for him to go take a big rest.

"Four times you have score. I no lak to lose you, faller, weeth no more busted bone," the Beaver pilot roared. "We hold 'em."

Vic watched the rest of that game, shaking his head at the travesty that went on under the name of ice hockey. It was knock-down and drag-out. His fast footwork, superior speed and keen mind had saved him from many a nasty spill on that ice. He wondered how long he would last in this crazy league. The players depended on the money donated by the spectators at a game. The four teams played three times a week and were lucky to make twenty-five dollars a head out of it. But a man could live on that if he had to.

As the weeks passed Vic Paulson wondered if he had ever been in any other hockey league. The past seemed to have rolled back clean out of sight of his mind's eye. The jinx that had cut his career short had apparently gone with it. Maybe, he mused, it was too cold in this country for the little black devil to roam. News from outside had been sporadic. The Condors had slipped back into third place the last he had heard of them. Kohl was out looking for another minor star, but the week-old paper in which Vic had read the information de-



clared that the Condor manager was being cautious with the jinx in his mind.

The Bisons' arena was a deserted fish-storage plant on the edge of the Qu' Appelle. Long wooden benches that would seat three or four hundred fans extended along the sides, and at one end was a common, stove-heated dressing room for the hockey players. Vic Paulson picked himself a wooden locker without a door and began to change into the Beaver spangles he had grown used to. The warmth from the stove radiated through the tacky dressing room. An oil lamp hung from the ceiling and sent a feeble light into the enclosure that Paulson had chosen. He saw a lot of names that had been carved into, or written upon, the bare boards; and a couple of them were synonymous with the rink game. Names that had blazed brightly and soon died. There were other names that held no significance.

Vic hung his heavy coat on a nail, but it sagged precariously and he moved it to another one. His eyes rested for a moment on a name that had been heavily incited with pencil right above that loose nail. His heart leaped in his chest, then thudded sickeningly. *Boreau*. The writer had adorned his signature with fancy furbelows and the crude likeness of a bird. Vic Paulson stumbled toward a long wooden bench and slumped down, his face graying.

Flandreau looked at him with narrowed eyes and said: "What ees thees, *mon ami*? You have the seekness by the ribs, eh?"

"No, no, not that, Canuck," Paulson bit out. "I just saw—something. A lot of well-known hockey players started in this neck of the woods, didn't they?"

"*Oui*, thees ees so. She ees call' cradle of ice hockey, thees country. From here go beeg fallers lak Quatrellé an' Pierre Touissant an' Duke Clancy an'—" He reeled off many names.

VIC yanked on his tattered hockey togs, a fierce grin on his face. Why had he not thought of that man before? There was that remark he had made once: "Here I *am* somebody. In the army or the mail service nobody would ever hear of me." That sounded like the payoff. Boreau, a man who would never be satisfied to be a little splash in a big pool. Jules Cardonne had said—

The Oxbow Bisons put on a grueling battle against the team that was leading the outlaw league. While Vic Paulson skated the slower, older stick wielders off their feet and ragged the puck like a madman through the Bison defense six times in the first period and a half, he did not know that the Beavers were beginning to be talked about in the hockey world just a few miles away. He did not know that at the moment when he banged home the first Beaver score, the pilot of the Regina Cougars in the same league with the Winnipeg Tartans was saying to Canadian hockey writers in his office:

"I hear everywhere that that outlaw team could beat any six in the Dominion League. I'm sick of hearin' it. Sure, Paulson is at center ice for them. That's all they've got. The fans would like to see the Cougars against them, eh? Well, they will! I've sent a man down to talk to Flandreau, but those big lugs use mostly spares. They'd put half of the Cougar team in the hospital."

"And if your spares are upset?" a writer queried significantly.

"Then I have to put in the first line, an' in that first line is one man the Chicago Condors will pay ten thousand dollars for. Their scout is comin' to look him over sometime. They won't tell me when because they say little Melchoir would play better than he knew how for one game if he—"

"Well, the Beavers have been sayin' that they can take the Cougars any time," a hockey expert grinned, walking away.



The Oxbow crowd were getting cold feet. Vic Paulson's terrific pace kept lifting them off their seats, and the ice under the benches was pretty cold. With Flandreau and the other big wingman the ex-big time center was ripping the Bison backline to bits. But Vic Paulson knew that he was absorbing too much punishment, was getting spilled too many times to last long. A man's life in the outlaw league could not be more than a year or two. But the thought that he had finally tagged the Condor jinx kept lifting him up and sending him in for more. Four goals he pounded into the Bison net in the first period.

"Flandreau here?" It was a representative of the Cougars, and he had walked into the dressing room during the last rest period.

The big Canuck said aloud: "Right here, *m'sieu*," and Vic Paulson looked up from tying a shoelace.

"You've been beefing about getting a chance to play a Dominion league team, Flandreau," the man said. "Maybe you figured we wouldn't call your bluff, eh? Well, I'm here to talk business regarding an exhibition match. But you'll play our rules, see? A thousand dollars for your end. What say? A week from tonight in Regina!"

"By gar, we be there!" Flandreau exclaimed. "We beat Cougars, hey Vic?" He chuckled and slapped his leg. The Cougar man looked at Paulson and sneered almost imperceptibly.

"Going up in the world, eh, Paulson?" He turned to Flandreau again. "You've got to remember one thing, Flandreau. Our right wing, Melchoir, is ready for the big time. The Chicago Club is interested in him. Lay off him, or we'll run you right out of the country—the whole bunch of you. You'll never pick up a hockey stick again—anywhere—see?"

"For wan t'ousan' dollar I mak' this bunch play lak washwomans," Flandreau declared. *Alors, mes enfants! Wan t'ousan'—*"

The jubilant Beavers made a riot out of the rest of the game. They tossed off the Bisons to the tune of nine to one and then hurried to the dressing room to chatter excitedly while doffing their worn spangles.

FANS stormed the Regina Cougar arena the night when the stick wielding terrors from the back woods were to appear against their favorites. For two days the Beavers had been in Regina looking the town over. Vic Paulson had kept a weather eye peeled for a familiar face but it did not present itself. But he spotted Cojack and the defense man, Longboat, in the midst of a spending spree, and he sought out Big Georges Flandreau.

"How much money did you give those two after the Bison game?"

"Five dollar each wan, thees ees all," said the big Canuck. "They have moch monee, *mon ami*. You theenk they steal heem, non? I cut the eyes, Vic, *mon garcon*. If they have rob' somebodee,—"

"Sit tight, Flandreau, sit tight," Vic told him. "Listen."

The French Canadian listened. After a while he said: "Vic, I theenk I'm gon' do anytheeng for help you, *mon ami*. Jus' watch Big Georges when time come. Always I say to them fallers, Vic Paulson he belong in beeg hockey league. They play you dirty treek somewan, huh? We feex mebbeso, by gar!"

"I'm sayin' a prayer," Vic said earnestly. "Those two birds have been paid dough. Why? I think I know." He lapsed into thoughtful silence. Cougars against Beavers. A game that would make the palms of gamblers itch. Outlaw giants against a reputable, big Minor League club. They would think of the Vic Paulson in there with Flandreau's bunch. A Cougar star, Melchoir was headed for the Condors. Everybody would know it by the grapevine telegraph. Everybody! The plug-ugly tactics of the outlaw league were taken for granted throughout the country. A lot of



things could happen to the Cougars.

Vic Paulson decided to play a wild hunch, the hunch that he was thinking the same thoughts as another man who would stop at nothing to ruin the chances of the Chicago Condor Hockey Club. This was a perfect set-up for a shady move. The ex-Condor star knew that his present manager, Georges Flandreau, would keep his word with the Cougar pilot, but he would not have trusted the rest of that Beaver outfit with a thin dime. Show a man like Cojack fifty dollars, and he would sharpen up his knife and ask where he was supposed to go to work. That halfbreed, Longboat, in the Beaver backline, would hire out to any man for a price as low as ten dollars.

The officials laid the law down to Big Georges Flandreau when the outlaw team of big nondescripts took the ice against the Regina Cougars. A derisive catcall or two went up when the fans saw Paulson on the ice. The boos rode the old Tartan favorite hard right up to game-time, but he kept his jaws set with grim determination.

"He sure was a sucker," a Chicago scout in the stands commented to a companion. "Had the world by the tail an' let go for a few lousy dollars. He didn't have to say what he thought. This Melchoir, now, if he can take the stuff these mugs dish out, he'll stand up with any big-time team. He'll be in there. I don't think these spares'll last."

A hush quieted the crowd when the whistle shrilled. The teams lined up, and Vic Paulson found himself facing a player whom he had been up against many times before. But the Cougar center gave him the old eye. "You're right where you belong, Paulson," he said, "with the scum of the rink!"

"Watch yourself, Brill," the Beaver center ice man snapped. "I'm going to chase you off the ice!"

The puck was dropped, and Vic Paulson, keyed to high pitch, swept it

away for the Beavers and stick-handled down the ice with a burst of blinding, deceptive speed that tore a begrudging roar of admiration out of the throats of the biased fans. The Cougar defense was waiting, fire in their eyes. They would get this up-start the way the Toronto Maroons had gotten him. Vic Paulson put on the brakes and kicked up a shower of shaved ice. He shot a bullet pass to Flandreau in the left lane, but the Cougar right wing trapped the big Canuck against the boards.

It was one thing to trap a man, another to keep him trapped. Flandreau, strong as a bull, battled his way out and crashed through the Cougar defense to bang a shot at the net. The goalie deflected it toward a Regina wing, but Vic Paulson was in there with a beautiful check that sent the Cougar stick wielder sprawling. In came Cojack to snag the rubber and go down ice with Flandreau and Paulson clearing the way. The Cougar spares stiffened, were split apart by Paulson and the big Canuck, and Cojack slammed a terrific shot past the Cougar net guardian for a score. Paulson skated to his position, a bleak grin on his face.

The Regina center, Brill, drew his arm across a cut on his cheek and bit out: "Lucky! The next time—"

**T**HE NEXT TIME was the same as the last. The Cougar spares fought wildly to get going. Time after time their rushes were broken up by a whirlwind on skates who had been up to the big time. Vic Paulson poke-checked them into a state of frenzy. He back-checked, sweep-checked, skated around them as if they were frozen to the rink.

Flandreau's triumphant bellowing, as the first period stretched out, maddened the Cougar bench. The Regina pilot, leaning forward, cursed softly as he watched Vic Paulson tear around his own cage after stealing the rubber and come down ice like an express train with the Cougar



center in hopeless pursuit. Flandreau spilled a Cougar backliner. Cojack trapped a fighting wingman against the boards, and the disc went flying toward the harassed Cougar goalie ten times before it stayed put at the back of the cage.

The fans were riding the Cougars now. They yelled for the first string. Two to nothing for the outlaw puck ragers as the period ended.

"What a shame!" exclaimed a scout. "That Paulson guy could have made any big-time club click. That Condor Club sure is jinxed. Even if they want this Melchoir, they'll have to deliver him in an armored car."

In the dressing room turned over to the Beavers, Vic Paulson was tightening the heavy leather belt that he wore around his middle. "Next period, Georges," he said to Flandreau, "the big boys come in. Watch close now. Things ought to start busting wide open if what I think is right. I saw two men come in during a time out. One wore a coat that looked like he is in the money."

The Cougar pilot sent in his first line to start the second session, and the crowd welcomed them with a deafening roar. They pleaded for the boys to smear Paulson, wipe the ice with the plug-uglies. Vic Paulson, a tightness in his throat, remembered when this Cougar crowd had given him plenty of cheers. The center facing him now was tops in the league. Like Brill, he pretended that he had never seen Paulson before.

The whistle. The play was on! The Cougar center stole the puck from under Vic Paulson's nose and cut away from a charging Beaver wing. He went down the middle with Melchoir, the potential Condor wing, slipping fast down the right lane with Cojack riding him hard. Paulson, maddened, drove after the Cougar center and caught him at the blue line. He worried the man out of possession of the disc, cut toward the left and looked for Flandreau. Spotting him down ice battling it out with

the Cougar defense, he shifted his flashing blue eyes toward Melchoir.

Cojack, teeth bared, was going in at the Cougar star, stick held high. Melchoir went down from the impact, slid to the boards, and the whistle shrilled crazily. Cojack went off for five minutes and Vic Paulson looked at the Beaver manager, his lips twisted. Melchoir was raised to his feet, the wind still out of his lungs. Blood was flowing from one corner of his mouth. After a while he gave the Cougar pilot a nod and stayed in. The crowd gave him a great ovation, then started to revile the Beavers, scoring their brutality.

Three minutes later a Cougar drive came down toward the Beaver net with four raging stick handlers determined to break through. Melchoir was carrying. He swung out of the middle lane, drove a pass across the ice to the other Cougar wing just as Longboat, the halfbreed Beaver, came in at him. Longboat's teeth flashed whitely. There was murder in his eyes. Quick as a flash Vic Paulson wheeled away from the Beaver line and threw himself bodily at his own backliner. The crowd's wild yells choked off, and the Cougar pilot leaped off the bench.

Longboat left his feet with a howl of rage and went crashing against the boards. Cojack tore out through the dashes, bellowing insanely, with the timekeeper reaching desperately for him. Big Georges Flandreau drove in then and knocked Cojack down with a mighty blow of his fist.

The fans caught on. They knew that the Beavers, for some reason, had tried to take Melchoir out. The whistle kept shrieking, and police came out onto the ice. Longboat was on his feet, and he tore at Vic Paulson, heavy stick swinging around his head. Reason had left the giant halfbreed.

"You mak' eet the fight agains' own side, yah?" he roared. "You stop eet me from get' my monee, non? I keel you!"



Cougars ganged the halfbreed and brought him down just after he had flung the stick at Vic Paulson's head. The Cougar center yelled at Paulson as he skated close: "Got some man left in you, Vic. Glad of it, kid."

Cojack was harder to hold. He got loose from the police, lunged at Vic, and the old Tartan flash jabbed him in the stomach with the handle of his stick. Cojack went down.

Suddenly Vic shouted: "Up there in the stands—those two men leaving! Get them! Come on, Flandreau, let's go."

**C**OUGAR PLAYERS turned to stare up at the stands. Two spectators were fighting their way toward the exit through a wildly gesticulating crowd. Running on his skates, Vic Paulson, followed by four Beavers, went over the boards and drove up through the crowd that separated as before a wind and let them through. Police came hard on the heels of the charging ice brigade.

One of the Chicago scouts yelled: "Paulson saved that kid! They would have wrecked Melchoir for life. Somethin's breaking here, Bill. Let's get over there!"

Spectators out of their seats were hampering the progress of the pair who were trying to get out of the arena. One was flailing wildly at the crowds near a lighted exit when Vic Paulson got near him. A face turned toward him for a moment, a familiar coppery face adorned by a well-groomed black mustache.

"Boreau!" he yelled and flung an innocent bystander aside.

The Beaver players kept widening the path, and then Vic Paulson stuck out his stick and threw the man with the mustache off his feet.

A loose-lipped, moon-faced individual in Boreau's company reached inside his coat, but Georges Flandreau threw his stick. The heavy handle cracked against the man's mouth and sent him reeling backward, spitting blood. In a moment

the Beavers were swarming atop both customers, and the French Canuck's booming laugh rang out above the pandemonium.

"By gar," he roared, "you right *mon ami*! You call heem the honch, non?"

Vic dragged a man to his feet. He looked into Boreau's, alias Strang's, scared eyes and clipped: "So we meet in person, Jinx? You're washed up for keeps. You'll be a little splash in a big pool from now on, Boreau, and the pool will have bars around it. Come on—tell all the nice people here about the frame you set up for me. Tell Cojack and that other mug that they won't get their rest of the dough for crippling Melchoir so that the Condors—"

The Beavers went back onto the ice with the police. They threw Boreau, alias Alex Strang, John Kilbride's air pilot, at the feet of the two outlaw hockey players who, having been promised a certain degree of immunity, anxiously owned up to their part of the deal.

"Wan hun'ed dollar we are getteeng," Cojack blustered, "if we get thees Melchoir. We are paid feefty already by thees man!"

"Well, Mr. Strang." Vic Paulson bit out. "You were tripped up when I saw your name written on the boards of a locker room at Oxbow. Decorated it the same way you wrote the name Strang on that programme I autographed in Winnipeg during my last game with the Tartans. I kind of figured that this would be a nice chance for you to stop Melchoir. My hunch was right. Rats look for other rats when they need help in a deal like this. Go ahead an' talk!"

"What d'you want me to say, wise guy?" Boreau growled. "You said it all. Sure was me—it's been me all along. I've stopped that Chicago Club every time I had a chance. Butch Kohl, I mean. He gave me a lousy deal once, and I never forgot it. Hah, I get around a lot workin' for Kilbride. Kohl thought he was jinxed,



him trying for a top-place team. Well I've been stopping him! I pretty near had you, Paulson, like those other two guys! I wouldn't have had to frame you twice if I hadn't landed that crate where a lot of farmers could get to it. I had a wrench ready to keep you off a rink for good with a couple of broken legs! That all you want to know, you smart guys?"

"Not quite!" Vic said. "Where did Barrow come in on this? He had to know about that copy."

**S**TRANG grinned crookedly, tried to wrench himself loose from the hands that held him. "Barrow? Hah! He wrote that stuff for me. I had to have more than one guy under my thumb to get away with things with Kilbride. I watched Barrow close and help him a lot in betting on the ponies, Paulson. Sometimes I don't pick them right for him, and he went overboard. He has a wife and a couple of kids, and he had to borrow a little money from Kilbride. But Kilbride doesn't know it—yet. Barrow did what I told him to do. Paulson."

The hockey player said: "A rat wouldn't share the same room with you, Boreau. Take him away before I crack his skull with a hockey stick!"

The Cougars mobbed Vic, then, slapping him on the back and almost wringing his hand off. Sports writers dashed away to get the news through to the States via the Canadian News Syndicate wires. The game kept being

held up, and the Chicago scouts finally wormed their way to mid-ice.

"Good boy, Paulson!" exclaimed one. "You're aces and you're on the way back all right."

"Well, there's a Melchoir," Vic qualified their statement, "ready for delivery and no jinx riding on his price tag. Things ought to be lookin' up for the Condors."

"Melchoir!" a scout roared. "It's you, Paulson, who's ready for delivery. Don't forget the Condors have a string on you."

A man whose face was wreathed in smiles finally managed to draw Vic's attention with a tap on the shoulder. He wheeled and saw Papa Cardonne.

"I come to see you play, keed," the Tartan trainer explained. "I say to everybodee they lie 'bout Vic Paulson. I have the many fight' weeth peoples. I say you wait an' he show you that. Vic, I am ver' proud of you." He turned and eyed Big Georges Flandreau. "Why, you beeg moose, you! I teach to you thees gam' wan time an' you theenk you so smart as you don' me. So you geet the bad companee, Georges, eh? Come shake the hands weeth Papa Cardonne. Now you are in right companee. Joe Gru-neau he want coach for Winnipeg Tartans. I tak' you 'long weeth me!"

Flandreau beamed and put his arm across Vic Paulson's shoulder. Vic, too, was a pretty happy guy. "Everything seems to be all right now, eh?" he said to the Cougar pilot.

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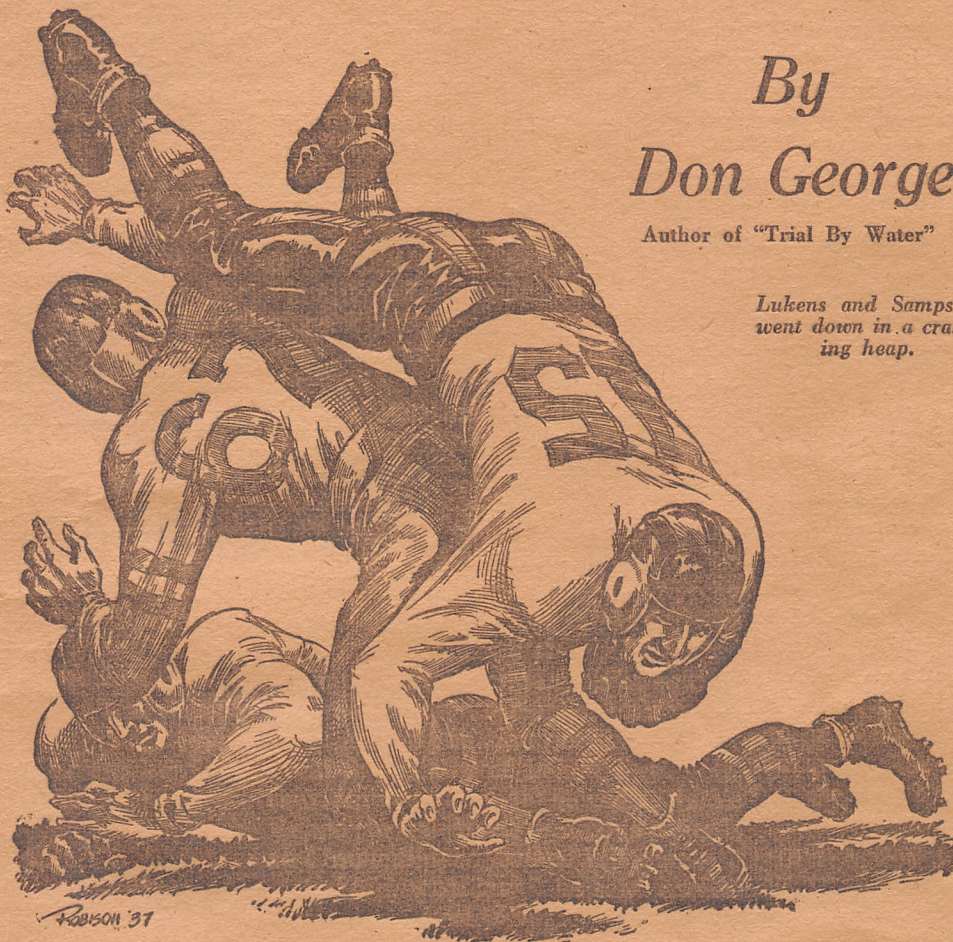


# Pigskin Juggernaut

By  
Don George

Author of "Trial By Water"

*Lukens and Sampson  
went down in a crash-  
ing heap.*



*Bat Lukens was green in the ways of the gridiron, but with a football in his hands he was a rampaging juggernaut. If he hit you hard, you became a hospital patient—and he had to go easy, or he'd lose the girl who'd sent him onto the gridiron.*



**E**NRIGHT INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE isn't very large, but its football team is one of the most feared along the Appalachian Range, where grid juggernauts come big and tough. Under the expert

guidance of "Snake" Kagan, premier coach of the knock-'em-down, step-on-'em school of action, Enright was riding high and cocky. Maybe it didn't have any manners and maybe it wasn't heavily endowed, but it knew its own strength. And that strength lay in the husky muscle of its eleven football players rather than in the brains of the other six hundred stu-



dents. Situated in the middle of the industrial and mining area, it didn't put on airs, because it didn't know what airs were. And it didn't play a modern, deceptive game, because their opponents would have laughed themselves sick if they had, and would have bulled a dozen tallies over in the bargain. It stuck to what it knew, and it knew plenty.

That was the setup "Bat" Lukens walked into without knowing it. On the surface, he looked like a ready-made candidate for a berth on the first eleven. Even Kagan, when he first saw Lukens, was impressed.

"Say, Lippy," Snake said to his trainer, "pipe the original behemoth, over there in the leather jumper. Is he scouting us for the New York Giants, or can it be possible he's a student here?"

"Lippy" Gans looked at the huge proportions of the youth referred to, and whistled. "Say, he's too good to be true. He's so tall it'd take a Western Union telegram to reach his brain before his feet went dead. He's so thick he'd bust a box car wide apart, trying to get in. Sign him up, Snake. Who the hell cares who he is."

Enright gridders are not noted for being puny, but Bat Lukens, standing on the sidelines watching them practice, towered over them all. By his build, you'd take him for a steel bo-hunk, but he had the healthy, bronzed face of a farmer and the sleepy look of a bored debutante. He just didn't seem to fit together properly.

The squad quit practicing to look at him. The coach walked over casually and spoke.

"Belong here?" he asked. "What's your name?"

"Yes, mister, I just come. I'm Bat Lukens," the newcomer said, as if it hurt to speak more than necessary. "Say, is that thing you're playin', football?" he drawled.

Kagan's thick eyebrows went up. "Yeah," he said. "Like to try it?"

"I sure would. I heard a lot about this game back in Pikeville."

"Pikeville! Say, are you from Pike College? If you are, you'd better git. We don't allow scouting in this league."

"You got me backwards," Bat Lukens protested. "I never seen Pike College. I come from back in the hills. All I know about that place is a feller name "Skunk" Sampson goes there. That's why I didn't."

"Say, do you know Sampson?" said the coach, interested.

"Yeah, he's a lop-eared, muddlin' little polecat," Lukens said casually.

"You think so? If I had a couple like him on this club, we'd go places. He just about wrecked this gang in the big game last year," Kagan said, half in bitterness, half in envy. He admired a good player, but hated to have him on the other team.

"Well, if he can learn this game, I guess I can," Lukens said. "My gal's always talkin' about Skunk, and I'm sick of it. Sayin' as how he's goin' to college, and playin' this gentleman's game, and learnin' things. That's why I'm here. I'm meanin' to better myself. To learn things. Emma wants that I should."

"She does, does she?" said Kagan, trying not to laugh. "That's fine. You came to the right place—didn't he, Lippy? He wants to better himself. To learn things. We'll teach him."

"Yeah," said the trainer. "We'll give him back to Emma so she won't know him. That's a laugh—coming to Enright to learn things."

"It won't hurt him to try," Kagan said. "Give him a uniform and tell him to report. We can use his beef, even if he hasn't any brains."

"Say, mister," Bat Lukens said mildly, "if you're talkin' about me, I want to hear what you say. I don't like people talkin' behind my back."

**S**NAKE KAGAN scowled blackly, "Oh you don't, eh. And who the hell do you think you are? I'm boss here, see? What I say goes. If you don't like it, say so, and I'll throw you out."



"Don't act like that, mister, it's right unhealthy," Lukens said. "I killed a man once—almost. Emma says I don't know my own strength. She says not to get in any fights here, or she won't speak to me."

Snake Kagan stared at Lukens, then spat disgustedly. He'd seen them come in like this before. And he'd seen them go out different. He wasn't impressed. He couldn't afford to be. He had to stay tough to rule that mob.

"Can the chatter. We do our talking with our fists here. You're too big for your own good. Come out for the team and you'll be howling another tune. Or have you changed your mind?"

"Do you mean I can play? That's fine. I didn't mean nothin'. I just want to play this game. Emma says—"

"To hell with Emma!" Kagan shouted.

"What's that?" Bat Lukens asked, suddenly changing from an easy-going, awkward giant into something that looked like a cross between a steam roller and a pile driver ready for action.

"He don't mean nothing," Lippy Gans cut in. "He says it's swell you're going to play. Your Emma can say all she damn pleases. All we want around here is results. Produce 'em and you're okay. Fizzle, and it's your tough luck. Fair enough?"

"Don't you worry about me," Bat Lukens said modestly. "I'll make out. Only I don't like anyone talkin' about—"

"Cripes," said Lippy Gans angrily. "Forget it. Come out tomorrow."

When Bat Lukens appeared the next day, the whole team stared at him and began to laugh. The uniform he had drawn, the largest in the place, made him look like a gigantic scarecrow. The pants came to above his knees. He had already split the jersey wide open. And he'd left off the shoulder pads and helmet.

"What good are those things?" Bat wanted to know when he saw them.

"Protection," said Gans shortly. "You need it around here."

Bat Lukens began to laugh, in a slow, hearty way that shook his whole huge frame.

"That's funny," he said at last. "Me needin' pertection."

"Let him alone," Snake Kagan said to Gans privately. "One good crack on the dome will bring him to his senses. Pass the word along to 'Crash' Conway and Mike Fulton and the others to give him the works. See what he's made of. I can't dope that guy out."

On the field the coach gave him a football. Lukens gripped it in one huge paw and looked around to see what to do next.

"Tuck it under your arm," Kagan said curtly. "One knock, and you'll fumble, carrying it that way. Look." He gave the ball a sharp blow, but nothing happened. It still stuck to Lukens' hand.

"I'll be damned," Kagan said to himself. "Now let's see you kick it," he said, trying to find something to criticize.

Bat Lukens carefully placed the pigskin on the ground, reached back a gangling foot and booted it. The ball sailed over the goal posts. Kagan stared at him.

"Now kick it when it leaves your hands like this." He demonstrated, beginning to look pleased in spite of himself.

Lukens grinned and tried. The force of his leg thrust sent him off balance and sprawling. The ball fell to the ground.

"I guess I missed," Bat said, without rancor.

"I knew he couldn't be that good," Kagan said to Crash Conway, the captain. "But he's good enough, if he can take it. Try a couple of tackles at him."

L UKENS was looking the other way when Crash Conway's compact bulk caught him unawares. His knees buckled under the impact, and



he grunted, but he did not fall. Crash got up slowly and rubbed his shoulder.

"What did you go hitting me for?" Lukens asked, mildly.

"He was tackling you," Kagan explained, trying not to show his amazement. "It's part of the game."

"Oh, all right. Go ahead. I don't mind," Lukens agreed.

Lippy Gans choked suddenly, and Conway turned on him angrily. "What are you laughing at? Did you ever try to tackle a ten-ton steel beam set in concrete? Well, just try him."

Gans stopped laughing.

"Now run through the squad with the ball," Kagan commanded Lukens, more and more pleased with his find. "Try to get through them to those goal posts."

"Sure," Lukens said, and began running.

He lumbered along like a freight train, straight ahead, until he came to the first man, "Sailor" Sanford. The Sailor had seen a lot of rough going, but he knew better than to try to stop that galloping hulk. Ken Bull, left half, tried, and was knocked reeling. Immediately Bat Lukens halted and turned back to pick up his teammate.

"Say. You hurt? I'm sure sorry. I didn't mean that, honest," he apologized.

Ken Bull was too amazed to speak, but Snake Kagan shouted: "Keep going! Don't stop! What do you think this is, a tea party? If they can't take it, it's their fault."

"Yeah," snarled Bull. "You try it then."

"Maybe I'd better not," Lukens said, without moving. "Emma didn't tell me I'd have to go hurtin' people. She wouldn't like it."

Kagan let out a roar, then he quit suddenly, and shook his head. "So that's it. I knew he wasn't real," he said to the trainer. "I've seen them like that. It's a swell gag. They like to make believe they're thinking of the other fellow, when all the time

they don't like to play rough. One sock and they're through."

"Listen, coach, give him a chance," Gans said earnestly. "After all, he's not going to be playing against these guys. Put him on the team, and the opposition will fall all over themselves getting out of his way. They'll never know he's like that. And what of it? I bet he can tackle."

"So can a monkey," said Kagan. "And think of all that horse meat going to waste. Well, let him stay. We'll see. If he doesn't stumble over and kill himself, maybe he can get in the way of some one else. He's big enough, the crazy fool. And we got to plug that hole at fullback. If the Great Wall can keep China safe by standing still, maybe this guy can play safety man for us."

Two teams were formed. Lukens was placed in one backfield and told to tackle the man with the ball if he got through. He stood five yards behind the line, his big mug grinning with pleasure. He watched the ball snapped, moved over a bit as Mike Fulton plowed through tackle, reached out one long arm and grabbed Fulton by his waist. Mike kept on digging with his cleats, and executed a sudden twist to get away. Lukens scarcely moved, but his arm bent until Mike Fulton was pulled so close he couldn't move.

"That's the damndest tackle I ever saw in my life," Kagan raved. "Are you trying to kiss him, or what? Spill him! Hit him hard! I told you to tackle him."

"I caught him, didn't I?" Lukens said. "All this fallin' on the ground ain't no use. It's plumb foolish."

"Maybe not, but they stay put. Wait till that guy Sampson tickles your ribs with his elbows and cracks your shins with his cleats. You'll wish he was on the ground dead."

"Who, Skunk Sampson? Why that varmint's so low I wouldn't let him lick my boots. You know what he did, he told my Emma—"



THE HEAD COACH turned away, angrily. "It's no use, Gans, I don't know who let him in, but I'll be a school teacher if he's going to stay. Maybe he could play football in a crazy asylum, being the natural-born fool he is, but I can't risk my contract letting him play for Enright."

"What about that hole in the backfield? You only got Crash and Mike and Ken Bull," Gans reminded.

"Oh, all right. Keep him on. But if you can beat some sense into that thick skull of his, you're better than I am. If he talks about his Emma once more, I'll go nuts. I'd like to meet that jane once and tell her what I think of her."

"Ask Bat about that," Gans said grinning. "Maybe he'll introduce you."

The first game—against Prairie College—took place, and Enright's cheering section was treated to the spectacle of Bat Lukens trying to play safety man on their highly-touted eleven. At first the stands just gasped when they saw he was real. Then they cheered. Finally, when action got hot, they began to laugh. Then they groaned and started to boo. Definitely, they didn't like what they saw. Snake Kagan heard those ominous sounds and immediately yanked Lukens.

"Listen, wise guy," he said, as Lukens stood beside him. "When you carry the ball, you're supposed to run the right way. A guy pulled that stunt out in California once and he hasn't lived it down yet."

"I turned around," Lukens said, "and then I run back again even further, didn't I?" He seemed hurt.

"Yeah, you're shot with luck, but it won't last. I'm just telling you. You can't make a donkey out of me. And another thing, when you hit that line, you don't have to stop and apologize to every guy you step on. The idea is to keep going."

"But I broke his ankle. I didn't mean to do it, and I thought I ought to tell him," Lukens explained. "I might have hurt him bad. Emma told

me this was a high-class game, but I guess if she really knew, she wouldn't like it. I don't know what to do."

"Are you a man, or just a piece of skirt?" demanded the coach. "I guess you came to the wrong place. This ain't no female college."

"I guess you're just jokin'," Lukens said, puzzled, but trying to smile.

"Yeah, but the joke's on me. Maybe you didn't hear them razz you when you caught that fumble and then gave it back to the dope who dropped it. One of us is crazy, and I'm beginning to think it's me."

"It wouldn't have been fair to keep it," Bat Lukens said. "I read the rules and it says you can't pull the ball out of a man's arms. I did it by mistake, so I gave it back. I like to play fair. I don't like crooked dealin's any time."

Coach Kagan was so mad he had to quit talking. But he wasn't too mad to realize that, for all his faults, Bat Lukens had done more good than harm. He had stopped one Prairie score by pushing a man out of bounds, even if he hadn't even tried to tackle him, and he had kept on going to tally after Fulton and Conway had opened a great gap in the opposing line. Luckily, no one had been able to get in his way that time, or no telling what crazy thing he would have done, but he had scored, at least. Call it luck. Still it was six points, and the ball game.

Snake Kagan was in a dilemma. He hated to leave Lukens on the team and he hated to take him out. He tried his best to cure the mountaineer's faults, but it was useless. The guy refused to learn. He acted as if football was a cross between a love feast and a croquet game. He played with a big grin on his face the whole time. He never seemed to mind being ganged by the rival players. In fact, he scarcely knew what was happening. And even though he didn't wear a helmet or pads, he never got hurt. A player like that was worth something, so Kagan left him in.



RIVERTON'S grid team was fair, and put up a good fight, but it didn't do them any good. Enright had too much brute power. Yet Bat Lukens almost lost the game for the home team, and nearly gave Snake Kagan and the Enright boosters heart failure.

The score was 14-13 in favor of the Industrials in the last quarter, and Riverton was forcing the play deep in enemy territory. Their quarter dropped back and heaved a long pass. It was wide of the end who ran down to nab it, but it fell right into the big mitts of Bat Lukens, who was standing on the one-yard line.

A yell went up when Lukens stood there for a moment, not knowing what to do, then stepped backward a couple of yards and stopped again. Another yell went up, this time from the bench, where the subs were watching with their tongues hanging out. They knew, although the crowd didn't, that Lukens should never have touched the ball in the first place. If it had gone wild over the goal line on this fourth down, it would be Enright's ball headed the other way. As it was, with Lukens snaring the oval out in the field, and then stepping back of the last marker, it meant that if he was caught there, it would be a safety, and two priceless points would go to the Riverton.

Riverton players tore in to make the tackle, but just before they arrived, Lukens again began to move in that slow, awkward way of his. He started to run, and reached the five yard stripe before he was stopped by five blue-jerseyed wildcats. Ken Bull kicked on the next play, and Enright was out of danger, but it had been a close call. That was the blunder that earned for Lukens the monicker, the Football Fool.

To cap it all, Bat Lukens blamed Kagan.

"You never told me what to do for a thing like that," he complained. "I wasn't sure, and when I'm not sure, I have to think things out. I did some-

thin' once, before I thought, and the other fellow took a long time recoverin'."

Snake Kagan saw red.

"Listen, you hill-climbing giraffe, all this gab of yours about what a great man-killer you are just doesn't sit right inside my lap. If you was the hell-cat you say you are, I'd be the last to weep. As it is, you're just a loud-mouthed, cow-brained, rubber-bellied halfwit. I never thought I'd live to see the day when—"

Coach Kagan never finished. Bat Lukens' pleasant face turned a light mud color, and his eyelids straightened out like the holes in slot machines. He pushed out a hand and hoisted Snake Kagan up into the air by the back of his neck like a kitten. For a full minute the older man kicked and yelled and cursed.

Bat Lukens waited calmly until he had quieted down.

"You got an awful mean tongue when it starts to wag," he said after a while. "I wouldn't like to have to pull it out."

Snake Kagan was no coward, but that quiet tone, and that terrific grip unnerved him. When he was released, he walked away without a word.

NOTHING was said by either party about the incident, which had not been witnessed. Bat Lukens came out for practice as if nothing had happened. Coach Kagan glared at him and went to the other end of the field. But when the game with Millerdale came along, Lukens' name was not in the starting lineup. Nor was he sent in as a substitute.

He sat on the bench, hunched up, watching, not saying a word. Then he went back to the gym and dressed in silence. The team had won, and the others fooled and joked while they were taking showers, but Bat Lukens was ignored. He tried to talk to Conway, but the latter grunted and kept on dressing. He tried to be pleasant to Ken Bull.



"I wish I'd been playin'," he said wistfully. "I sure do like this game."

Bull looked at him sourly. "We got along all right," he said.

"That's good," Lukens said sincerely, not realizing that his own teammates didn't like him because they couldn't understand him. They thought he was yellow, because he never took a poke at a guy's jaw during a pile-up. And they weren't used to being treated politely . . .

The team rolled along to victory after victory. It looked like an all-winning season to the excited Enright mob. But along the valley swept the stories of Skunk Sampson and the havoc he had wrought on all opposition. Pike College was on the loose, too, and the whole area was taking sides in the coming fray. Snake Kagan was going around with a worried air, for that hole in his backfield remained a big problem. Without Bat Lukens, it was bigger still.

"Wait till Sampson spots our weakness," he moaned. "The board will have my neck if we don't win, and how are we going to, with a ten-man team?"

"Put the big, muscle-bound nut back in," advised Gans. "He's better than nothing. He'll stop that Sampson."

"Like hell. He'd probably offer to carry the ball for him," Kagan grouched. "I never saw such a wash-out. If I could only put some fight into his useless frame, we'd have something. But what's the use."

"Say," said Gans, "didn't the lunkhead say something once about knowing Sampson, and how he was a polecat?"

"Talk," replied Kagan. "All talk. Pull him apart and there wouldn't be anything left inside but hot air."

"Yeah, at least you could work on him from that angle. It won't do any harm."

"If I could only get him mad," Kagan mourned. "I mean mad at somebody else," he said, remembering the one time he had seen Lukens an-

gry. "That's the answer. Say, maybe it would work," he said, and went off to think about it.

Games came and games went. Still Lukens sat on the bench. He began to grow restless. Finally he accosted Kagan.

"Mister Kagan," he said. "I want to play this game. That's what I come for. You ain't holdin' me no grudge, are you? I didn't mean to get mad at you. Maybe you can't help sayin' such things."

Kagan got red with anger. "I'll say what I damn well please," he began, then changed his tone suddenly. "Never mind. Forget it. Tell me, is Sampson a friend of yours?"

Bat Lukens swelled up and scowled. "A friend of mine! Say, I guess you don't know much, do you? Ask anybody in Pikeville about that. Why, the—"

"Okay," Kagan soothed. "I just asked. Now I'll tell you something. I'm keeping you out because I don't want to scare off the Pike gridders before it's time. I want them to think they'll have a cinch. Then I'm going to put you in there to mop them up. Get it? To mop them up. Especially this Sampson guy."

Bat Lukens had to think this over. Then he said: "I don't know, coach. Me and Sampson don't get along good, but Emma told me not to bother him no more. She says I could get put in jail if I hurt him again. And those other fellers. I ain't got nothin' against them. You can see that."

COACH KAGAN swore under his breath.

"He's hopeless," he told Gans. "Say, if he met this guy Sampson in a family feud, he'd probably shake hands with him and ask him how his mother is. His Emma's just plumb ruined him. I'd like to wring her neck."

"Did you tell him that?" Gans wanted to know, with a leer.

"Shut up," Kagan growled.



Pike rooters began to invade the bleak campus of Enright Industrial the day before the big game. Then the husky squad came along and strutted around as if they owned the place. They were loaded for bear, and didn't mind who knew it. They were going to take Enright and toss it on the nearest dump of slag. Crash Conway and his mates went around with grim faces. They weren't conceding anything, but the game looked lost. When they got a look at the dangerous Sampson, they went away worried.

The game began. Bat Lukens sat on the bench as usual. He went over to talk to Snake Kagan.

"Mister Kagan," he said. "My Emma, she come all the way from Pikeville just to see me play, and so I got to play."

"Sit down," grunted the coach. "I don't care if she came from the north pole. We got troubles enough as it is."

Skunk Sampson broke loose and tore through center for eighteen yards. Pike players swarmed all over their rivals behind the hard playing of their captain. The Pike stands roared. Enright sat back with tight lips.

"Coach," Bat Lukens said again, "Emma won't never forgive me if I don't go in and make one of those touchdowns. She wrote me to say I sure must."

"That's a laugh," Kagan said without laughing. "If I put you in, you'd make a score, all right—for the other side. I'm not crazy yet."

Pike was still moving under their first momentum. Yard by yard the Pike juggernaut moved forward. Mike Fulton hurled himself against the runners time after time, but always two or three yards were lost. The Enright line was taking a beating. They fought back with every trick they knew, and they knew plenty, but Pike knew a few more.

Sailor Sanford came out of a scrimmage with a bleeding cut. "Slick" Wolfe, at left tackle, was already limping badly.

"They ganged him," Kagan cursed, "Can't the lousy referee spot a foul?"

"Yeah, he sees plenty," Gans said. "Look at the Pike end. Crash just clipped him. Lucky the ref didn't see that."

It was that kind of a game. Everything went. Down there in the hard-bitten valley, this was the only kind of contest they knew. They were brought up on it. The referee would have been mobbed if he had called a penalty. He knew it. And so did Snake Kagan. But Enright was backed to the wall. A minute later, Sampson scored.

Bat Lukens stood up and paced up and down before the bench. He stopped before Coach Kagan.

"Now Skunk Sampson will be struttin' around Pikeville tellin' Emma what a good player he is. And I won't be there to give him the lie. She'll maybe believe him. Look, coach, I want a touchdown, too. Just one."

Kagan hesitated.

"You want to go in, eh? Do you know what I heard before the game? I heard that Sampson was hoping you'd be in there so he could push your face in again the way he did once before back in Pikeville."

The big player stared at the coach. His jaw dropped with surprise. "Coach, that ain't so. He's lyin', like he always does."

"Yeah, and I heard some one say that there's a girl named Emma in the stands that's calling you a yellow catfish. Says you aren't fit to associate with a decent woman. Says she'll take Skunk Sampson any day, because he's a fighting fool."

"Who told you that?" Bat demanded. "I just can't believe it, but I'll kill the critter who said that anyway."

"I'm not sure, but I think Sampson did," Kagan lied.

**A** WIDE END RUN brought the play close to the sidelines and the bench. Lukens looked at the battling players, and then suddenly ran onto



the field. Kagan followed, and grabbed him.

"Don't get him now," he ordered. "Play ball. Get that tally. Show him up. But don't fight with him yet."

Lukens nodded, and Kagan returned to the bench with a satisfied smile.

"I got him mad at last," he told Gans.

Enright rooters groaned when they saw Lukens go in. "There goes the Football Fool," they said. "And there goes the game."

But a minute later they cheered, for Sampson had attempted another thrust through tackle, and had run smack into the huge form of his rival. His forward motion came to an abrupt stop when Lukens clutched him around the neck and almost strangled him. The referee tore them apart. The ball went to Enright on downs.

"Well, if it isn't Bat," Sampson leered through bloody lips. "I thought you was still in jail."

"Maybe after I finish with you," Lukens retorted, before Conway pulled him away.

"Come on, big mouth," the Enright captain grated. "Get that marker you're always talking about."

"Give me the ball," Bat said, and there was no pleasantness left in him.

He took the leather and plowed straight ahead. Pike players fell off him like leaves. He kept going, while the crowd gasped. Then there came a sound like a movie smashup, and Lukens and Sampson went down in a heap.

"Say, guy," Sampson said. "You gone crazy? Take it easy. I ain't got nothing against you now."

"I have," Lukens answered. "I thought I learned you once to keep away from Emma."

From then on, Bat Lukens went berserk. He whipped his mates into a fury. He swore at them until the admiring spectators cheered. He stuck the ball in Ken Bull's stomach and

roared behind him into the opposing line. He zoomed into the clear at a gallop around left end and gained thirty yards before he cracked up against Sampson. He opened a hole for Mike Fulton, and opened a bigger one later. Nothing could stop him until he finally rammed his way across the last stripe. The try for point missed, and the score stood 7-6 against them.

When the half ended, they discovered Lukens was battered to a pulp all over. But he refused to quit, so they fixed him up and sent him in again. When the team trotted onto the field, they were grimmer than ever, all but Bat Lukens, for they didn't believe it could last. No man could hold such a pace to the end of the game.

But they didn't know Bat Lukens. Play began, and he couldn't be stopped. The rest of the team took renewed hope. The crazy loon didn't know anything about the game, but he knew how to move in one direction. If some one got in his way, it was just too bad. He kept going until they piled on him six deep. Then he got up and did it again. Conway helped. Fulton did more than his share. The whole team was yelling like madmen, forgetting their grouch against him. This was the kind of a guy they could understand. They'd go places with him. And they did. He scored in the third quarter. Enright went ahead 12-7, and converted the kick for another point.

But then the inevitable happened. Pike took the ball on the kick-off and began to move. Sampson had plenty of fight left in him. And so did the rest of the battling warriors from Pikeville. They began to roll. It took time, with Enright tacklers hurrying them on every play. But they kept going. Yard by yard they plowed along, and the tally came with ten minutes left to play. They evened the count, and while the home team tried desperately to stop the extra point, they made it, and were ahead again.



It looked hopeless. But Bat Lukens didn't know enough to quit.

"Come on, you mules," he yelled. "The game ain't over."

THEY rallied, and the fight grew more deadly than before. One of Luken's arms was hanging limp. His jersey was ripped from shoulder to belt, and his face looked as if it had been pressed by a huge stamper. His shins were gory. But there was a grinning sneer on his face, and he couldn't be stopped. There were only two minutes left to play. The team was fighting like mad.

Ten yards beyond the line the final marker loomed. Bat lunged toward it. The human walls banged together like two battleships. Then Lukens struck, and snapped it in two. He headed straight for Sampson, crashed into him, and the two enemies went down. But they fell over the line, and the score was made. Enright again ahead, 19-14.

Sampson cursed and kicked when Lukens fell on top of him.

"Ain't you satisfied yet?" he demanded. "If I had a gun, I'd blow your head off."

"You tried that once before," Lukens snapped. "If it hadn't been for Emma, I would sure have got mad that time."

"Yeah, and if it hadn't been for Emma's sister, Lou, I'd have got madder," Sampson snarled as he crawled to his feet.

Bat Lukens dropped the ball and stared at Sampson.

"Say, you sweet on Emma's sister, you mean?" he asked.

"What are you going to do about it?" Sampson said truculently.

"Why, Skunk," Bat began, "and here I've been thinkin'—"

Before he could finish, his mates were piling on him, slapping his back, shaking his hand. He looked at them with surprise.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Did I do something wrong?"

Crash Conway tried to laugh, but his ribs hurt too much. "No," he said. "It must have been a mistake you didn't. And I thought you weren't tough."

They tried for the extra point, but failed. A few seconds later the whistle blew and the huge crowd swarmed down onto the field to celebrate. Victory tasted good to Enright Industrial, so they made the most of it. But Bat Lukens wasn't thinking about the game at all. He was still worried about what Sampson had told him. He went toward Coach Kagan.

"Nice going, Lukens," Kagan said, grinning, "I knew you could turn on the juice if you wanted to."

"I want to know," the big gridder said ominously, "why you lied to me about what Skunk said."

"Don't get sore," Kagan said quickly. "Okay, I fooled you for your own good. Look what happened. You won the game. You're a hero. Don't that mean anything to you?"

"Hero be damned," Lukens said. "I told you I don't like people callin' me names like that. Now you got me mad. And I'm going to tell you something. I like this game, but not the way you play it here. You're dirt mean."

He grabbed Kagan and shook him for emphasis. "Back where I come from we ain't that mean to our hogs."

Kagan's teeth were rattling from the shaking, and he was unable to speak. He hung limp at the end of Lukens' long arms. A crowd stood around watching, not daring to interfere. Then one small girl fought her way through.

"Bat Lukens," said said, "I'm so ashamed of you. Shaking that man. And smashing all over poor Skunk Sampson. You hadn't ought to have acted like that to him."

Lukens dropped Snake Kagan and looked at her.

"I ain't actin', Emma," he said. "I'm dead serious. Coach here told me you was sweet on Skunk Sampson."



What I want to know is, is it true or not? Skunk says it's your sister Lou."

"Why, Bat," she said, "course it's Lou. I was just pretending about him to make you jealous. And if anyone says different, he's lying. Did this person say different?" she asked, indicating Kagan.

"Him," Lukens said scornfully. "He don't count."

He hesitated a moment, shyly, unable to find his tongue. Then: "You seen me make that touchdown, didn't you, Emma? I made it for you."

Emma's face turned apple-red.

"Yes, Bat," she said. "I seen it. But I didn't know football was so rough."

Bat waved his good arm airily, expansively. "Oh, that. It ain't rough, Emma. The boys don't mean nothin'. It's all in fun. And I kinda like the game, don't you?"

Emma coughed. "You was wonderful, Bat." She beamed. "And they was all cheerin' for you."

When they had gone, Lippy Gans turned to Snake Kagan.

"You don't deserve it," he said, "but it looks like you got yourself a good backfield for a couple of seasons."



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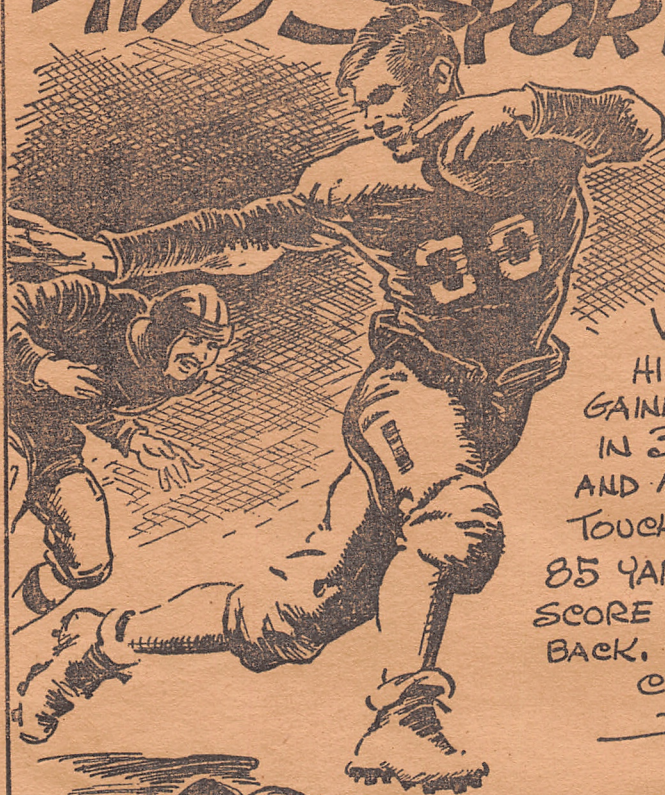


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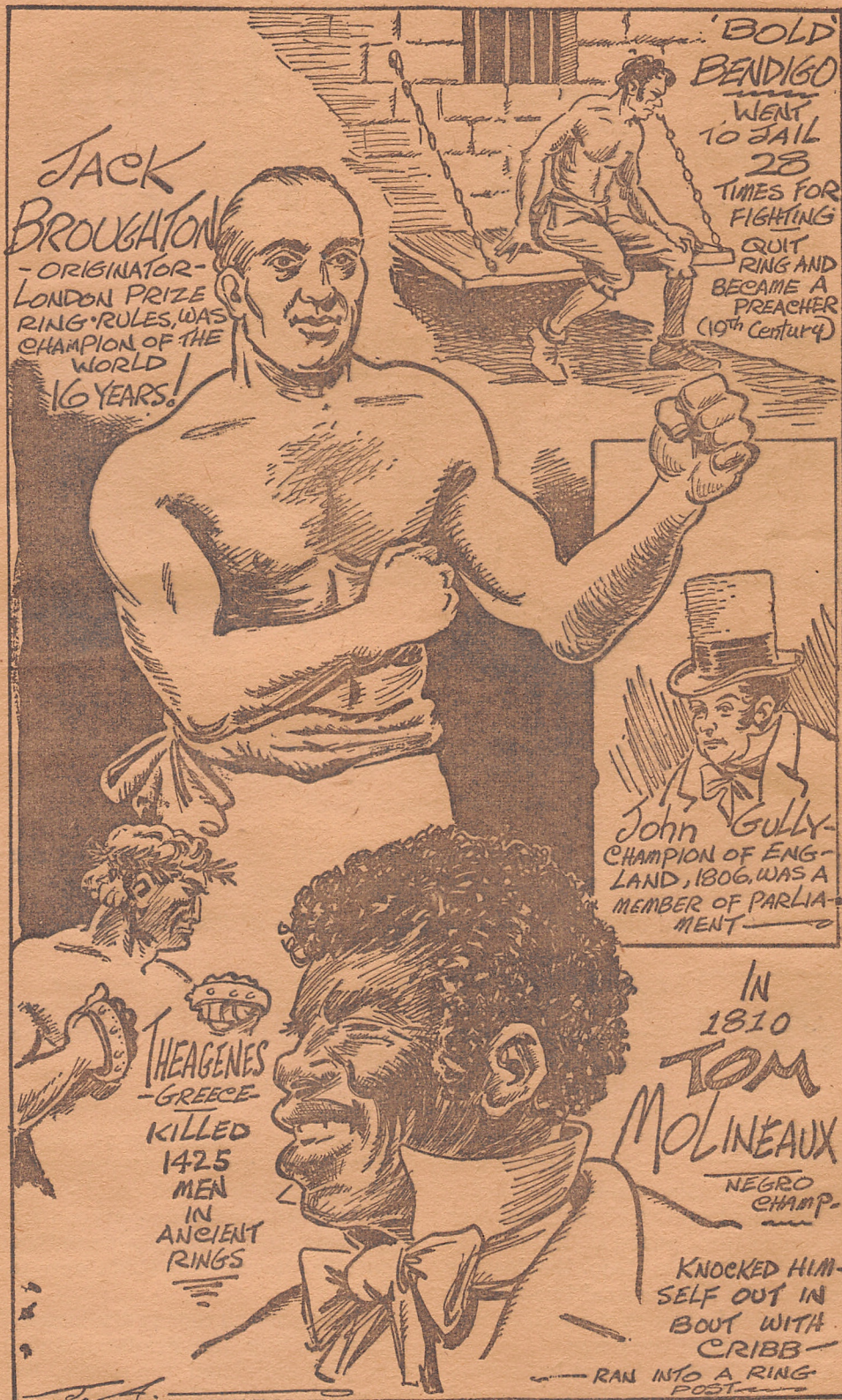
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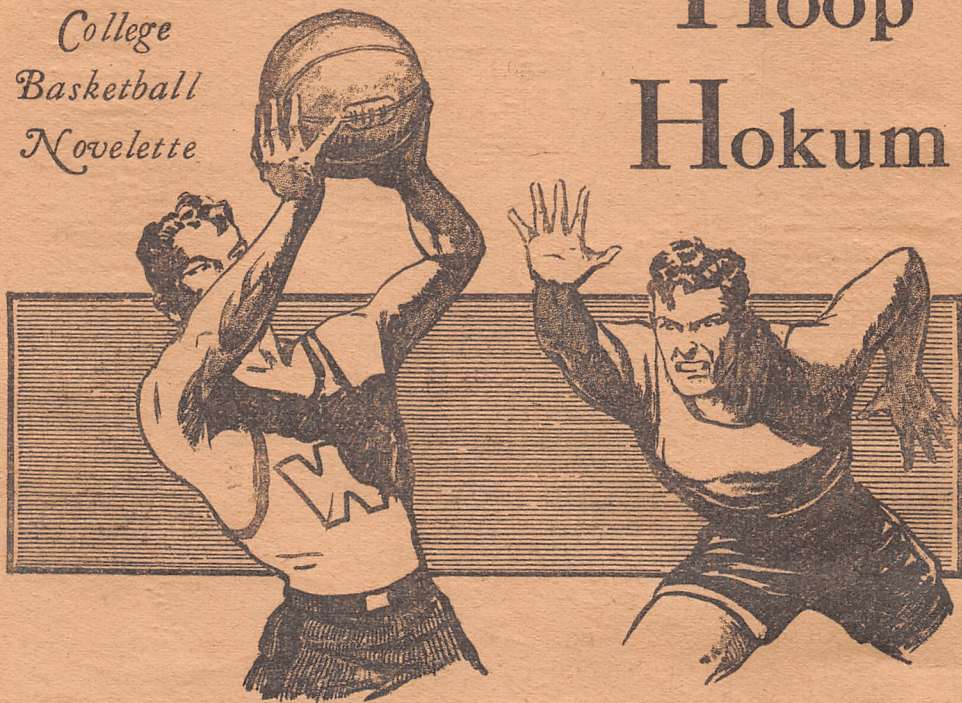






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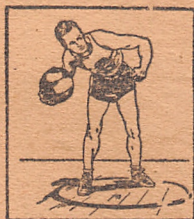
# Hoop Hokum



*By Nelson S. Bond*

Author of "Gridiron Goof."

*Zip Connors knew how to play basketball only one way. And that way was to win. But he had yet to learn that one could win playing two ways—and also that there were two kinds of hoop hokum.*



**Z**IP CONNORS, waiting in the suicide corner, slipped the hip into his defense man so casually that even the ref didn't notice it; then turned and streaked for the basket as Lefty Craig's pass looped high and hard over the opposing guard's head. He wheeled swiftly to loop the leather over the rim for the final two-pointer of a lop-sided score as the whistle signalled the end of the game.

A host of voices roared hollow approval as the red-and-blue-jerseyed players jogged off the court. Behind

him a voice snarled into Zip's ear.

"You got away with it tonight, Connors. But wait till the next time we meet!"

Zip grinned lazily.

"Yeah—wait," he drawled. "You'll have grown gray whiskers, sorehead."

The angry guard muttered something and disappeared as the two teams headed for their separate dressing rooms. In the steamy warmth of their own showers, the Buffs were jubilant.

"This makes us tops in the league," crowed smiling Jim Bradley, "and it puts you individual top-scorer, kid. But you deserve it. You played a bang-up game."



Zip smiled sourly. "Janssen won't say so. He'll ride me again, like he did last week and the week before that."

"Oh—Janssen!" sniffed Bradley carelessly. "What do you care what a down-at-the-heel newshound says in his cheap column. We won, didn't we?"

Heartened, Zip allowed himself to be rubbed down by the Buff's assistant trainer, then slowly donned his street clothes. Tonight, particularly, he was in no great rush to finish up and leave the familiar dressing room. Despite his gratification at having helped put the title on ice for the Buffs, there were groping fingers of doubt stirring through his brain. This was his last game in the City League—for several years at least. The next time he donned trunks, it would be for—

He looked up suddenly, aware of a figure standing over him. It was Red Harper, manager and chief coach of the Buffs. Harper's face, craggy and unemotional as ever, stared down at him thoughtfully.

"Well?" said the coach finally.

Zip shrugged. "Well—that's that!" he said. "We won, and it's all over. I was just sitting here thinking about the next time I play basketball—"

Harper sat down on the hard bench beside his star forward.

"Nervous, kid?"

"A little," confessed Zip. "It'll all be so darned different—that's what's gotten under my skin. They play different rules and everything in colleges."

"PFF!" Harper dismissed the differences between the Intercollegiate and the Eastern Association rules with a shrug. "A natural hooper like you won't have any difficulty catching on to a new set of tricks. If anything, their rules make the game softer than ours."

"You really think that?"

"Sure. Why, listen, kid—you've been playing for two seasons in a league with no age limitation. You ain't been playing a kid's game—you

been playing a man's game against guys older than yourself. Grown-ups! You'll have a snap in college."

"That's good!" Zip breathed a sigh of relief. "I'll tell you, Harper, it had me a little worried. From what I've read and seen, college basketball looks like a fast, tough game. And I don't want to flop. This will be a great chance for me. If I make a name for myself, I can step into a coaching job when I graduate."

"That's what you've got to keep in mind," advised Harper grimly. "College basketball isn't really such a tough game. The players just make it tough for themselves. You've got to watch out that you don't get the same crazy mental attitude the rest of them have."

"Mental attitude?" repeated Zip wonderingly. "I—I'm not sure I know what you mean."

"Aw, the old hokum!" sneered Harper. He drew his heavy face into a silly simper. "Nasty-nasty mans mustn't foul his opponent! Naughty to rough a receiver! So-o-oo unsportsmanlike, donchaknow!" He laughed crudely. "You'll get a bellyful of that kind of baloney when you get on the college courts. Listen to it for appearance's sake—but forget it as quick as you can. That sissy stuff is what kills good basketball players."

Zip grinned understandingly.

"You mean they wouldn't approve of the way I took Winslow out to-night?"

"Not if they saw it. But that's where you've got two strikes on 'em right off the bat. You know how to let an opposing forward or guard have it so that even the ref won't see it. And—" Harper added complacently—"if I do say it myself, it was good coaching that taught you."

Zip knotted his tie and rose.

"Then I'll carry on the good work for you," he laughed, "even in the college league. No hoop hokum for yours truly."

"Atta kid!" said Harper, slapping the young forward heartily on the



back. "You make good in the Sissy League, and maybe even the Buffs will forgive you for taking a run-out powder on them. But no fooling, Zip—it was swell to have you playing with us. And we'll all be rooting for you."

"Thanks, Harp."

"But," warned the mentor, "don't let us down! Don't be a sucker for the soft soap they'll feed you."

66—**M**ETAPHYSICAL attributes of the individual psyche tend to alleviate physical suff—"

The bell jangled sharply to interrupt the philosophy professor in mid-sentence. Wearily he closed his notebook and dismissed the class. Zip gathered together his notes and joined other students who were crowding for the door.

In the hallway outside, he hesitated for a moment. Three weeks at State University had not yet served to clear his mind as to the relative locations of the many buildings on the proud old campus. The gym would be . . . let's see . . . over that way—

A warm hand descended on his shoulder. Feather McCarthy, his roommate and fellow pledge at the Phi Tau fraternity house.

"Hold, varlet!" cried the slimmer boy. "Whither goest thou in such a hurry?"

"Let up, Feather," grinned Zip. "I've got to get over to the gym. Today's opening day for basketball practice."

"That'll wait," coaxed Feather. "Come on over to the fountain with me for a few minutes. I've got a feast for your beauty-starved eyes."

"A woman?"

"A woman!" Feather raised his hands in simulated horror. "Nay—say rather a goddess. An angel. A bit of loveliness stolen from the heart of heaven. Just wait till you cast your orbs on her."

"Nope—sorry," said Zip. "I've got no time for skirt-chasing. I've got to—"

Feather grasped his roommate's arm and propelled him, protesting, across the campus.

"Ye shall not say me nix!" he scolded. "When I offer to introduce you to the keenest lassie in State U, I mean to carry out my— Ah! There she is now!"

Zip looked, hesitated—and was lost! Moving forward to greet them was a vision in a tweed sports suit; a vision with hair the color of burnt amber that fell away from a smiling, piquant face of elfin loveliness. His mouth worked aimlessly, wordless, as she spoke in a voice that was soft, just the faintest bit husky, and thrilling.

"Lee, this is Bob Connors, better known as Zip," Feather was explaining. "He hates women and loves basketball—and he has the distinction of being my roommate."

"How do you do, Mr. Connors?"

Her slim hand, in Zip's huge one, was cool and fine as a bit of royal velvet. Her smile dazzled Zip, and words faltered in his throat.

"Ho-how do you do, Miss—Miss—" he stammered.

"Janssen," supplied the girl. "Just like Feather to forget surnames, isn't it? But I suppose classmates shouldn't really stand on formality. You may call me Lee if you wish."

Zip was staring at her dazedly. Harshen the soft lines of that lovely face, film those rounded temples with the frost of gray, and dress this vision in a man's rough clothes, and—

"You're not," he said, "you're not related to Swede Janssen, sports editor of the Middleburgh *Enterprise*?"

"Not very well," smiled the girl. "You see, I'm just his daughter. Why, do you know dad?"

Zip laughed shortly.

"He knows me!" he barked. "I used to play on—" He turned away abruptly. "If you'll excuse me, I think I'd better get along to the gym. I don't want to miss the roll call."

He turned and strode up the winding pathway to State's huge gymna-



sium as the two stared after him in bewilderment. The girl looked at Feather, who shrugged.

"Search me. I told you he was a woman-hater."

"Bob Connors," mused the girl. "Zip Connors. I must ask dad about him."

A CROWD of freshmen choked the doors of the gym as Zip reached the building, but by a little hearty shoving he managed to ease his way to the fore of the expectant group waiting for the appearance of State's basketball mentor, "Spot Pass" Billings.

Billings appeared from his private office shortly, a huge notebook under his arm, and flanked by two assistants. He paused before the group a long moment, his keen blue eyes passing from man to man. Then, with a satisfied nod, he began to speak.

"I'm not going to waste time on teaching fundamentals," he said crisply, "until I have gathered a few facts from each of you regarding your age, schooling, and previous experience. I presume that every candidate in this room has his name listed in my roll book. I shall call each name out separately. Step forward, please, as you hear your names."

He turned to a page in the book and read a name aloud.

"Abramson."

A burly, dark-haired lad moved a pace forward.

"Here, sir!"

"Your age, Abramson; then your prep school and experience."

"I'm eighteen, sir. Played guard for two years at Raleigh High School in Trayville."

Billings' assistants jotted down the facts. The coach nodded approval.

"Very well, Abramson. Next man. Akeley!"

"Nineteen years old. One year with Lippincott High in Jaspán."

"Very good! Barlow . . . Birarton . . . Buskirk. . ."

One by one the candidates stepped

forward as the roll call went on. Zip heard their reports disinterestedly and as at a great distance, meanwhile studying the smooth floor and the tiers of seats in the gigantic gym. Butler. . . Cartledge . . . Chesinski. . .

"Connors! Is Connors here?"

With a start, Zip came to himself and stumbled forward hastily.

"Yes, sir! Sorry. I'm Connors."

This time the object of the coach's direct scrutiny, he felt the full force of those probing blue eyes digging beneath his suit; laying bare the long, flat muscles of his chest and thighs, exploring the hard sinews of his rangy arms.

"Experience, Connors?"

"Two years with the Middleburgh Buffs, sir!" said Zip in a low tone.

Billings' head rose sharply from the notebook.

"The Buffs?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well, Connors. See me in my office after roll call, please."

"Yes, sir," said Zip. He moved back into the mob, suddenly conscious of half a hundred eyes directed on him. In a few minutes he took advantage of the crowd's forgetfulness to slip, unobserved, out of the room. He waited outside on the steps of the gym until a host of hurrying bodies, pushing past him, advised him that the roll call was ended. Then he turned and picked his way to Coach Billings' office.

Billings was already in his easy chair, feet comfortably propped up on the desk before him. He looked up as Zip entered the room.

"Oh, Connors," he grunted. "Have a seat, boy."

Zip sat down gingerly. Billings wasted no time in coming to the point.

"You played for two seasons with the Middleburgh Buffs, Connors?"

"Yes, sir!"

BILLINGS surveyed him thoughtfully. "I see. . . I don't believe you mentioned your age. You'd be about twenty, suppose?"



"Twenty-one, sir," said Zip evenly.

"You played basketball in high school before you went with the Buffs?"

"Yes, sir. Middleburgh High School. Two years."

"Mmmm. Now, Connors, I'm going to ask you a blunt question, and I want you to answer it just as bluntly. Did you receive any pay for playing with the Buffs?"

"No, sir," answered Zip stiffly. "The City League is strictly amateur."

"Why didn't you come directly to college from High School?"

"Money," said Zip succinctly. "My family had all it could do to put me through high school. I worked for two years and a half, playing basketball on the side, until I had enough money to make a start. Then I was lucky enough to get a part-paid scholarship—"

"That'll be enough. I don't want to pry into your private affairs. I just wanted to make sure that there would be no protest in the event that you make the team. Now, one thing more—do you know the I-C basketball rules?"

"I've been studying them ever since I knew I was coming to State," answered Zip. "Of course we played according to Eastern Association rules on the Buffs." He hesitated for a moment; then, anxious to make an impression, "I—I was individual high-scorer in our league last year, Mr. Billings."

The coach smiled drily.

"I'm afraid that won't cut much ice at State, Connors. You'll have to take your chances with the rest of the boys up here. We don't play favorites on our teams."

Zip's mouth drew into a hard line.

"I'm not looking for any breaks," he declared grimly. "I can make my own."

There was a look of not-too-pleased surprise on Billings' face. "After playing with the Buffs for two seasons," he commented slowly, "I'm just a little bit afraid you *will*. That's the main

reason I asked you to come to my office today. I've heard scattered reports on the Buffs, and on Coach Harper's training methods, Connors. I sincerely hope you know the true meaning of sportsmanship."

Zip suppressed the grin that threatened to overwhelm him. In his ears rang the memory of Harper's falsetto mimicry, "Nasty-nasty mans . . . So, so unsportsmanlike, donchaknow!" Well, Harper was right! Billings wasn't going to waste any time in shoveling out the old hoop hokum.

"I play to win, Mr. Billings," he said coolly.

"We all do," said the coach. "But we play within the bonds of decency and good fellowship. Well—we won't go into that now. We'll wait and see how you look on the boards. Report for active practice tomorrow at three, Connors."

He rose and extended his hand in token that the interview was over. Zip grasped it firmly, faintly surprised at the cordial strength of the older man's grip; then he retreated slowly from the room. He did not see Billings' eyes fastened speculatively on the door as it swung shut. . . .

**"OVER HERE, Zip!"**

Zip Connors, entering the Fountain for his noonday lunch, heard the call and walked over to a corner booth to join his roommate. As he reached the booth he stopped suddenly. Lee Janssen smiled up at him.

"Hello, stranger. Haven't seen you for over a week. Heap basketball?"

Zip grinned. "Heap big basketball," he acknowledged. "If you'd call calisthenics and push-ball practice basketball. Today I understand that for the first time the Old Man is going to let us touch the leather."

Feather McCarthy rose, a look of disgust on his face.

"As if it weren't bad enough," he snorted to the girl, "to have a roommate who eats, sleeps and dreams basketball—you have to deliberately en-



courage him. Call me when the post-mortems are over."

He walked disconsolately away. Zip, alone at the table with the girl, felt a sudden weakness come over him. She was so darned beautiful. If only her father—

"Would it be out-of-bounds," he said suddenly, "to ask if you happened to mention my name to your father?"

The girl raised cool eyes to his. "Not at all. As a matter of fact, I did."

"And what did he say?" Strangely, it was very important to Zip that he should know the girl's impression of him, mirrored though it might be through the cynical eyes of her sports-writer dad.

"He said you were a marvelous basketball player."

"Is that all he said?" persisted Zip.

"Not quite." The girl's eyes, on his, were vaguely disturbing. "He said that you could be a *great* basketball player if only—" she stopped.

"Go on! If only—what?"

"Zip, you don't know my dad as well as I do," said the girl suddenly. "Twenty years ago, when he was a young man, he used to be very active in sports. He loved any game for the sake of the game itself—and not for what it might bring. He has carried this feeling into his writing as well as his daily life."

"And what has that to do with me?" asked Zip.

"Only this. Dad is down on the Buffs because he thinks they play cheap basketball. He dislikes Harper personally, and he has a natural distrust for any man who received training under Harper. That is why he warned me to be careful of—of—"

She bit her lip. Suddenly the chattering of a hundred students' voices seemed to fade and die out of the smoky atmosphere of the fountain, and it seemed to Zip Connors that he and this girl he'd but recently met, were the only two people in the world—isolated together in a land far remote from the actual world they lived

in. His voice, when he spoke again, was hoarse.

"Listen, Lee," he said desperately, "I want you to know me. I want you to understand me. I've never had much in this world—but I want lots. I want to go places, and be somebody. And to do that, I've got to build myself a name. The only way I can do that is in basketball."

"I've been playing the game for one thing. To win! But if it means something to you to see me play it—well, your way—then—I'm messing this up, but what I mean to say is, sometime I'd like to be able to tell you—"

"If," said a bored voice, "you'd move over, my good man, you'd do your roommate a service. Thank goodness you two have stopped talking basketball. Now perhaps we can eat!"

Reluctantly, Zip made room for Feather. It was too late, now, to do any more explaining. Perhaps he had already said too much. Had he, he wondered, displayed a weakness? In a silence broken only by McCarthy's attempts to chatter, the three finished lunch. Then Zip went on to the gym.

**B**ILLINGS being busy with the varsity squad, it was Tod Higgins who supervised the freshman team workouts. He lined up the eighteen men remaining from the first weeks' study of available material and made a selection for the first real practice match of the year.

"We'll split up into two teams, gang," he barked. "On the north court the Blues; on the south, the Reds. The starting Blue team will be Twill and Abramson, guards; Smith and Connors, forwards; Hodgson, center. Red team is Roget and Buskirk up front, Schultz and Wilkins at the guard positions and Brown jumping. All right—on the court!"

Swiftly the two makeshift squads took the boards. Zip, jerking his heavy jersey off and tossing it to the Blue team's bench, felt a surge of elation rising within him. This, at last, was



basketball! This was what he had come to State U to play. Now he'd get a chance to show these boys that he was first-string material. Next year a varsity post, and then—

With no particular plays planned, both teams went to their natural positions. Higgins took his post between the two centers, tossed the ball—and the game was on!

Brown snatched the reach from the Blue squad jumper, flipping the ball sidewise to the rangy Buskirk, who bounced it swiftly across court to the flashy Roget. The young forward eluded Twill's frantic grope for the dribbling leather, poised himself near the center foul line and let fly a long looper for the hoop. The ball tilted precariously on the iron ring, then fell forward onto the court. No score. Abramson swooped it up, circled from behind Buskirk, and rifled a fast toss to Connors.

Zip grinned amusedly as the awkward Schultz tried to block him from the basket. He sidestepped the bewildered Dutchman and let the sphere go. It swished through the net with inches to spare as the Blue squad whooped delightedly.

Again the toss-up, but this time Hodgson's fingertips deflected the ball to Connors' waiting hands. Once more Zip circled on one foot, away from Schultz. But this time as he straightened for the toss, Wilkins came over fast from the far court to leap before him as the ball soared.

The ball hopped crazily to the middle stripe where Brown retrieved for the Reds and passed swiftly to Roget. A frown appeared on Zip's forehead as he fell back into a semi-guard position watching his teammates defend the hoop. So that guy Wilkins thought he was fast, hey? Well, there were ways to stop that trouble!

Abramson finally smuggled the ball from Roget on a poor pass, and looped it to Smith in the left forward position. Zip led his guard across court to

circle into the play where Wilkins was striving to block out Smith's toss. As the foursome circled, Smith revolving and dribbling the sphere, Connors crossed Wilkins, eluding his own guard. At the same time he backed up, straightening swiftly. The top of his head slammed viciously against the crouching Wilkins' nose, and a pained exclamation of surprise jerked from the injured guard.

Freed, Smith looped the ball through the hoop just as the bewildered Higgins fingered the whistle, wondering whether or not he should call a foul. Zip, grinning comfortably, jogged back to his post.

The Reds called time out as a replacement came in for Wilkins, who walked from the court vainly trying to staunch the pencil of crimson that spurted from his damaged nose. Higgins inspected the injury, released Wilkins to the shower, and decided there was no foul. After all, the ball was in free play—and it looked as though Wilkins had closed on Connors too fast.

WITH TIME in again, the Red squad took the sphere and began to send it through an impromptu series of triangular spot-passes that was the germ of the "Billings system" of basketball. Slowly but methodically they moved from far court to within shooting distance of the enemy goal. Buskirk's attempts to break loose from his guard caught Zip's attention. So Bus was the guy to watch? Roget had already demonstrated his inaccuracy in the clutches.

With a swift motion he made as though to poke the ball from Brown's hands, saw the flash of brown that told its direction, and wheeled to block out the receiver. Buskirk jammed by him suddenly, and in a flash Zip straddled a furtive leg across the forwards racing knees. Buskirk grunted loudly and fell, face forward, in an awkward sprawl. This time Higgins whistle shrilled as the Red forward rose, clutching at a scraped knee.



"What happened there!" demanded Higgins. "Did Connors foul you, Buskirk?"

Zip smiled innocently. "Why, no, coach. I was just cutting in to take the ball, and—"

"Did he, Buskirk?" repeated Higgins.

Buskirk shook his head.

"I—don't think so, coach. It could have been an accident. He couldn't have deliberately—"

"Let's see that knee." Higgins inspected the injured limb briefly. "Get down to the dressing room and let Mike put something on it. Don't want you coming down with a stiff prop. You, Connors, take it a little easy. This is only a practice game."

"Yes, sir. Sorry, Buskirk," said Zip.

The rival forward stared at him curiously for an instant; then painfully hobbled off the court.

Play was resumed, and now, with two considerably inferior players in for the Reds, Zip soft-pedalled on the rough stuff. While he trusted his ability to make a bad one look natural, there wasn't any use taking chances with the eagle-eyed coach. Save the best tricks for when you need 'em most—that had always been Harper's advice. So Zip eased up as the Blues continued to pile up points on their opponents.

Not long afterward, Coach Billings came in from his workout with the varsity squad. He watched the freshmen finish their practice; then, as Higgins signalled all candidates to the showers, turned to his assistant.

"How do they look to you, Hig?"

"Not bad for this early in the season. What do you think?"

"Looks like some good varsity material for next year. This boy Connors looks particularly hot."

"Hot!" grunted Higgins. "He's too hot to handle. A couple more like him on the squad, and I'd go into training as a registered nurse!"

"Why, what do you mean?"

Briefly Higgins recounted the two accidents in which the forward had been involved. Billings gnawed at his lips. Finally the head coach spoke.

"Keep an eye on him, Hig. A close eye. I want to know more about accidents like that. I'd like to see Connors start in that Tech game Saturday night, but—"

"But?" said the junior coach.

"Nothing," growled Billings. "I'll be in to see the practice myself, tomorrow."

**Z**IP CONNORS, waiting for the signal that would call the State Frosh from the dressing room to the court upstairs, grinned amusedly as he re-read the letter he had received from Red Harper.

*Dear Zip,*

*All the Buffs are glad to here from you and that you are doing so good with the rah-rah boys, which why shouldn't you coming from where you did? We got a new guy in your place which isn't so hot but he'll do though we all miss you. Don't ferget what I told you about the old hokum Billings spills and don't let nobody clip you from behind. Good luck, kid!*

*Yours,*

*Red.*

A bell rang in the dressing room, and Zip hastily stuffed the letter into his locker. As he climbed the stairs with his teammates, a lingering grin was on his face. Red sure was a card! He'd have to write and tell the Buffs' manager about last week; how after he'd let two of the frosh "have it" in practice, the Old Man himself came and sat in on the practice sessions. But Billings had no kick coming. Zip prided himself on that. For he had never been in a situation serious enough for him to uncover any of the little "stunts" that he knew would dispose of dangerous enemies.

Tonight, though, he thought with sudden seriousness, might force his hand a little. He would have to be on



his mettle. These Tech freshmen were supposed to be a fast aggregation. Tall and rangy, they had already overthrown a fighting Cardon College quintet by a 32 to 14 score.

Coming from the dark well of the stairs into the brilliantly lighted gymnasium, he blinked a little. Then, as his eyes became accustomed to the lights, he gasped in surprise! Could this be the same gym he had practiced in so many afternoons?

The cages had been erected in the center of the gym, and all about it were rows upon rows of benches, filled to overflowing with a chattering throng of college students. As the State team entered the arena, a skyrocket cheer, led by two damsels in pure white, rocked the high rafters of the *palestra*.

This was not like the sour-faced, gambling mobs that had jammed the City Garden to see the Buffs play. That crowd had been an eager, excited one, blood-hungry and spoiling for action. This was just as eager, just as excited—but underlying their tenseness was another feeling; a sense of friendly rivalry, comradeship. This was a colorful crowd. You could feel in their throbbing voices a pride, a faith, in their team.

For a moment Zip had an impulse to cut and run. Then common sense asserted itself. What the hell—was *he* beginning to fall for that old college hokum, too? This was just another basketball game. And the guys they had to beat were those green-jerseyed lugs now running out of the far stairway. And the way to beat them was—Well, a few minutes to play would decide that.

State's starting lineup consisted of Zip and Buskirk at forward, Brown jumping center, Abramson and Wilkins on defense. The quintet took the court, warming up for a few minutes; then gave way to the subs, who in turn gave way to the Tech warm-up period. Before long the packed tiers were filled with a mob that began yelling for action, and the starting fives

moved into the court. The referee addressed the captains briefly, then as the men took their places, made the toss-up and his whistle shrilled. The game was on!

Tech, living up to pre-game dope, went into the offensive immediately when their lanky center, Green, tipped the ball on the toss-up to Samet, the right forward. Samet was unable to evade Abramson's ironclad block, and tossed to Norsky who raced the bouncing leather ten feet into the State court before Wilkins succeeded in forcing him to return it to Green.

**G**REEN, a pace in front of the opposing center, allowed haste to spoil his aim, and Wilkins retrieved the ball as it bounced from the backboard. The State hoopsters then went into the famous "Billings triangle," spotting the orb from one to the other in rapidly narrowing circles until they had advanced it past the midline marker. At this spot the two guards dropped out of the play, and the State forwards became the two legs of the triangle with Brown as the pivot man.

It was a fast and colorful style of play, but one calculated to gradually wear down the opponents' defense until one or the other of the wheeling three found a place for the point try. It was Zip Connors who finally evaded his guard, Chisholm, long enough to turn and flip the ball into the hoop. And as the ref signalled a score, the State rooters hailed the first blood for their Freshman squad.

Tech evened the score a minute later when Norsky tossed a short jab through the circle, only to see the State hoopsters make it first 4-2, then 6-2, as Buskirk and Connors each added another tally for their team. Brown's unintentional foul drew a single-point try for the Tech center, and Green lobbed it cleanly through to make the total 6 to 3.

So far, Zip was playing under wraps, and deriving a great deal of enjoyment out of the way in which the



tri-pointed State attack was bewildering the Tech players. To his own great surprise, he discovered that the long weeks of technical practice, during which he had never even been allowed to compete against scrubs, had given him an "at-home" feeling with the I-C rules. It was quite natural for him to make a single-step dribble, instead of the full-pace variety allowed by Eastern Association rule books. Moreover, he recognized the value of this ruling in keeping the play fast and clean. With less opportunity for stalling, and less chance for the ball-carrier to get set, fewer accidents resulted.

Both teams scored once more in the ensuing minutes of the game, and State jogged the tally up to 10-5 just as the first quarter ended, when Abramson, trapped with no receiver, shot a desperate, court-long looper that just barely inched its way through the hoop.

Then, as the first-string boys went out for a breather, Freshman Coach Tod Higgins sent in his second-string forwards and guards, leaving Brown at pivot.

Zip, seated on the sidelines, turned and scanned the watching crowd closely, and was rewarded shortly by a glimpse of an amber-haired beauty who, despite the fast action taking place on the floor, was looking down at the players' bench. As his eye caught hers, Lee Janssen flushed and looked away quickly—but there was a smile on Zip's lips as he returned his gaze to the court. There was a new warmth within him, too, that was no part of the strenuous physical exercise. Swede Janssen's daughter was—well, something!

A cheer from the opposing stands disturbed his thoughts, and he looked up in time to see Samet swing the sphere through the net for the second time in as many minutes to bring the Tech score up to nine points as opposed to the State team's ten. He looked anxiously at Tod Higgins, who nodded his head imperceptibly. "It's all right, Connors. We'll play it out

this way. Only two more minutes left in this quarter."

Zip's eyes puckered, and he watched the two teams start off again. Against the less talented brace of guards, Schultz and Twill, the Tech forward wall looked impressive. Samet, in particular, was playing a game and a half for his squad. Zip studied the Tech forward's style carefully, noting the looseness with which he made his turns, the high-armed run of his dribbling races. His lips curled. If the Buffs had run up against a guy who ran like that, they would have killed him. He could hear Harper's rasping voice now, speaking to a sub.

"That high-armed cherry-picker! Go in there and find out what makes his ribs stick together!"

And in a few minutes Samet's substitute would be shooting a brace of fouls for Samet, who would be groaning in the dressing room with a nice pink spot dug into his chest! That is—if the ref even *saw* the play . . . .

THE WHISTLE blew, ending his reverie. Tod Higgins nodded briefly to his squad, dismissing the boys to the locker room. As they reached its steamy warmth, Buskirk slapped Connors heartily on the back.

"Great going, fellow! Even the second team can hold these dopes. With you and me back in there again—"

Zip looked at him, faintly surprised. Somehow he had imagined that Buskirk would be jealous of him. Maybe sore at him, even, because of the way he had spilled the greener forward in practice not so long ago. On the Buffs, there was strong rivalry and bitter jealousy, even amongst the players. They worked like a unit on the boards, but in the dressing room—

"Thanks, Bus," he said. "You weren't so bad yourself. Next period we'll go get those guys."

"You bet we will," agreed Buskirk, stripping off his wet jersey.

"I've been noticing," continued Zip, his tongue loosened by this newly dis-



covered friendship, "about this guy Samet. He's plenty hot. If you'll keep an eye on my position next period, I'll see what I can do to—"

He faltered and stopped as Buskirk's head, eyes rounded, emerged from the wet jersey.

"But Samet is Abramson's man, Zip."

"Don't be a sap! He won't be anybody's man if he goes out of the game, will he?"

Buskirk's face darkened, then suddenly cleared into a grin. He jabbed an elbow into Zip's ribs.

"Why, you crazy galoot. For a minute I thought you meant it. Honest, kid, I've had you sized up all wrong. I didn't think you had any sense of humor. Get Samet! Ha-ha! Wait'll the gang hears this." He turned to the group in the dressing room, raised his voice so that all might hear. "Listen, gang—Zip's got a swell idea. He's going to make it easy for us to win this game. He's going to put Gus Samet on the spot. Any suggestions?"

A roar of laughter filled the room, and a dozen eager voices picked up the idea and tossed it as a kitten might toss a ball of twine.

"Swell idea! That guy's been in my hair all—"

"Give him a six-shooter. If Samet scores again, let him have it."

"Smack him with a wet fish!"

"Sit him on the window. That'll knock him silly."

Slowly, Zip sat down before his locker, began to change to a dry pair of socks. His mind was a chaos of bewilderment. Say—was he crazy? Or was it this gang? Why, they didn't even take him seriously. They treated his suggestion like a big joke. Didn't they realize that Samet was the biggest threat on the Tech squad? Or could it be that—

The old hoop hokum! Be a sportsman! These guys didn't care whether they won or not—or, rather, they wanted to win, but it would never cross their minds to play a man, instead of the game! That was why

Green had been able to get up and shoot that foul after the State center crashed into him. It had been an accident, pure and simple. Ray Brown had made no effort to really clip the guy.

The half period over, Zip climbed the stairs with the rest of his teammates, a chastened player. For the first time in his real playing career, he had found cause to distrust the teachings of Red Harper. He could not help contrasting the joyous way these State players went forth to the cage war, with the surly looks on the Buffs' faces as the City League men had taken the court.

The rocket of applause burst through the arena as they once more took the field, to be followed instantly by the trailing Tech squad. Higgins selected his first team men again, substituting Hodgson in the starting lineup at center, and the game began.

FOR THE FIRST few minutes of that third quarter, Zip Connors played like a man moving through a dream. His passes and blocks were accurate, but intuitively so. He was playing with his perfectly trained body, rather than with his mind. He was scarcely conscious of the fact that it was he who snapped a State score through the net to make the score 12-9, or that his circling block had restrained Chisholm from a pass to Samet that would surely have resulted in a Tech score. He was puzzling things out to his own satisfaction—and a noticeable length of time had passed before life suddenly sprang into being behind his eyes again, and he woke to the awareness that he was still in the game, fighting to protect a slim three-point lead.

But when that realization came, it came for good. Zip Connors had struggled with his past, and had emerged victorious. Forgotten, now, were the principles instilled in him by Red Harper—and suddenly Zip knew why the hokum of Coach Billings was not hokum at all. It was because there



was a thing known as sportsmanship, and that attribute made any game more worth the playing.

Revivified, he glanced swiftly around him. The ball was in Tech's possession, and borrowing a leaf from the cagey Billings' book, the green-jerseys were "triangulating" a routine play deep into the State court. A sudden desire to break up that play single-handed, and lead State on to a deserved victory overcame Zip. He sprang into action, deserting Chisholm and moving down court to a central position among the Tech passers.

Green dribbled, wheeled and passed a low bouncer to Norsky, who tapped it twice and shot to Samet. The ball caught a crazy bounce, flattened to a roll, and Zip closed fast after it as Samet desperately tried for a retrieve. Both men came in together—Zip crouching, low, anxious; the Tech forward swift in that high, awkward style of his. Zip's practiced hands got the melon first, and instinctively he wheeled, shot the ball to safety. As his arms throbbed back he heard a shocked grunt behind him, felt a solid body give before the impact of his sharp, pistonlike elbows.

Then suddenly the referee's whistle was blowing, and a knot of players was gathering around the prostrate Samet, and from the stands came a low, growling rumble. As in a dream, Zip watched two Tech subs come in to take the groaning Samet from the boards; heard the ref call a double foul against him. Then Roget was running in from the players' bench, and he was trudging back, head lowered, to face a red-faced coach.

"—Got here just in time to see that, Connors!" Billings was saying. "Couldn't forget your Buffs' training, eh? Well—get down to the locker room! We don't need that kind of genius on the State teams."

Blankly, Zip stared into the coach's blazing eyes. This was all wrong, he wanted to say. This was a horrible mistake. He hadn't fouled Samet, hadn't tried to, anyway. The kid had

rushed too near him, that was all. He opened his mouth, but the words would not come. And his searching eyes found in his teammates' faces the memory of that incident in the locker room. They were condemning him now on the strength of what they had a short time before considered a riotous joke. In every face he saw mirrored disgust and anger.

Slowly he turned and walked toward the dressing-room door, the boos of the spectators trailing behind him like a cloak of sound. He raised his eyes once, hopefully, as he passed a certain seat in the stands—just in time to see a slim figure, handkerchief pressed to her eyes, walking briskly toward the exit. . . .

"SO THAT'S the way it is, Dad," Lee Janssen's voice was pleading. "It was an accident. Must have been an accident. Zip couldn't have done it on purpose, for just a short time before the game he told me—"

Swede Janssen looked at his daughter with something akin to pity etched in the fine lines about his eyes.

"I'm afraid Zip Connors' reputation will have to count against him, youngster," he said. "After all, you know what the Buffs are. And Red Harper. Zip played for two seasons with that tough outfit."

"I don't care," cried the girl. "He was trying to forget all that."

"Did he say so?"

"Not in so many words. But I know—"

Janssen looked at his daughter searchingly. "Lee, look at me. Are you—are you in love with this boy?"

The girl raised her head proudly. "Yes, Dad. I am."

"Well, then—" Janssen sighed and rose. "Maybe I'd better get to work and find out what's what. My pride won't let me believe that any girl of mine would choose a cheap sport. Is he still in school?"

"Yes, but I haven't seen him since the Tech game. I doubted him myself—at first. He must have guessed that.



He goes directly from his fraternity house to classes; then home again. He never goes near the gym. Feather says he hardly speaks a word to anyone. And the team really needs him. They just managed to beat out Teachers' College last week, and that was supposed to be a soft game. With Cardon and Washington on the schedule—"

Janssen leaned over and patted his daughter's head.

"Well, you sit tight. I'll go see if I can't clear this whole thing up."

AT THE GYM, Coach Billings was only too willing to discuss his troubles with the ace sports writer from the neighboring town.

"To tell you the truth, Swede," he admitted, "there is a chance I made a too hasty judgment. I just entered the door as the foul occurred. From where I stood, it looked as though either man might have caused it, but when I neared the players' bench and heard them repeating what Zip had said in the dressing room just a few minutes before—"

"Did you ever think to ask Samet?"

Billings' face dropped.

"Damn, Janssen, I didn't. But surely he would have said something—"

"Perhaps Samet doesn't know you dropped the kid from the squad because of the accident?"

"You're right. I'll settle it right now. I'll call Tech long-distance, and make them find Samet for me."

The coach called the long-distance operator, put through his call. Then nervously the two older men waited, both starting as the phone jangled a few minutes later. The Dean at Tech had located the basketball player, and he was on the wire.

Anxiously, Coach Billings put the important question to the unseen boy. Janssen strained his ears trying to unscramble the metallic clackings from far-off Tech, saw with growing excitement the amazed look on Billings' face. Then slowly the State coach hung up the receiver. His voice was dull when he spoke.

"Janssen, I've wronged the boy! I'll never be able to forgive myself for my quick temper. Samet acknowledges that it was his fault altogether, that he closed too quickly as Connors shot. Of course he was so upset after the injury that he hardly noticed what happened after that."

The writer's face lighted.

"Then he can come back to the squad?"

"Any time!" said Billings. "As soon as I can—"

But he was speaking to thin air. Swede Janssen was already on his way to the Phi Tau house. There he collared Feather McCarthy.

"Zip?" said Feather McCarthy. "You're too late, mister. He's already gone."

"Gone? Gone where?"

Feather shrugged.

"I dunno. He threw his basketball things into a bag and said he'd be gone over the week-end. That's all I know."

"Basketball things! Then I know where he's gone. To the Buffs. They're playing tonight." Swede Janssen's mouth suddenly dropped open. "But they're not playing an amateur game! They're meeting the crack Philly outfit in a money match. After all these years, Red Harper's bunch has decided to go pro. And if Zip plays in that game—"

Feather McCarthy, his eyes popping, was in motion.

"You've got a car, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"Then what are we waiting for? We've got three hours to get to Middleburgh—and that's more than a hundred miles from here! Let's get going!"

RED HARPER, his coarse face beaming exultantly, leaned over and patted Zip's shoulder with a sort of crude affection.

"With you playing, guy," he gloated, "we'll take these lugs like canaries take quincy. Boy, am I glad them rah-



rah boys gave you the merry go-by!"

Zip answered nothing. The clock on the dressing-room wall showed fifteen minutes to game time, and as the minutes ticked away a growing hesitation rose within him. Some inner compulsion warned him that if he took part in this game, something important, something vital to his future happiness would be gone forever.

Not that he scorned professional athletics. Far from it. But while there was still a chance that he might be reinstated as an amateur—might, through some quirk of circumstance, be allowed to continue the program he had mapped out for his future life—

He sighed, and jerked his laces tight. No sense in thinking that way. Billings had kicked him off the State squad, killing his future hopes as a college coach, and Lee Janssen—had walked out on him.

"So what happened after you clipped the guy?" Red was asking curiously. "Didn't he swing on you? Gosh, them college boys must be sis-sies."

"Shut up, Red, will you!" snapped Zip. "And for cripes sake, leave me alone. I'm trying to think."

"Awright, awright," mumbled the Buffs manager, "I didn't mean to rile you." He backed away, grinning broadly. Get the kid in a mean humor, and he'd make those Philly pros look like bums. From now on, it was money in the pocket for all the Buffs. A darn good thing the kid learned his lesson.

A warning signal sounded in the Buffs' room, and the players began to file out of the door, Zip among them. Curiously, the young player stared into the faces of those who rudely elbowed their way past him. Somehow he could not help but contrast those grim visages with the happy lust for battle that had typified the State squad moving into action. Dour Skim Jacobs scowled and spat a curse at a teammate who had carelessly trod

on his foot. The other player responded in kind.

A sick revulsion swept through Zip. He remembered Buskin's grinning face, and his cheery: "I can lick the guy who stepped on my toes—if he's not too big!" And the laughter and careless camaraderie of his ex- teammates.

He reached the bench and sat down.

"Listen, Red," he said: "Don't start me right away. Let me sit here for a while and watch the play, will you?"

Red grinned. "Want to size 'em up, kid? See who needs special attention when you get in there. O.K., Pertrie, you start at left forward."

The game got under way, to the music of the savage, fight-loving crowd in the jammed *palestra*. The teams were evenly matched, and it was a hard-fought battle, but Zip was hardly aware of it, so engrossed was he in his thoughts. Time ticked slowly by. The Philadelphia outfit scored once; scored again. Red looked anxiously at the star forward, returned his gaze to the court war. The Phil-lies chalked up another marker. Red stirred in his seat.

"Zip—" he said, almost with deference.

The young forward rose listlessly. There was a feeling within him as though he held his future in his hands, and he was about to toss it away just as in a few minutes he would toss the leather sphere for the basket. But he set his jaw grimly.

"O.K., Red," he said.

He stepped to the door of the cage, started across the polished boards. The ref blew his whistle for the substitution. Then suddenly there was a flurry of commotion in the upper stands, a blurred noise from the doorway that led to the street. Feather McCarthy, hatless, breathless, his hands and coat sleeves grimy with dust and oil, burst to the rim of the gallery and his shrill voice piped across the cage:

"Zip! Don't go in! You're cleared! Billings wants to see you!"



For an instant Zip stood stock-still on the floor, his mouth agape. Then like a flash he turned and dashed from the court. As he passed Red Harper, the coach snatched at his flying form. Zip beat away his hand and raced for the dressing room. Feather, divining his way, and following the card signs, met his roommate there. Hastily he spilled the situation as Zip hustled out of the Buffs' uniform into his street clothes. He was donning his overcoat as Red Harper, his fiery thatch blazing with chagrin, burst into the room.

"Zip! You can't do this to me! You gotta come back and play with the Buffs. You don't owe them college boys nothing."

Zip grinned. "Maybe I can't do it, Red," he said. "But the fact is—I'm doing it! I'm sorry, fella, but this is how it has to be. I can't play your kind of basketball any more. There's a reason—two reasons—why."

Swede Janssen was waiting for the two boys at the car. His hands and face were as grimy as Feather's, but there was a happy grin on his face as he gripped Zip's hand.

"We came mighty near not making it," he said. "We got a flat ten miles out of town. But we pulled through. And I want you to know that I'm darned glad—son."

**Z**IP CONNORS, waiting for the tap-off, glanced to his right to grin at his running mate, Bus Buskirk. The big right forward winked in return, and their two bodies moved as a single unit as the whistle blew. Brown's tap found Connors blocked by the Cardon College guard, but Zip wheeled swiftly to whisk the ball to Buskirk in a smooth, low pass.

Buskirk's try scarcely rippled the net as State's rooters cheered hoarsely for this amazing freshman squad. Already old-timers were dusting off their memories, trying to recall when Old Man Billings had developed a triangle as deadly effective as this Connors-Brown-Buskirk forward wall. The of-

ficial scorer chalked up: State, 28; Cardon, 9.

Again the tap-off, and this time the desperate Cardon center flipped the leather to a teammate, who passed crosscourt to an advancing guard. Zip moved in to intercept, glimpsed the Cardon forward charging in on him and mentally noted the crack-up possibility. He feinted to the right, cut back in time to prevent the dangerous foul which might have ensued. His outstretched hand plucked the ball in mid-bounce, whisked it away to Buskirk.

On the bench, Coach Billings settled back with a satisfied grin.

"That kid," he commented to his junior coach, "is going places. Did you notice the way he evaded that foul?"

Tod Higgins nodded glumly. He was thinking what a tough break it was that next year there would be no Zip Connors on the freshman team—and what a break Billings had in store for him. Three more years of Connors.

The Billings triangle again had the ball, and was moving into enemy territory. Flip . . . flip . . . flip . . . a fast, running approach that left the enemy breathless and bewildered. Three minds that worked as one; three pair of hands that gripped and released the swiftly flying ball as though it had been made to measure. And one uncanny forward wizard whose razzle-dazzle was destined to make history for State U's basketball teams. . . .

In the press box off the sidelines, a gray-haired veteran sports writer was preparing his lead for the story of tonight's basketball victory. Beside him sat a young girl, a girl whose features were a softer, rounder, replica of his own. Her eyes were starry as, leaning forward, she centered her gaze intently on the sparkling play. Or—Swede Janssen grinned—was it on the play? Her eyes seemed to focus more on one particular person than on the entire court. And certainly the



fastness of the play was not responsible for that faintly heightened color, for those clenched hands, for that look of deep personal pride and something else that shone in her face.

Swede Janssen sighed lightly and returned to his copy. His time-accustomed fingers raced over the keyboard as he selected the words for his story:

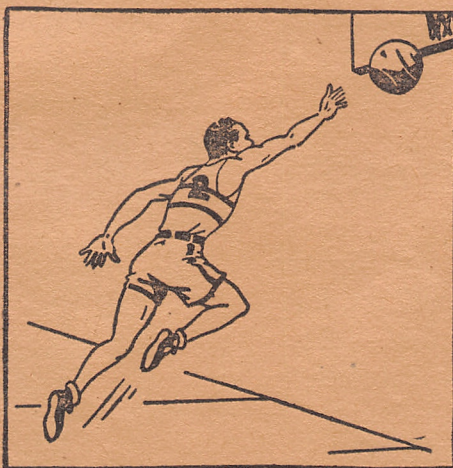
Spearheaded by the blazing attack of their spectacular star, Zip Connors, the freshman squad of State U last night pounded out its fourth straight victory over out-classed Cardon College by the score of—

**S**WEDE hesitated—then left that space blank. A shot of Connors had just this minute zoomed into Cardon's bucket, and there was no telling how many more would enter that portal within the next few minutes. He picked up his story.

Connors, recently reinstated to the squad after an unfortunate misunderstanding, demonstrated unmistakably his playing ability by the clean, perfect poise that led his comrades to a victory. His well-nigh miraculous passing and spotting; his leather-legerdemain on defense; his almost uncanny knack of snapping two-pointers from all positions of the court, lead one to believe—

Swede stopped and pondered. Good idea to invent a little descriptive phrase here. Something to let the public know he was still the dean of sports writers. His eyes glinted, as the phrase struck him. Swiftly he wrote:

—lead one to believe that, in Zip Connors, Coach Billings has a man who can convert his "spot-pass" system into something so strange, so bewildering, that the unbelieving spectator would believe it to be —hoop hokum!



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# Altitude Comedown

*By Cliff Howe*

*To break the record, Pat Harmon needed a lot of competition. But his pole-vaulting rival—the other half of the famous Bamboo Twins—knew more about altitude than just covering it.*



THE BUZZ of the mob died away. A quiet so thick and drama-soaked that you could almost slice it with a knife, pressed down over the Garden. The bar was at a dizzy fourteen-nine—and both men had missed twice.

"Larry Weems, third and final trial!"





This was what they'd paid their coin to see, this battle of The Bamboo Twins. Here were a couple of long-legged, strong-shouldered aerialists, with eagle blood in their veins, threatening week after week to soar into the general neighborhood of the stratosphere. For once, the headlines around the indoor track circuit were snatched away from the Cunninghams and Lashes and San Romanis of the long grinds.

Out of the far West had come Pat Harmon, a vaulting fool, burning with the desire to be the first man in the world to do fifteen feet. The thrill of an ambition fulfilled, plus world acclaim—plus another little item the newspapers didn't yet know about, a \$50,000 contract for some movie shorts—when he would hoist his lithe body that high on a whippy bamboo pole. And Pat had a right to want that contract, after twenty lean years of knowing that even a thin dime can be big money.

From a little college in the Midwest, Larry Weems had blossomed to fight it out in a row of brilliant duels with Pat. He was a six-footer, too, with a mighty pull-up. Quick-thinking meet officials had sensed the box-office possibilities of this sky scraping pair. They'd done their publicity smartly, and they'd shown the vaulters how to make a better show of it. At once the chatter columns were filled with gossip like this:

They're great, these Bamboo Twins. They have everything. Great pals, in and out of uniform, they're going to shatter every existing vault mark by as far as from here to Timbaktu . . .

The Bamboo Twins! Pat Harmon chuckled mirthlessly to himself. Great pals! That was a laugh. He wrapped himself in a blanket as he sat down. The handshake and the friendly slap he'd just given Weems were part of the show—nothing else. He knew how mutually insincere the grip of their pole-calloused hands had been. What the scribes didn't know was plenty.

In the five weeks Pat and Larry had known each other, they'd blended like fire and water.

Pat studied Weems, poised there at the head of the runway, forward tip of the long pole wavering a bit, his dark, unreadable face a trifle pale. Pat talked quietly to Duke Bartell, his Central California coach who had long since resigned himself to the utter certainty that Pat would turn pro:

"He's scared."

Bartell nodded. "I guess maybe he is."

"I hope he makes it—by six inches."

AND PAT meant it—for several reasons. He hadn't wanted to have Larry Weems for an enemy, had held hopes that they would eventually be friends. Just how that could be, he didn't know. For he couldn't be a friend of a man who lacked guts, or seemed to. And there was something bafflingly aloof about Weems, some mystery in his eyes, some carefully guarded secret that made Pat distrust him.

There was another reason why Pat wanted to see Weems do this little job at fourteen-nine, beyond hoping that it might help break their smoldering enmity. That was competition. He'd talked about it more than once to Duke Bartell.

"You've done a swell job, coach, teaching me how to vault. But you know and I know that my one great chance—if any—to do fifteen feet some day is to be pushed to it by terrific competition. And Larry Weems is the only bird in sight right now to furnish that."

"He'll make you go the limit—even if he does act scared sometimes. He'll make a champion out of you."

Larry Weems started down the runway. Pat tensed automatically. He wanted to beat Weems in this meet, but he didn't want his win to be over a guy who was afraid. He want-



ed to lick Weems at his best or not at all. "Come on," he roared, inwardly. "Wipe that look off your pan, and get over that bar."

Weems picked up speed. He ran like a sprinter. The point of his slim pole stabbed down. He swung up, pulled hard, twisted—and was over! The roar of the crowd crashed down like a clap of thunder.

Pat looked at Bartell. The coach said, "Not bad for a scared cookie, huh? I guess that look in his optics was something besides fright. Well, there's the competition you're always chanting for, kid. What are you going to do about it?"

"Fourteen-nine is what I'll do about it," Pat answered.

He chose the newest of his four slender, black-taped poles. With infinite care he directed two officials as they moved the standards an inch or two forward from the landing pit. He slipped out of his sweat shirt, dried his moist palms on it before tossing it to Bartell. Then he walked slowly to the end of the lane, his right hand at the twelve-six mark where he always gripped the pole for the dizzier heights.

"Third and final trial for Pat Harmon!"

Quiet settled again over the dazzled throng of seventeen thousand fans.

Pat reviewed the task ahead of him: stride, take-off, pull-up, body jackknife—the myriad details that must be mechanically perfect to whisk him over the thin white wand perched so high in the air. Fourteen-nine. Cinch. He'd done it, and a bit better, twice within two weeks.

He took four slow strides, then turned on full speed as his foot slapped down precisely on his measured mark. From there on he was a streak, even burdened with the long bamboo. The standards rushed forward to meet him. Tricky, this indoor stuff. The lights were funny.

Pat was still half a dozen strides from the standards when Larry

Weems' strident voice suddenly stabbed out:

"Hey! Don't walk across there!"

The startling shout momentarily distracted Pat. His stride faltered, almost perceptibly. A sudden thrust of anger muddled his concentration.

As the pole point thumped down, Pat's left hand darted up against his right on the bamboo. His left foot slapped the floor venomously. He swung his legs up together, pulled with all the strength of his muscled arms and shoulders, flipped around with an acrobatic wriggle. Over it!

But the faint flaw in his disturbed timing made his chest barely graze the white wand. The bar was still bouncing crazily as Pat plunked into the shavings. It made one final weird vibration—and came down. Larry Weems was vaulting king of the Crescent A. C. games!

Pat leaped up from the pit, fighting mad. He could take a beating, but not one concocted that way. He strode to Weems, who was saying, "Tough luck, Harmon. I guess I had the horseshoes tonight," and extending his hand in the customary finish of The Bamboo Twins' act.

**P**AT TOOK Weems' hand, even managed from habit to fake a grin, because he'd been told it meant so much to the show. But he said, through clenched teeth:

"I ought to punch your face in for yelling like that. Of all the dirty tricks I ever—"

"Some fellow looked like he was going to cross the runway, and I didn't want him to walk in front of you," Weems explained in a wan voice. A look of relief had replaced the odd, dark expression he always wore during the meets.

It sounded thin, too thin to believe. Pat hadn't seen any motion along the lane out of the corners of his eyes. A cheap, yellow stunt, just to win a trophy cup. Pat's voice was fiery:



"Next time, Weems, you're going to take a licking you won't forget. And if you try some other chicken trick, I'll take you apart." He turned away, so he wouldn't lose control and take a sock at the guy. . . .

The indoor track army moved from New York to Boston for the annual Starlight Games. Again the papers went wild over The Bamboo Twins. Big stories dealt with the prospect for Boston fans to witness the world's first fifteen-foot vault.

After his first burst of anger at Weems had cooled a trifle, Pat discussed the incident with Duke Bartell. Like Pat, Duke had failed to notice any spectators make a move as if to cross the lane. "But then, there could have been a nitwit edging out into the way," the coach added. "I couldn't say positively."

Though his dislike for the mysterious Mid-Westerner did not lessen, Pat began to wonder if by any faint chance Weems actually had been sincere in shouting the warning. He dismissed the notion as illogical. Weems had been so eager to win that he'd have stooped to anything.

An hour before the time to start vaulting in front of the huge throng of Bostonians, Pat tried to talk himself into exactly the proper frame of mind. "I guess going out there sore as a boil, with a chip on my shoulder, won't help my jumping any," he said to Duke Bartell.

"Correct, the first guess," the coach answered. "You can't relax when you're chewing tacks."

"I know it," Pat agreed. He added, thoughtfully: "And if I get Weems too roiled up—along with what he already lacks in the way of insides—he isn't going to chase me up very close to fifteen feet, that's a cinch."

Pat had every attribute of a great natural athlete. Deliberately, he forced himself to shunt aside his burning hatred for a cheap sport like Larry Weems. He made himself relax and concentrate solely on the

business of soaring on a bamboo stick.

He filled his role in The Bamboo Twins' act to the ultimate degree. He strode out wearing a big grin, walked over to Weems and shook hands. The crowd thundered approval. Weems smiled back, though the odd, unreadable expression was still in his eyes, and the first trace of fear was showing as the duel drew close.

"I wonder," Pat thought, "what this guy can be holding out on us?" He was pretty sure of one angle—that Larry Weems had no stomach for the long drop from the bar to the pit. That was natural enough. Nobody could actually enjoy the equivalent of hopping a dozen times off a thirteen or fourteen—or fifteen!—foot roof onto a landing place that was no feather bed even though it was springy.

But the distaste for that bad part of vaulting didn't completely cover Larry Weems, Pat knew. There was something else, something deeper, to explain his tight-lipped shyness around cameramen and sports writers, and to account for the fear in his eyes.

Pat and Larry set out to give Boston an eyeful of great vaulting. Pat had never felt better. And a couple of hours before, by special delivery, he'd received a succinct reminder that Magna Pictures was still waiting for him.

**A**T FOURTEEN-THREE, only The Bamboo Twins were left. With the bar at fourteen-six, the old, queer expression of fear showed more than ever in Larry's eyes—but it didn't keep him from squirming over on his first jump. Pat missed on his first effort. On his second trial, he zoomed over handily.

By mutual agreement, Pat and Larry had the bar raised four inches to fourteen-ten. Weems missed badly on his first try. That irritated Pat. He wanted to be pushed—hard.



He stooped to pick up his favorite pole. It wasn't there. The stooge who'd caught it evidently had mislaid it in the excitement of the mile run. Pat glanced around. He didn't spot it among the other similar-looking poles.

It was nearly midnight, and the crowd was shouting for the show to go on. Pat didn't want to delay the proceedings. He chose another of his four poles. It was a flawless stick. Still, it didn't feel exactly like his prize one, as he poised on the runway. He didn't like to change poles that way, not when the bar was up there among the rafters.

Still thinking about the pole, he was a trifle ragged on his pull-up. The bar clattered down. Weems was ready at once for his second try. He ran hard, leaped—and whisked over. The mob roared. It had no favorite son. Either man was the right one, this night.

Pat had time between jumps for another look for his missing pole. He peered along the rows of taped bamboo. And he found what he was looking for among Larry Weems' poles!

Once more Pat's fury flamed toward a man who would pull stuff like that to grab a trophy. His eyes blazed as he flung a scathing charge at the seemingly startled Mid-Westerner:

"Very, very clever. How much did you pay the kid to walk off with this stick? And lay off the innocent pan!"

"I didn't know it was here with mine," Weems faltered. "I didn't notice it."

"You're a liar, Weems. A liar and a heel. Too bad I found it before taking my next jump with another one." Quivering with anger he could scarcely control, Pat unclenched his fists and strode back down to adjust the standards.

The crowd buzzed excitedly. Hard feelings between The Bamboo Twins! The pole-vaulting pals in a verbal scrap! That was something. The mob was on edge as Pat primed himself for his second trial at fourteen-ten.

Duke Bartell was snapping instructions, telling him to wait until he cooled down. He heard the coach only vaguely through his fog of fury at a chicken-hearted, two-faced cookie of the Larry Weems species.

His hands shaking from the intensity of his rage, he started his run. He couldn't get into high gear. Flopping hopelessly out of form on his pull-up, he kicked the bar clear to the back edge of the pit. The crowd groaned.

Pat sat down to take his rest. But he couldn't stay there, not even with Duke Bartell working on his legs and talking a soothing stream. He strode back up the runway, turned, and started back at once. Strength loosed by anger made his pull-up amply high. But his left hand hit and bumped the bar off. The Starlight championship was Larry Weems'.

**D**ISMALLY, Pat returned to New York to rest two days before starting workouts for the International Invitational Championships at the Garden. He felt like tossing up the whole business and heading back west. He couldn't lick a queer-eyed two-timer who was doing his damnedest—which was plenty good—to rock him out of fulfilling his ambition and picking off a \$50,000 movie plum.

Temporarily, he forgot that the competition Weems had furnished—competition no other athlete in the current crop could offer—probably was the principal thing that had pressed him past the fourteen-and-one-half-foot mark.

The meet association quartered all the visiting athletes on a single floor of a downtown metropolitan hotel. Pat felt tense and ill at ease with Weems around. His hatred and mistrust of the other half of The Bamboo Twins had grown out of all proportion.

And then, one day, he found his watch missing from his room. His mind flashed at once to Weems. May-



be that explained the queer look in Weems' eyes. Perhaps the fear in them was the fear of being found out not only as a cheat and a louse, but as a common thief.

Pat reported the loss to the hotel detective, but admitted his suspicions only under insistent questioning. Since Weems was out of the hotel, the detective promptly told Pat to come with him, and headed for Larry's room. Not relishing that sort of thing, Pat went along reluctantly.

They didn't find the watch. But in a leather case, Pat saw something that made his mouth drop open. It was a picture and yellowed clipping—cut from an old college annual. The man's name was Jack Bullivant.

Complete realization came slowly to Pat, hitting him like a stunning punch. Jack Bullivant! Yale's first truly great pole vaulter. There was no mistaking that nose, the eyes, the shape of that rounding chin. Larry Weems must be—had to be—Jack Bullivant's son!

Pat looked at the detective. "Uh—got to sit down a minute." Shaking his head, he drew a deep breath and slumped into a chair, to let the astonishing discovery sink in.

A fiend for vaulting history, he'd long since heard the story of the famed Eli star. Jack Bullivant—just a thirteen-foot man, true; but considering the equipment and knowledge of his day, as great as any modern vaulter.

The facts of Jack Bullivant's fate soon after his graduation and marriage flashed back to Pat. Not all the poles had been choice bamboo in those days. Some had been treacherous—as dangerous as equivalent lengths of dynamite. Pat could almost picture this old-time star as he made his last vault. A stiff pull-up, a sudden splintering crackle, and a terrific spill . . . . Then a lifetime in a sanitarium, his broken back mended—but his wife gone from the shock, and his great legs shriveled and useless from paralysis.

"No wonder," Pat mumbled. "No wonder."

"What're you muttering about?" the detective asked.

"It's no wonder," Pat repeated, "that he looks scared out there. Uses a fake name and won't allow close-ups, probably so his dad won't know he's vaulting and fade out from worry about it. . . . wonder how he ever got into it, anyhow?"

The detective sighed loudly, and announced: "One of us is screwy, and it isn't me. Come on, let's get out of here before we both go nuts."

Pat didn't tell Duke Bartell what he'd learned. He went to his room to think the thing through. Larry Weems was gripped by an inborn fear, all right, whenever he vaulted. He had a right to be afraid. The fellow had more than his share of guts ever to have touched a vaulting pole.

While Pat was pondering, the room telephone rang. It was the detective. "I did some nosing around," he said, "and found your watch on a new bell-hop I've been leery about for two weeks."

Pat's impulse then was to change his whole attitude toward Weems. But he realized the discovery about Bullivant didn't alter the fact that Larry apparently had stooped to crude tactics in the last two meets. Pat was still enraged when he thought about that. Yet he wanted to be fair.

"I'll see what happens in the Invitational," he decided. "If he doesn't pull another raw deal, I can forget a lot of things. If he does, I'll smash his nose all over his face, whether his name is Bullivant or Luke McGlucke!"

The invitational, he knew, was the meet that counted. If ever he was to break fifteen feet, it would have to be there. And he just had to do it. Too many things depended on his breaking the record. And to do it, he had to be pressed by the most blistering sort of competition. . . . If he could do something to stiffen that pressure just one notch more. . . .



HE CAUGHT a morning train to Syracuse. At the Sunview Sanitarium, they took him to a sunken-eyed man, old before his time. Yet there was something keenly alert about the man's face. He leaned forward from the wheelchair to shake hands.

"Yes, sir, young fellow, I'm Jack Bullivant. And you're Harmon, the Central California pole vaulter, aren't you? I've seen your picture."

Pat blinked. He hadn't suspected that a man reported so ill had followed current sports so closely. He found it hard to say what he wanted to. He didn't want to shock the invalid—had every hope, rather, that by putting his proposition delicately, he might ultimately help the man to rally a little.

"I—well, it's like this," Pat said hesitantly. "There's a fellow named Larry Weems who's been as good or better than myself all winter. We're both trying to do fifteen feet. You know stiff competition is the key to any new record. Now, I realize traveling might be pretty tough for you, though New York's not too far away. But I've been thinking that maybe with a grand old-timer like Jack Bullivant in a box seat, it might build up one or both of us enough to sneak over that fifteen-foot jump."

The invalid's deep-set eyes twinkled brightly. "I see." He paused a moment, then added: "Isn't what you really mean, Harmon, that my being there might stiffen the competition you would get from my son Larry?"

Pat's eyes bulged in sheer amazement. "You know about him? I didn't—"

"Sure I know about him," Mr. Bullivant interrupted. "I found out a few months ago that he was vaulting. It scared me to death almost, and that's no exaggeration. I had a bad three weeks, before I got back to normal."

"Then I was all right. I realized it was strictly Larry's business, and that vaulting wasn't as dangerous as

in my day. After that, I began to get so proud of him I would almost burst whenever I heard he had added a couple of inches. He writes to me, often—and he hasn't an idea that I suspect a thing about him. So don't tell on me."

Pat was getting used to stiff surprises. He wrinkled his forehead. "What I don't understand is why he ever went into pole vaulting, knowing how it wrecked you. . . . Forgive me. I don't mean to be so blunt."

"I think I know why," Mr. Bullivant answered. "It isn't entirely that gnawing urge a human being has to make himself face something he has always feared. I've heard him speak of track coaching. He thinks that would be his best line—and evidently he believes that setting a few records will help him pick off a job with a good salary. He isn't far wrong there at that, I imagine."

The old, broken athlete let his head drop. "The poor kid. My sanitarium bills have saddled him hopelessly. No wonder he's desperate to find a good job and start getting out from under."

The silence that followed was awkward. Pat suddenly knew that Mr. Bullivant sensed the bitter rivalry between The Bamboo Twins. He realized Larry's father must have heard of their squabble in Boston. Crimsoning, he was glad when Mr. Bullivant finally spoke again:

"So you think it would make your competition a notch hotter if I paid a surprise visit to the Garden?"

Nodding, Pat answered lamely: "It will improve Larry's chances, too. It will make us both work harder."

"Naturally it will. . . . Harmon, I'll be there—if I have to shoot some doctors to make it. And I'll be rooting for Larry with all my heart, of course. But if he can't do fifteen feet, I want you to. One of you has to."

"Fair enough," Pat mumbled. Poor sportsmanship surely was no inherent Bullivant characteristic. Larry had picked his up elsewhere. They



talked a few minutes longer before Pat left.

With The Bamboo Twins publicly pronounced ready to chew each other's throats, the committee of the International Invitational Championships—with an eye always out for showmanship angles—possessed a natural that sold out every inch of spectator space. It was a mob pop-eyed at the prospect of watching mere humans soar upward fifteen feet on slender bamboo toothpicks.

Pat saw Mr. Bullivant in his wheelchair, far back where Larry wouldn't notice him. It was part of their plan that he should not be moved to a front box, and pointed out to Larry, until they were gunning for the top heights.

Pat felt in rare form. He'd never found his timing better. Larry was vaulting magnificently, too. Once again the draw made his turn precede Pat's at each height. He was the first man over fourteen, Pat the second.

**A**T FOURTEEN-SIX, Nushida of Japan went out. From then on it was the scintillating setup the public had been waiting for—Weems versus Harmon.

"Tired?" Duke Bartell asked Pat, as the officials slid the standards up to a giddy fourteen-eleven and measured it to find the bar absolutely sagless.

The muscles in Pat's shoulders were beginning to ache, but he answered: "Never felt better in my life."

Larry came down the runway, the old aloofness and mystery in his eyes, along with that familiar glint of fear. He muffed the jump completely. Then Pat went into action. He scraped his leg on the pole as he swung up, just enough to muddle his timing. The stick rattled down.

"Second trial for Larry Weems at fourteen-eleven."

Larry missed badly, again. Pat saw that the strain was getting him—

inborn fear, no doubt, and a hate for that sickening drop on the other side. And if Larry couldn't press him past fourteen-eleven, Pat knew he could never go on to do fifteen feet.

He sprinted down the runway, swung up magnificently. But the grazed bar wobbled and dropped. Pat knew instantly that it was time to shoot the works. He saw that old, crippled Jack Bullivant must have felt it too—for the invalid was having himself wheeled down to a front box.

Larry stood strangely taut at the head of the lane as Pat walked toward him. Big drops of sweat beaded Larry's contorted face. The old fear was beating him. It showed so vividly now that the whole crowd must have seen it. The throng seemed to know that Weems could not possibly succeed on this final desperate effort.

Pat stepped squarely in front of him, before he could start his run. Larry frowned nervously. "What's the idea, Harmon?" he asked, jumpily. "Get out of the way so I can get this over with."

Pat didn't move. He looked at Larry steadily, and said: "Larry Bullivant, you're scared to death!"

Larry winced as if he had been walloped on the chin. Pat talked swiftly. "I know all about you, Larry. So does your dad. He was a great athlete. He'd hate to see you fold up in a pinch. And he's going to, if you don't snap out of it. Take a look—over there in that box. He's rooting for you."

A vast stream of thought can streak through a startled human brain in the tick of a watch. Pat could see the changes racing into Larry's mind after his first dumb-founded, stupefied moment.

Larry waved to his father, a bit weakly. Gradually, the surprise and the fear faded from his eyes. And presently, he turned again to face the towering standards.

Down the lane he tore, his long legs churning. His foot slapped down,



and he soared high. The scream of the throng drowned out the thud as Larry flopped into the shavings. The white bar was still atop the standards!

Pat drew a deep breath. Here was the pinch he'd deliberately brought on himself. Slowly, calmly, he walked up the lane, his back to Larry. In the two meets past, Larry had pulled the crudest of tricks to steal victory. Here was a chance—virtually an invitation—for Larry to invent some new way to disrupt the leap that might deadlock him.

As Pat reached the head of the runway, old Jack Bullivant called to him. He put down his pole and walked to the box.

"Great jump, wasn't it, boy?" Mr. Bullivant enthused. Pat nodded, grimly. The invalid added: "Harmon, I want to see you go back out there and sail over that thing, too. You're as good as he is. Who knows? Maybe better!"

Pat mumbled thanks. While listening to Mr. Bullivant, he'd heard a strange, buzzing commotion surge through the crowd. Had Larry pulled something so obvious that everyone in the Garden but Mr. Bullivant and himself had seen it—nudged a standard out of line, or something as glaringly rank?

**H**E STRODE back. Sure enough, Larry was standing near the right standard, an oddly triumphant grin on his face. Pat gritted his teeth. "I've got to get over this one. But if I miss it," he grated inwardly, "I'll tear the guy to pieces. He isn't fit to have a dad like Jack Bullivant."

Pat gripped his pole, carefully. It felt springy and live. His shoulders were sore, but his legs seemed full of rubber. The slender standards looked out of proportion, stretched up so high to support the thin white wand.

Fourteen-eleven! Half an inch higher than he'd ever gone in a meet or in practice. And Larry Weems was

already over it. Pat started to run. He leaned forward to get the right body angle. He turned on the heat, knew he had all the speed he needed.

His eyes were on the bar for a moment. It looked higher than the roof, seeming to dance around crazily. Then he fixed his gaze on the square where his pole must bite down and take hold.

Up went his left hand to his right. His left foot bounced off the floor with a ringing whack as he kicked his right high. Together, his feet snaked up—up—up, and over the white bar. He turned toward the pole, and his knees and legs were over. He hunched up at the waist, pushing fiercely with all the steely strength he could force into his wrists. For an instant, his head and arms and shoulders hung far down one side, his feet and legs down the other—with the bar a scant hair's breadth from his stomach, like a blade ready to slide through him.

He released his iron grip on the pole, flung his arms up and raised his chest and shoulders with a lurch that tore at his strained stomach muscles.

Then he was dropping, dropping. He bounced hard on the small of his back, flipped over backwards on the rebound. A tremendous roar smashed into his ears. The thunder kept reverberating. Somehow, he found himself up out of the pit, shaking hands with Larry. Larry was howling:

"You've done it! You've done it! Fifteen feet! Fifteen feet!"

Pat shook his head. "What are you raving about? It was fourteen-eleven we did. Have you gone goofy?"

But Larry shook his head, too—and then a jubilant official spoke up:

"This fellow Weems is a pretty fast talker, Harmon. He threatened to default and ruin our show if we didn't slide it up an inch to fifteen feet while you were talking to somebody over in the crowd. He said you'd never know the difference—and buddy, you didn't! But the whole cockeyed mob knew it. Congratulations!"

Somehow Pat got it through his



head that they were telling him the truth, that he had vaulted fifteen feet. Then he was attempting to blurt apologies to Larry.

"And I thought—that time you yelled when I was about to take off, and after that, when my pole was found among yours—that you were dirty. I can never—"

Larry stopped him with upraised palm. "Later," he said, "I realized you had reason for what you called me. But I wasn't dirty. It looked as if a man was really going to cross the runway. And the other time, it was one of the assistant groundkeepers who'd put your pole among mine. I learned that later, but because of your cussedness—" he laughed—"I wouldn't tell you."

A black-derbied little man glided through the maze of seething humanity. "I'm Vauxmann, of Magna Pic-

tures," the dapper stranger said. "I want you to sign our contract right now, before the rest of them start bothering you. Fifty thousand dollars, Mr. Harmon."

"Wait a second," snapped Pat, suddenly beginning to think in high gear. "I've got to have a partner in this movie vaulting—or I don't sign. I'll show him to you."

Pat was a trifle hazy, an hour or so afterwards, about just how the cops managed to get the floor clear, and the supremely confident way Larry had whizzed down that lane and up and over fifteen feet like it was twelve-six. . . . But their names were side by side, anyhow, on a chunk of important paper, and Larry was going to get some big bills paid off for a swell dad. And the name of the first movie short—at Pat's demand—was going to be "The Bamboo Twins!"

*In the Next Issue—*

## PHANTOM FISTS

*Smashing Boxing Novel*

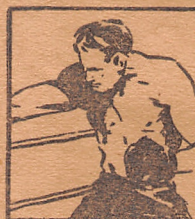
By **JOE ARCHIBALD**



## THE HATE RINK

*Hockey Novelette*

By **NELSON S. BOND**



## BASKETBALL—BIG BUSINESS

*Special Feature*

By **JACK KOFOED**

*And Many Other Stories by  
All-Star Sports Authors*

**February ACE SPORTS**

**Out December 22nd**



# Hockey Horoscope

*Predictions for the Season's Hot-Ice Demons.*



*By Jack Kofoed*

*One of Sportsdom's Leading Commentators.*

**G**OING out on a limb is a favorite pastime of mine. I did a job picking football winners for ACE SPORTS in a recent issue. Just how it will work out I don't know. But now I'm doing a nose dive right into the hockey game.

A hockey season is just as tough to predict as football. A team might go great guns, according to the dope. Then one night there's a tangle on the ice. One star goes down and breaks his leg. A general fight

starts. Another player is cracked over the head by an avenging stick. Bingo! the squad is shot to bits and starts to lose—and my predictions take a wallop on the chin.

Still, you can't hate a guy for trying. So I'll tell you what ought to come up in the National Hockey League through the season of 1937-38. If I'm wrong, the worst you can

do is sue me.

Last year the world's champions were the Detroit Red Wings, managed

**An Expert  
Charts the  
Rinksters'  
Chances**



by Jack Adams. They had pretty nearly everything a hockey team needs, including a penchant for getting sore and banging away at rival players and occasionally the officials. That they were able to win, considering all the things that happened to them, proved their great reserve strength.

Everything seemed to happen to the Red Wings. Douglas Young and Larry Aurie went out with broken legs. So did a good substitute named Orville Roulston. Norman Smith, the goalie, was side-tracked with a bad arm. Minor injuries slowed up a number of the others.

So Adams reached down into the Pittsburgh Hornets, of the International League, and brought up some choice recruits he had developing there. Recruits usually need seasoning when they come into the big time, but the lads seemed to have all they needed.

Earl Robertson took over the nets and did a perfect job. You'd have thought he was born and brought up in that position. The University of Michigan graduate, Johnny Sherf, developed into a front line star. Jimmy Orlando, who learned his business on the ice of Montreal, became a blazing-hot defense man. "Muddy" Bruneteau, who was classed as a spare wing, became a spark plug during the Stanley Cup finals and raised hell with the Rangers. He drew them into fights—which meant penalties—carried the rubber all over the rink and made himself a general Ranger Enemy Number One.

The Red Wings won the playoffs for the Stanley Cup, and so became the top team in hockey.

**I**M nominating the Red Wings for the same position this year. Why not? All their cracked up aces have recovered and will be in action once again. They're first-class men, backed up by the sensational rookies who carried the club through the crucial finishing weeks last season. Put them

all together, and they may not spell much; but they'll spell plenty of trouble for any outfit that tackles them. The kids have had the seasoning they needed, and should be the better for it. Gosh knows, they were tough enough without it.

Their bitter rival was the New York Rangers under the old Gray Eagle of the Ice, Lester Patrick. Patrick's veterans did as much as could be asked of them. They were worn down by years of action, but they rose to the occasion in magnificent style. If they fell just a shade short, it was not for lack of trying.

But look what's happened to them. Bill Cook, one of the greatest forwards of all time, has dropped out and will manage the Cleveland Falcons. Frank Boucher, his partner in hundreds of brawling battles, also leaves the skates to become assistant manager of the Rangers. Ching Johnson, bald-headed and aggressive, a defense man of parts and courage for many a semester, also goes the way of all flesh and will head an amateur team. The iron man, Murray Murdoch, is going to the Philadelphia Ramblers, and Butch Keeling is ready to call it a day. That cuts a deep slice out of both offense and defense, but the picture really isn't as dark as it seems.

Patrick still has, among others, the high-scoring Cecil Dillon, the Colvilles, Shibicky, his son, Lynn, and others who were something better than fair last year. But his ace in the hole is the crew of up-and-coming kids from the Philadelphia Ramblers. The Ramblers stood the minors on their slightly cauliflowered ears last winter, and a number of them are ready for fast company right now. It may be that they will do for Patrick what the Hornets did for Adams in '37. If they do, the Red Wings will have more trouble than they bargain for at this particular moment.

The other two clubs in the American Group are the Boston Bruins and



the Chicago Black Hawks. Neither is likely to bust the league wide open. Out in Chicago, Major McLaughlin, owner of the club, decided to get rid of the Canadiens and make his outfit one hundred per cent Yankee. Considering that the biggest proportion of hockey stars have come from Canada, this looked like a suicidal move. At any rate, he picked LaPrairie, Suomi and Schaeffer from the A. A. U. champions of a couple of seasons back, and Klingbell and Brink from other amateur clubs.

It is McLaughlin's idea to build from the ground up, but that is a long and wearing procedure. In Karakas he has one of the best goalies in the game, but that isn't enough; for good as Karakas is, he had half a dozen counters scored against him two or three times in a single contest, because the defense was slipshod. McLaughlin's idea may work out in time, but this season probably isn't the time.

**B**OSTON has a new-deal setup. Bill Stewart, the former referee, has taken the club over. Art Ross has been installed as manager, with Fred Cook as his assistant. The Bruins weren't more than lukewarm last year, and the Stewart-Ross-Cook combination isn't going to stand pat. They are gunning for new players, and that means they'll be in much the same spot as the Black Hawks. They'll be experimenting while the Red Wings and Rangers are playing hockey.

Well, that takes care of the American Group, who will finish, if I happen to be right, in this order: Detroit Red Wings, New York Rangers, Boston Bruins and Chicago Black Hawks. Now, all the boys have to do is go out and prove I'm either a good prophet or a dunderhead guesser. But I am bound to say, from this point, the finish should be just about like that.

The other half of the league is known as the International Division, and comprises the Canadiens of Mont-

real, Montreal Maroons, Toronto Maple Leafs and New York Americans. Personally, this setup always seemed silly to me. Here are eight teams who go through a long and bitterly fought season—for what? For the championship? Oh, no—for the right to compete in the playoff for the championship and the Stanley Cup.

In short, there are eight teams. Six of them eventually get into the playoff. Now, it is entirely possible that the squad which had played the poorest hockey all season might suddenly strike an inspired winning streak, while one that has been clicking on all cylinders hit a losing spot. The victories which had been piled up from November to March wouldn't mean a thing. The best team wouldn't be the champions after all.

That's the way it's worked—and if they want to do it that way, it's all right with me. The whole idea is to build up a sort of world-series gate. Money is the only answer to a setup like that. There's no sporting common sense to it. But, as I say, that's their business, not mine, so why should I complain? I was starting to talk about the squads in the International Division, and what they are likely to do.

The situation there is not unlike that to be found in the American Group. There are two strong outfits, and a couple that resemble weak sisters. But, you get that lopsidedness in baseball and football and every other sport. There just doesn't seem to be any way to balance things up.

The Canadiens and the Maple Leafs have man-power, plus youth, which is a combination much sought after and seldom achieved. Add to this plenty of speed and fight, and you begin to get a general idea of what they have to throw against the opposition. The youngsters on both teams have weathered the storm for a season or two. They're older and heavier, which means they will hit everybody down the line harder than they ever did.



They have learned more, too, about the strategy of hockey, and are smarter. In short, they are considerably tougher than they used to be.

Last year Apps, Jackson and Drillon were high scorers for the Maple Leafs. They are coming back in fine physical condition from the training camp, and, barring injuries, there seems to be no reason why they should not pile up goals and assists with just as much *éclat* as they did in the not-yet forgotten winter of '36-'37.

The same is true with the Canadiens. Gagnon, Joliet, Mantha, Haynes and Blake were capable scorers. The outfit was sound and well coached, and with the recruits to bolster them, these men from Montreal should continue to be a little bit of all right. At any rate, I don't see where it is likely that either the Americans or Maroons will push them out of their spots at the top of the division.

**I** HOPE I'm wrong about the Americans, because they long have been favorites of mine, or, at least, "Red" Dutton, their manager, still is. Red is one of the most remarkable men in hockey. He went to war with the Canadiens more than twenty years ago, and was pretty well shot to bits. The doctors said he wouldn't be able to go on the ice any more, but in spite of that he was a great performer until a few seasons ago. He is smart and able and has done a lot with the material he found available.

Dutton has a great player in Dave Schriener, and a few other good ones, but there is too much a mixture of old die-hards and unseasoned new material. Red, though, has a habit of inspiring his men, of getting the last ounce out of them. The Americans may squeeze themselves into the playoffs, but the odds against them winning are whatever you care to name. After all, though, only one team can be champions; and a manager who can form a fighting organization that draws well, is doing all that can be

expected of him, particularly under the situation in which Dutton finds himself.

The Maroons are in much the same condition—too much weakness here and there for them to overcome in one season. Besides, there is, according to reliable information, internal dissension, or, as the boys call it, "club trouble."

Since these predictions were written before the end of the training season, it is possible that some troubles have been eliminated from several of the teams. The Rangers worked out at Winnipeg, Manitoba; the Americans at Calgary, Alberta; Boston at Hersey, Pa.; the Canadiens at Providence; Toronto, in their own Maple Leaf Gardens; the Maroons in Oshawa; Chicago, at the University of Illinois at Urbana. The training was doubtless hard and thorough. It may have brought forth some unexpected talent, but I doubt that anything occurred to change the general value of my predictions.

The development of a hockey team isn't so much different from that of a baseball team. A manager finds out things in a training camp, particularly about the possibilities of youngsters or how far back a veteran has fallen. But the talent he finds hardly ever pays dividends the same year. That's true on the ice as well as the diamond.

So, my combined predictions stand as made: in the American Group, Detroit, Rangers, Boston and Chicago; in the International Section, the Canadiens, Toronto, American and Montreal Maroons. I'll stand or fall on that listing.

When it comes to the playoffs, I'll make my bet on Detroit to beat back even the best the Rangers or Canadiens have to offer. Personally, I'd like to see Patrick and his New Yorkers take the cup, because New York is my stamping ground and Lester is one of the greatest figures hockey ever saw. He practically always gets his Rangers into the playoffs, even



when they don't look any too hot. Last winter he gave Detroit all they could handle. It is possible that he will find the proper combination in the early spring of '38, when the battle for the venerable trophy begins. But I'm afraid not. They seem to pack too much power up there in Michigan—too much for what the New Yorkers now have, anyway.

But there's always a chance. I'm not saying that to give myself an alibi, either. My prediction is flatly that the Red Wings will take the Stanley Trophy. I'm out on the limb with that. But, if the Rangers—or any of the other teams that get in the playoff—happen to click in a suddenly blistering week, they may tumble Jack Adams' boys right down the skids. The favorite has been licked plenty of times in the past. He will be in the future, too.

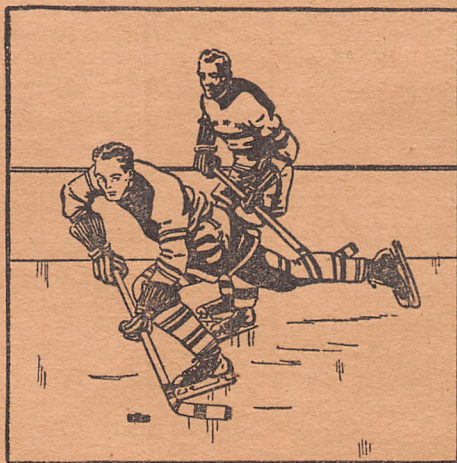
At that, hockey is easier to figure than football. It runs truer to form. Football players go into action once in about seven days. The possibilities of slumps are greater. The heroes of hot ice keep in action three or four times a week all season long, and, the longer the schedule, the more surely form will tell.

As I pointed out, though, in those football guesses, I have no way of

looking into the future. I have doped out these hockey standings on the past performances of the players involved; on the promise of newcomers who have joined the clubs; on internal conditions that the public does not always understand. But sport cannot be reduced to a mathematical formula. If it could, it wouldn't be sport. Unexpected happenings—injuries—can upset this whole line of calculation. But, as things stand now, the hockey situation seems to be pretty well set.

Detroit deserves a high spot on the ice, as well as in other games, because it is a great sporting town—probably the best in the United States. New York must have good teams, because it is the biggest "money" town in the country. Chicago is much in the same category, and it may be that Major McLaughlin will eventually build a winning outfit there. Toronto and Montreal have long been the capitals of hockey on this continent. It is there that the best players are developed.

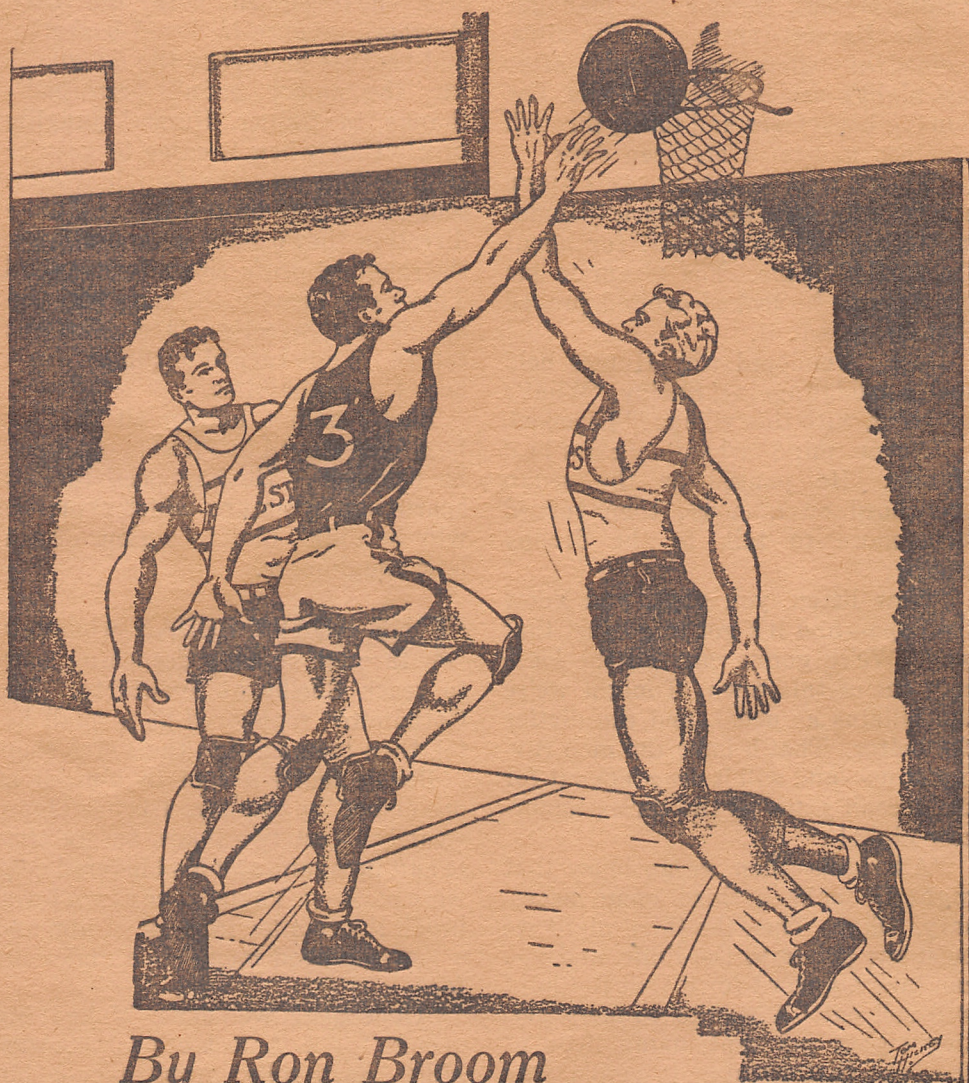
But, unfortunately, only one city can boast a championship team—and if you take my word for it, the Stanley Cup will roost in Detroit once again. Make a little bet on it—and if you don't win just forget it. I won't pay you back.





*Out there on the court, Bucky Loomis was taking the beating of his life.  
He had to be a shock-absorber—to be a . . . .*

# Two-Way Sharpshooter



*By Ron Broom*

Author of "Racket Robot," etc.



**W**HEN it snows in Montana, it snows. Bucky Loomis was beginning to find that out, after five hours of blizzard-battling

on the snow-piled road to Shelby. He'd grappled with the wheel for the first four of those hours—they'd been sticking him with plenty of the driving lately—and now, from sheer exhaustion, he slumped in a corner of the back seat of the huge sedan. But it wasn't all rest there either.



"Get your elbow outa my gullet," growled Pitts, beside him.

On the other side of Pitts, Smith snoozed soundly. Hubka nodded drowsily in one of the jump seats. Eel Masterson was driving. Only Sniper Humes, the playing manager of the barnstorming Gothamites, seemed anywhere near awake after last night's sizzler in Great Falls. The touring basketeers had toiled through nineteen games in nineteen days.

"I can't wait to get into this dump and take the local boys apart," Humes muttered, half to himself, for about the fortieth time. The gleam in his pig eyes as he looked around proved that he meant it.

Bucky wondered why Humes held such a grudge against Shelby. "What's so wrong with this village?" he asked.

"Never mind what," growled Humes. He paused as the sedan bronchoed on a curve, then turned once more to talk to the droopy troupe:

"Now listen, you guys, you know the dope—and it's got to go just that way. We're gonna cart all the loose coin out of this town. Tonight we're the villains as usual, and the dirtier the better. That'll have the mob raving at us—and will it drag 'em out for the second game of the series tomorrow night!

"All right—then we go lousy that night to make a third game necessary. Okay. Then the third night we hoist the prices to the limit, and you can take my word for it that the joint will sell out. With the winners getting eighty per cent, damn little of the take that evening is gonna stay in Shelby. I guarantee you that."

Bucky spoke up: "And I suppose the more guys we can put into the hospital that night, the better you'll like it?"

"Exactly. You're beginnin' to get smart, Loomis, I do believe."

"I don't go for that stuff and you know it."

Humes' eyes narrowed. "You'll get over it. I told you when you signed

that this was no sissy circuit. As long as you're with the club you do as I say—or else."

Bucky didn't answer. He was fed up with the whole thing. Just through with college and a brilliant hoop career, he'd signed with the barnstormers because he loved basketball and because he needed the dough. So far, the money hadn't been bad—thanks to Sniper Humes' juggling proclivities when it came to gate receipts. This was the fourth western tour of the Gothamites. Under Humes' direction they'd built a reputation as the roughest professional team extant. They drew heavily, the same way that an outlaw wrestler lures the customers. Fans turned out in droves to hoot the Gothamites.

Bucky hadn't known all that—or he'd have stayed in Pittsburgh, where he belonged. He happened to be a sportsman by nature, which explained why he didn't fit into a gang of athletic roughnecks.

**T**HE HEAVY SEDAN whammed through steadily deepening snow to reach Shelby at five-thirty. The Gothamites registered at a small hotel, then tramped into the coffee shop.

Bucky found a spot to himself at one end of the counter. His head hung wearily. Just two hours before time to suit up again, and his blistered dogs were barking. Vaguely, he saw a towel brush the counter in front of him and a well-thumbed menu slide under his face.

"Cube steak, well done. Make it big enough to see. A flock of hash-browns. Milk. Hard rolls. Apple pie—a big chunk."

He didn't look up. His drooping head scarcely lifted as the meal was set in front of him. It was a lilting voice that brought his gaze up suddenly:

"Isn't this pretty heavy for a basketball player just before a game?"

For a moment, Bucky couldn't answer. She was dressed like any other waitress he'd seen on the tour—



starched pink apron and a funny doodad on her head. But her eyes were eyes that made you look twice, and her mouth had something about it that Bucky had never noticed in any mouth before, and her hair was a mass of rippling jet. He coughed, and managed a reply:

"Used to it. We've gotten so we could put away a turkey dinner between halves and never feel it."

"It isn't good for you. . . . You're the team's new star, aren't you?"

"What makes you think so?"

"Your pictures have been in the paper." And answering the question in his eyes: "Oh, yes, I eat up sports pages. You see, my father—that's Harvey Walsh—manages the Shelby Eagles. I'm May Walsh."

Bucky was the exact opposite of a lady's man. But for a reason he couldn't understand, he found that he wanted to talk to this girl. She was a lift, and he needed one.

Their conversation brought out vividly the story of the Walshes. Harvey Walsh had had big money once. But like others there, he'd sunk every penny to help build a huge sports bowl. He'd been up to the hilt in it, and with the others, had emerged without his shirt. Some of the rest had made comebacks, but lady luck had frowned on Harvey Walsh at every turn.

" . . . So you see why I'm hoping you fellows lose two straight here," May finished, smiling faintly. "If the Eagles can beat you, they'll be a cinch to sign plenty of good, money-making games for the next month. It's a new venture for dad, and he's simply got to make a go of it, or—" She hesitated.

"Or what?"

"I think it will break his nerve for good."

EVERY available inch of space was occupied that night—jammed at six bits a head with fans who were there to jeer the Gothamites, to howl for a win for the Shelby quintet. Most of the Eagles were former stars of

that ever-powerful basketball school, Montana State.

The things May had told him were still weighing hard on Bucky's mind as he tried his last few practice shots before the game began. Whether the Eagles could take them—which they almost certainly could not—Harvey Walsh's team would be a battered mess at the finish of the series if the Gothamites unleashed as savage a brand of court deviltry as Humes had ordered. The Eagles likely wouldn't be in top shape again for weeks, might even be so thoroughly wrecked they could not earn another dime for Harvey Walsh all season.

Bucky confronted Sniper Humes just before the whistle. Though both were big men, they contrasted markedly, standing face to face at mid-floor. Bucky was the taller by five inches, a handsome, powerful one-hundred-ninety-pounder, lithe-muscled and agile. Humes was a chunky war tank, a two-hundred-ten-pounder at five feet nine inches, startlingly fast for his size and shape.

Bucky said: "What do you say we don't do too much slaughter-housing tonight. We've got nothing against Harvey Walsh."

"Not much!"

"What?"

Humes scowled. "You tend to your knitting, punk. You know I don't like this town, and if I did, it wouldn't make much difference. We're going to pulverize these cookies. And you're gonna help with the pulverizing."

"And that's where you're a mile haywire," Bucky responded, abruptly turning away.

The whistle shrilled. Tall Eel Masterson, a veteran of a dozen seasons of pro looping, got the tip-off handily. The ball flopped into Sniper Humes' big paws. Humes spun around as he charged for the end of the court and—strictly by accident—sent a tall Shelby guard tumbling viciously to the boards. The man jumped up, limping on a bad ankle.



The collision looked so unavoidable that only a scattering of fans bore down in a howl of foul. In a month, Bucky had seen Humes commit mayhem of every variety so slickly that few referees called him. The refs were that way anyhow, with barnstormers who carried only six men.

Humes went straight on in with the ball, leaped high, and popped a swishing one-hander through the hoop.

Bucky played clean, hard basketball, while the rest of the Gothamites were busy trying to wreck Harvey Walsh's basketekers. Bucky was praying that some Shelby hoopster would roll up enough to take an accurate swing at Humes' ugly nose.

But mild-mannered Harvey Walsh had coached the Eagles to turn the other cheek. And in fifteen minutes they were reeling from more crashing body contact, hidden-elbow jabs, tripping and other little tricks than they had known existed.

Still, they stuck fairly close to the Gothamites. They trailed only twenty-four to twenty at the half, only thirty-one to twenty-six after ten minutes of the second half. And through some strange run of good fortune, the home-townners had managed to survive that far without a single serious injury.

Sniper Humes was plainly far from satisfied. He growled at Bucky: "What're you tryin' to get away with—a mama's-boy act so the mob'll love you? Lend a hand, if you know what's good for you."

The Gothamites finally stowed the game on ice—a nine-point lead with two minutes left. Bucky had dished up a steady, fast display, registering four nice goals and adding a pair of free throws. He was dog-tired, but no rest came his way. Every other man in the lineup had been given at least a brief spell on the bench, Hubka alternating at one job and then another. But Bucky had played every minute.

**A**SHELBY FORWARD, Wills, pulled a neat feint to circle Bucky and drive in toward the basket. Bucky darted after him, reaching far forward to try to deflect the dribbled ball out of control. His played-out knees buckled, and he stumbled. His head and shoulders crashed against Wills' back. Wills tripped, almost under the bankboard. He turned a complete somersault and his head smashed into the close brick wall of the small pavilion. He did not get up.

"Foul! . . . Dirty!" The howl boomed out from the mob. Bucky cringed under the thunderous charge as he turned Wills over and stretched him out flat. Wills' left arm was crumpled in a weird pattern—the wrist bones had snapped when he'd reached out in a vain effort to protect himself.

Bucky was stunned. Sniper Humes had the crust to grin and wisecrack about it. "Nice piece of work, Loomis. I knew you'd come around like a nice boy and be on our side."

Bucky whitened. His fists clenched and unclenched as he faced the manager for a moment. Then, as they helped Wills away, he strode on a bee-line toward the locker-room door. A snarling chorus of boos sent him on his way.

Dismally, Bucky entered the coffee shop an hour later. May was still on duty. He went to her end of the counter. She had to know the straight of it, and he could tell by the fiery gleam deep in her eyes that she'd heard all about the game. Before he could say a word, she was talking in crisp, staccato sentences.

"You ought to be horse-whipped. I didn't know a man could be so low . . . I can't guess how you happened to fool me. I actually had you figured as a—human being. I was wrong. I hope you'll pardon my mistake."

She turned away, and sent another girl to ask for Bucky's order. He left without eating, and went to his room.

It sickened him, as he tried to go



to sleep, to listen to Sniper Humes' voice through the door joining the rooms. Humes was telling Masterson and the surly Pitts how easily he'd rooked Harvey Walsh's greenhorn ticket-man of exactly one hundred eight dollars.

The turmoil in Bucky's brain kept him wide awake. He couldn't completely understand it. He'd known May Walsh for no more than a few hours. Yet proving to her that he wasn't the sort she thought, and helping her father avoid a disastrous wolfing from Humes, suddenly seemed the most important job in the world.

All the next day, he kept himself holed up to avoid trouble. Shelby was a rough town, and the populace was raging at the way he'd ruined Wills' arm and weakened the Shelby lineup. . . .

In the dressing room that night, Bucky slumped down on a bench. He propped his head in his hands and gazed straight ahead till it was time to go out into the pavilion. His hatred for Sniper Humes was growing every second. The relatively fat payoff the manager had tossed him for the previous night's work didn't lessen the feeling.

Humes grinned as he reminded the Gothamites of the evening's plan of battle. "It's a rest, mates—a nice, easy coast. Make it look good, remember, but keep your shots off that bucket. These punks have got to win, to make it go three games. Let 'em have it by about seven or eight points—no more."

Bucky kept his face immobile as Humes slanted a warning glance at him at the finish of the instructions. He gritted his teeth. He could play good basketball—almost great basketball—if he wanted to badly enough. He knew he was going out there to play over his head, trying to lick the Eagles single-handedly. A beating wouldn't hurt Harvey Walsh's troupe as much as another night of gate-receipt raiding and general mayhem. Bucky knew Sniper Humes and Pitts

and the rest would ruin the Eagles in that third tangle because of the mysterious grudge Humes held against Shelby.

Bucky captured the opening tip-off. Whirling, he dropped in a long, rain-bowing shot for two points. All the effort netted him was a raucous Bronx chorus from the sell-out crowd.

A moment later, he snatched the ball at mid-floor. Faking another long shot to trick his guard into a leap, he squirmed by the man and dribbled half the length of the floor in a dizzy zigzag that had the crowd gasping. He laid the ball up in a backhanded flip as he sailed under the backboard. The tricky spin "Englished" it through for two more points.

Humes scowled at him as they returned to position, and muttered: "Lay off the scoring."

Bucky responded with another long shot—and a few seconds later, with a leaping one-hander from behind the free-throw circle.

"Get that guy!" the fans were chanting. Bucky grimaced mentally. They didn't realize that if the Eagles won tonight, they'd all be nicked for a sky-high ticket price the next night—to see the Gothamites batter their basketeers into so much pulp.

He saw Humes drop a remark to Pitts from the corner of his mouth. The manager also made a circuit to say something to Masterson and Hubka. He didn't approach Bucky.

IN LESS than a minute, Bucky understood what was up. Wide open under the basket, he barked for a pass from Humes. But Humes flipped to Pitts, over near the sideline. Bucky rambled back and forth at a tireless pace, shaking his guard miles loose. But whenever he shouted for the ball, it went elsewhere.

The mob began laughing at Bucky's vain shouts for a feel of the leather. They saw, as soon as he did, that the Gothamites were playing what was virtually keep-away from one of their own teammates. Humes, obviously



realizing that Bucky was in one of his torrid shooting streaks, had instructed the others not to let him get his hands on the ball!

The Gothamites were seasoned showmen. They promptly took advantage of the fact that the stunt was amusing the crowd. They went out of their way to overdo it—thus throwing attention off the fact that they were dogging it to let Shelby win. The crowd howled delightedly as Bucky burned crimson with anger.

Finally he could stand it no longer. When a time-out was called, with Shelby neatly in the lead by six points, he strode to Sniper Humes. "Call off the comedy," he snapped. He knew he couldn't get himself sent from the lineup, since Hubka, claiming illness and a fever, hadn't even suited up. "Pass that ball to me, or I'll—"

"Or you'll what, punk?"

Bucky took half a stride forward, reaching for Humes' arms. He intended to flop the stocky manager to the boards and twist him into a knot. Humes seemed to smell the sudden attack coming. He ducked under Bucky's hands, and smashed a skin-ripping right to Bucky's temple. Humes' left banged against Bucky's chin and the right laid his cheek open before Bucky could get his own fists flailing.

The Gothamites closed in quickly to haul them apart. Bleeding and raging mad, Bucky once more made a lone exit—and again a Bronx chorus trailed him through the door. Suckers, all of them, he thought—blind to the fact that Humes was overjoyed at assuring a Gothamite licking and a third game by having to finish farcically with four men!

Bucky's face felt like raw meat as he walked toward the hotel. He was desperate now, with a hard job to do and no way in sight to do it. Telling the local authorities that Sniper Humes was perpetrating a bald gyp and virtually a robbery wouldn't carry much weight, he knew—not with his own standing in Shelby. He didn't want to handle it that way anyhow.

There wouldn't have been much satisfaction in it if it did work.

He walked slowly toward the coffee-shop entrance. May had to listen to him and believe in him, whether anybody else did or not. She was, inexplicably, constantly on his mind, the most important person he knew right then.

He spotted her at the far side of the coffee shop. She saw him at once. Instead of turning away as he had expected, she returned his steady gaze. He was startled that the thing in her eyes seemed neither sheer disgust nor disdain; it was something else—disappointment, he almost dared to think. That didn't add up.

He left and headed for the elevator, realizing that merely spouting off a lot of words wouldn't do much good. Producing, somehow—digging up a way to save Harvey Walsh from a further cleaning, and to preserve the good health of the Shelby team—would cut a lot more ice.

Pondering the problem gloomily, he finally decided to try to call Sniper Humes' bluff. He waited in his room until he heard Humes and a couple of others next door. Humes was relating the particular manner in which he had raided the take for an extra hundred dollars. Bucky strode into the room.

"Well—our pal!" Humes boomed, sarcastically. "And what might you be here for? To whine that you're sorry and ask to be forgiven? Or for another dose of what you caught on that handsome puss a while ago?"

Bucky held himself in control. His voice was edged with steel. "Sniper, I know how you juggled the ticket dough to rob Harvey Walsh. . . . You're going to go back for an honest split, or I'm going to tell him what you've done, and let the sheriff go to work."

**H**UMES' GRIN turned sickly, but only for an instant. Then he threw his head back and laughed heartily. "Ho-ho-ho! Hear that, gents?



Our panty-waist pal is gonna blow his top! Isn't that rich?" He stopped laughing suddenly, turned his voice into a stabbing snarl. "Listen, punk—have you stopped to think that you accepted a slice of that coin last night—that you're in it just as deep as anybody?"

Bucky didn't hesitate. "You heard what I said." He tossed some folded greenbacks on the dresser. "There's what you gave me. You're going to hand that and all the rest back to Harvey Walsh if you want to stay out of the jug."

He drew a deep breath and kept talking:

"Can't you get it through your crooked head that this fellow is a bankrupt man—but a damned honest one—trying to make a comeback? He needs every dime to tide him through the winter. Yes, and he needs his basketball team in decent shape to make more dough in the next month or so. There's no sense in—"

Pitts spluttered like an electric fuse burning out. "Shut your trap, Loomis. You've been talking to that little twist of a daughter of his, I'll bet."

Bucky leaped at Pitts, but Humes, Smith and Masterson grabbed him before he got there. Masterson twisted his left arm savagely. Smith and Pitts locked his thrashing legs together.

"Come on," Masterson urged. "Let's toss this mug into the hall."

Bucky struggled viciously. Humes yelled: "Hey, wait a second. I've got a better idea." Released suddenly, Bucky subsided momentarily. Pitts had wisely retreated behind a chair.

Humes stood squarely in front of Bucky. "Okay, punk, you been asking for it and now you get it. You're fired. Booted. Canned. You don't belong to the Gothamites any more. You're out like a light—and I hope the Montana coyotes eat you for breakfast. I can pick up a bowlegged cowhand who'll do us more good than you have."

Bucky blinked. He hadn't quite fig-

ured on an angle like this. Still, he could think of worse things. He said, finally: "Swell by me. And from now on I'll be in better company if I am with the coyotes. Give me my cut for tonight—my honest cut, I mean—and I'll move along."

Humes grinned, crookedly. "Loomis, if you stayed here from now on until the second coming, your chances to collect another *sou* from me wouldn't improve."

Bucky knew from Humes' tone that he meant it. He turned abruptly, without another word, and went out of the room. Not until he'd sat down on the edge of his bed and counted his remaining funds did he realize exactly where he stood. He had four dollars and sixty cents—and Pittsburgh was a long way off.

Knowing Humes wouldn't foot his room bill, he thought of checking out. But since he couldn't cover it as it stood then, he decided to stick and take the consequences in stride.

"Got to do something," he thought, perplexedly. "Still got to figure out how to help Harvey Walsh and his gang tomorrow night."

Bucky decided finally to go to the Shelby manager and have it out. He hunted up Harvey Walsh early the next morning. The old, silvery-haired sportsman seemed down at the mouth. Bucky could read it in his eyes that the receipts hadn't been what he'd expected. And no wonder!

Walsh seemed surprised to see him. "I'm Loomis," Bucky said, uncertainly.

Walsh nodded, his lips pressed into a fine line. "I couldn't very well forget you. And anyhow, I've heard my daughter talking about you."

"About me?" Bucky was astonished.

"Forget it. I guess I talked out of turn to mention it."

"She thinks I'm a heel, I reckon," Bucky suggested, trying to pump him.

"I wouldn't express an opinion on it."



FOR A MOMENT, there was an awkward silence. Then Bucky blurted: "Look, Mr. Walsh. I want to talk business with you. I—I—well, to begin with, I didn't purposely smack Wills into the bricks the other night."

"I was watching. Did I claim that you did?"

"No," Bucky answered, slowly, "you didn't, now that I think about it."

Then Bucky suddenly began spouting the whole story from start to finish—about the frame to make it go three games so the winners, who'd surely be the Gothamites, could tote away eighty per cent of the juicy third-game receipts; about the juggling on the box-office check-ups; about the mysterious venom Sniper Humes held toward Shelby in general.

Harvey Walsh's face was a grim mask shifting swiftly from anger to surprise. And then, at the mention of Humes' hatred, to understanding confirmation. He said:

"I happen to know why Humes hates Shelby. Sometime—not right now, but maybe later—I might tell you about it."

Bucky was glad Walsh accepted his statements as the truth. That made it easier to put his final proposition.

"Mr. Walsh," he said, "as I told you, I've been fired from the Gothamites. I'm not cocky, but it wasn't because I can't play good basketball. I think you understand that. . . . Well, I know your lineup is shot with Wills out of there. And I know you'd give anything to win that game tonight."

Harvey Walsh was nodding slightly. "Exactly what are you driving at?"

"Sniper and his yeggs will tear your outfit to pieces tonight. I mean it. It'll be two weeks before you'll be really ready to go again. You might have to cancel dates you've already got, maybe turn down other prospects. But you'll have a lot better chance to come out of it in decent shape tonight—

and win the ball game, incidentally—if you'll take me on to play a forward job. And I don't care what the pay is, if any!"

For a long moment, Harvey Walsh looked steadily into Bucky's equally steady eyes. Then he said, as if yielding to an insistent hunch: "It's a deal."

Walsh extended his right hand and Bucky gripped it. He was surprised at the length and slimness of the man's fingers. He'd heard of fingers of that sort—but not on a basketball manager's hands.

At the door, Bucky turned and said awkwardly: "If it's all the same to you, I wish you wouldn't mention this to May before tonight. No particular reason. I just—"

"I get you," Harvey Walsh interrupted, and there was the faintest glimmer of a twinkle in his mellow eyes.

Bucky knew what would happen when Sniper Humes and Eel Master-son and the rest saw him in a Shelby uniform. But his big hands were steady as he laced on his deep-treaded court shoes. He hadn't done much talking with the other Eagle loopers, but, evidently with fullest faith in anything Walsh did, they seemed to accept him without an argument.

The pavilion was packed. Its brick walls almost shook from the roar of astonishment and anger that boomed from the mob when Bucky trotted out with the Eagles.

Sniper Humes' mouth dropped open. Bucky winked at him. In a scant second, the surprise faded from Humes' face. It changed to a grim warning that Bucky did not miss.

Without straining his imagination, Bucky could guess exactly what was coming his way. And in the first hot flurry after the tip-off, when Pitts body-checked him so fiercely it almost loosened his back teeth, he found painful proof that he had not figured wrong!

By mutual agreement—possibly by order from Humes—the Gothamites



began to gang up on him. They paid little attention to the rest of the Eagles, so far as dealing physical damage was concerned. They unloaded on Bucky at every move. But he'd steeled himself for it. Big and rugged, he knew he could take plenty and keep taking it.

FOR THE FIRST minute or two, he didn't get his hands on the ball. Finally it came to him. He purposely stood looking at it dumbly, as if he'd never seen such an object before.

The act tricked Smith into leaping at him. Instantly coming to life, Bucky went around him cleverly. He shot deliberately from long range—to the right of the hoop—and followed in like a racehorse. Leaping high, he captured the rebound, squirmed around in mid-air and laid in a beautiful cripple in a dazzlingly smooth flash of acrobatics.

Sniper Humes growled out a snort of disgust as the ball swished through. But he didn't miss the chance to spill Bucky. He ran under Bucky's legs, dumping him shoulders first to the floor. It hurt, but Bucky didn't mind.

He really had something to play basketball for now and he was feeling in top form. He knew that light, limber feeling—knew that on this night he could do almost anything with a basketball but make it speak French.

In five minutes, Bucky was aching at every joint from the slam-bang battering the Gothamites were handing him. But in just that much time, his point total had soared to twelve! The mob was raving over the display of sensational shooting.

"Lucky punk," Humes spluttered after the fourth goal. "That'll be your last one."

Bucky wondered how much longer he'd get away with it before the smart, veteran pros spotted what he was doing and checked the shots back down his throat. He had a "dead-eye" spot on the floor—close to either sideline and six or seven feet farther back than the free-throw line. He caromed

the shots off the backboard with astonishing accuracy, rather than firing directly over the lip of the iron bracelet.

That had been the shot that made him a collegiate kingpin in scoring. He'd practiced it so many years that on his hot nights he could almost shoot it blind—and this was one of those nights.

Sniper Humes had never seen him as a college star. And under orders to lay off a lot of shooting—to permit veterans like Pitts and Masterson to get the heavy gravy—Bucky'd never deigned to open up with the deadly weapon as a Gothamite player.

Three times more in the next few minutes, Bucky sank beauties from far to the left. Then he shifted to the right side and howitzered another, before Humes called time out to berate the Gothamites for their fuzzy checking. When the barnstormers came out of their huddle, Humes himself was on Bucky.

"That's all of those for tonight," Humes rasped.

"Maybe," Bucky answered.

Humes was a brilliant guard when he wanted to be. He began to smother every motion Bucky made toward the hoop, roughing him harder than ever. Meanwhile the Gothamite offense had started to roll. The Shelby lead was dwindling.

Bucky called time out. "Listen," he told the Eagles, "I'm going to ramble all over the place and keep faking at that basket—but I'm not shooting any more. I'll feed you guys and you do the firing. They'll be watching me—a couple of 'em at a time, I think. Trying to break my legs in a nice way, y' understand."

For the rest of the half and through fifteen minutes of the last half, Bucky was an elusive picture of grace and speed and courage on rubber soles. He turned, stopped, pivoted, twisted, at a terrific yet tireless pace. Time after time one Gothamite or another smashed him down with tactics that bordered on crudity. The worst of-



fenses drew fouls. Otherwise the Gothamites got away with it. And their efforts to wreck Bucky began to lick them.

THE SHELBY lead mounted once more. With less than five minutes left, it would have taken black magic by the wild-eyed Gothamites to catch the Eagles.

Humes called another time out. He removed himself in favor of a young ex-prep star he'd dug up during the day for possible emergency use. Bucky, having soaked up the battering that would have been levelled indiscriminately at all the Eagles, limped to the bench at once and motioned for Harvey Walsh to take him out.

Quickly he trailed Sniper Humes out into the corridor. Humes was heading hastily for the ticket booth. Bucky knew the Gothamite manager surely had bribed Harvey Walsh's ticket man dizzy tonight. "What's the rush?" he called to Humes.

Humes looked around. Something in Bucky's eyes seemed to make him jittery. "Just gonna check up on the gate," he growled.

Bucky shook his head, slowly and decisively. "No, you're not, Sniper," he said. "I'm doing the check-up. And I'd guess offhand that with what Harvey Walsh has coming back, plus his eighty per cent, there won't be a cent in the pot tonight for the Gothamites."

Humes bared his teeth and snorted, "Why, you dirty—"

"Don't say it, Sniper! Listen. The people who count in this town are wise to you. You don't like Shelby, but the main point is that Shelby doesn't like you. The smartest advice I can think of is that you take your gang and get out of town fast—and I don't mean tomorrow morning! The snow isn't too bad on the Great Falls road."

Sniper Humes was a hard loser—but he was not dumb. The Gothamite had faded out of sight even before Bucky emerged from the ticket booth.

With him was a penitent, scared ticket seller who was white as a sheet. He lugged a bagful of currency for Harvey Walsh.

Bucky wouldn't have traded the look in Walsh's eyes for anything he could think of. "You're a swell kid, Bucky," Walsh said. "I'm too tonguetied to say thanks the way I want to. . . . Say, how's about dropping over to the Walsh shanty for a bedtime snack? I have a hunch some eatables will be ready for the three of us."

"For the three of—" Bucky stopped short in the question. Then, grinning, he went on: "You know, Mr. Walsh, I don't usually eat much late at night—but for some strange reason I'm powerfully hungry tonight."

"I know how that goes," Walsh smiled.

Fifteen minutes later Bucky was stowing away tunafish sandwiches trying not to stare too hard at May. He managed to come back down out of the clouds long enough to say to Harvey Walsh:

"You told me this morning that you'd tell me sometime why Sniper Humes hated Shelby so much. How about right now?"

Walsh grinned. He held up his long, slim fingers. "They're telltale, aren't they? I used to be a gambler, Bucky—one of the leftovers after the big fight splurge. But I guess I was too honest or dumb to make a go of it. Well, Humes came in here two winters ago with a pocketful of basketball profits and a yen to run it up off us local poker hicks. I was in the game. He tried to do it the crooked way, so we had to hand him a dose of his own medicine. We took everything but his pants, I guess."

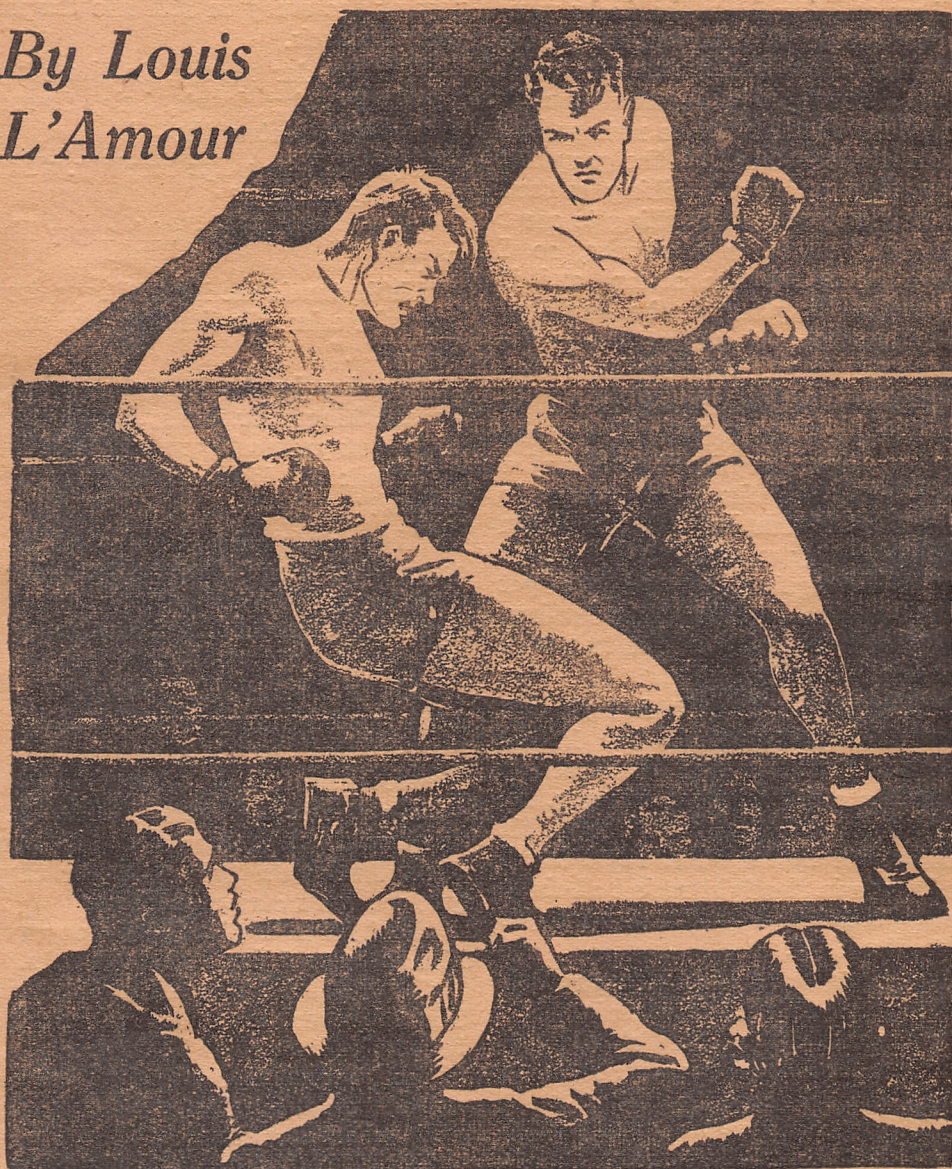
Bucky laughed—a long, deep, luxurious gurgle. He'd never enjoyed anything quite so much. At least, not until the next morning, when he helped May open her dad's stack of telegraphed bids for games from all over the state. That was really something, they agreed.



*The Bambo had the sock, and he didn't care when, where, how, why or on whom he used it. Yet all Fistiana looked for a . . . .*

# Fighter's Fiasco

*By Louis  
L'Amour*



**G**OOD HEAVYWEIGHTS are scarcer than feather pillows in an Eskimo's igloo, so when I take a gander at this "Bambo" Ba-

moulian, I get all hot under the collar and wonder if I am seeing things. Only he isn't the Bambo then, he is just a big mug with a seventeen-inch



neck and a pair of shoulders that would have made Bob Fitzsimmons gnash his teeth with envy.

But he was just plain Adam Bamouliau, a big hulk from the Balkans, with no more brains than a dead man's heel. But could he sock! Say. . .

I am walking down the docks wondering am I going to eat, and if so, not only when but where and with what, when I see a big monkey with shoulders as wide as the rear end of a truck jump down off the gangway of a ship and start hiking toward another guy who is hustling to meet him. It looks like fireworks, so I stand by to see the action, and if the action is going to be anything like the string of cussing words the big guy is using, it should be good.

This guy is big enough to gather the Empire State Building under one arm and the Chrysler Tower under the other, and looks tough enough to buck rivets with his chin, so I am feeling plenty sorry for the other guy until he gets closer and I can get a flash at him. And that look, brother, was my first gander at the immortal Bambo Bamouliau.

He is about four inches shorter than the other guy, thicker in the chest, but with a slim waist and a walk like a cat stepping on eggs. He is a dark, swarthy fellow, and his clothes are nothing but rags, but I ain't been in the fight racket all these years without knowing a scrapper when I see one.

Me, I ain't any kind of a prophet, but a guy don't need to be clairvoyant to guess this second gorilla has what it takes. And what is more, he don't waste time at it. He sidles up close to the big guy, ducks a wild right swing, and then smacks him with a fist the size of a baby ham, knocking him cold as a Labrador morning!

Old Man Destiny doesn't have to more than smack me in the ear with a ball bat before I take a hint, so I step up to this guy.

"Say," I butts in. "How'd you like to be a fighter?"

"How would I like to be a fighter?" he snarls, glaring at me like I'd swiped his socks or something. "Why, you double-decked something-or-other, I *am* a fighter! What does that job look like?" And he waves a paw at the study in still life draped over the dock.

"I mean for money, in the ring. You know, for dough, kale, dinero, gelt, sugar, geetus, the—"

"I get it!" he yelps brightly. "You mean for money!"

What would you do with a guy like that?

"Yeah, that's the idea," I says, trying to be calm. "In the ring, and with the mitts."

"It's okay by me. I'll fight anybody for anything! For money, marbles or chalk, but preferably money. Marbles and chalk are kind of tough on the molars!"

"Then drop that bale hook and come with me. I am the best fight manager in the world, one of the two smartest guys in the universe, an' just generally a swell guy!"

"That's swell. I like you, too!" he says, grinning kind of dumb-like.

**I**GNORING what sounds faintly like a crack, I says: "They are wanting a fighter over at the Lyceum Club. And we'll fight whoever they got, we don't care who he is."

"We? Do both of us fight one guy? Hell, mister, I don't need no help."

"No, you fight. I'm the brains, see? The manager, the guy that handles the business end. Get it?"

"Oh, so you're the brains? That's swell, mister, it gives you somethin' t' do, an' we'll manage somehow!"

"Huh? Oh!" I looks at him again, but he is walking along swinging them big lunch hooks of his. "But don't call me mister! My name is McGuire, 'Silk' McGuire. It's Silk because I'm a smooth guy, see?"

"So is an eel smooth," he says.



That sounds more like a crack than ever, and I am all set to hook him when I remember that four-ton baby back there on the dock, and how he was still cold when we walked off, and I decide to ignore him. That's what them guys need, ignorance!

A few minutes later I lead my gorilla into Big Bill Haney's office and park him on a chair in the outer office with his cap in his mitts. Then I breeze inside.

"Hello, Bill!" I says cheerfully. "Here I am again! You got that heavyweight for the four-rounder to-night?"

"What d' you care?" he says, sarcastic. "You ain't had a fighter in a year that could punch his way out of a paper bag!"

"Wrong," I says, coldly. "Wrong again, you sap! Climb out of that swivel chair and cast your lamps over this—" and I dramatically swing the door open and give him a gander at my fighter, who has parked his number tens on the new mahogany table and is right in the middle of a cigar that smells like it grewed on a rubber plantation.

"Hell," he says, giving Bambo the once-over. "That ain't no fighter. I don't even believe it's human. What do you call it, King Kong?"

"No wise cracks, chump. That guy is the greatest puncher since Berlenbach and faster than even Loughran. He's tougher than a life stretch on Alcatraz, and he ain't never lost a battle!"

"Never had one, either, huh?"

Big Bill looks the Bambo over with a speculative glint in his eyes, and I know what he sees. Whatever else the Bambo may have, he does have color, and that's what they pay off on. The Bambo looks like a carbon copy of the Neanderthal man, whoever he was, only a little tougher and dumber.

"Okay," Haney says grudgingly. "I'll give him the main go tonight with 'Dead-Shot' Emedasco. Take it or leave it."

"With *who*?" I yelps. "Why, that

guy has knocked over everything from here to China, and my boy's only a beginner. Emedasco will kill him!"

"You asked for a fight, didn't you?" he sneers. "Well, you got one. That clown of yours would've dragged down about twenty slugs for getting bounced on his ear by some preliminary punk, and with the Dead-Shot he'll get not less than five centuries! And you kicking?"

"But this guy's a prospect. He can go places. I don't want him knocked off in his first start, do I? Chees, give a guy a chanct, won't you?"

"Forget it. That's the only spot open. I filled that four-rounder yesterday, and then Hadry did a run-out in the main event, so I can shove your boy in there. If he lives through it, I'll give him another shot. What do you call it?"

"Hey, gorilla!" I barks at him. "What d' you call yourself?"

"Me? I come without calling," he grins. "But my monicker is Bamoul-ian. Adam Bamoul-ian. B-a-m-o-u-l-"

"Skip it!" I says hastily. "We'll call you Bambo Bamoul-ian!"

I TOUCH Haney for a fin, so we can eat, and we barge down to Coffee Dan's to hang on the feed bag. While Dan is trying to compose a set of ham and eggs, I go into a huddle with myself trying to figure out the answers.

There's a lot of colored folks in the lumberyard somewheres, but I can't quite figure what the catch is. This big tramp Dead-Shot Emedasco is poison, what I mean! Or that's the way he sounds in the papers. I have never seen him, but a guy hears plenty. I usually get all the dope on those guys, but this is one I missed somehow. He had been touring the sticks knocking over a lot of guys named Jones, and on paper looks like the coming heavyweight champ. He is a big monkey weighing about two pounds less than the *Queen Mary*, according to all reports, and he is



piloted by a double-crossing ex-confidence man named Marc Konecky, who is not so "ex," if you get what I mean.

The way the Bambo charges them ham and eggs I decide we better fight early and often, and that I'd rather buy his clothes than feed him. But while I am on my third cup of coffee, me not being a big eater myself, I look up and who should be steering a course for our table but "Swivel-Neck" Hogan.

Now, I like Swivel-Neck Hogan like I enjoy the galloping cholera, or something, and he has been faintly irritated with me ever since a poker game we were in. He had dealt me a pair of deuces from the bottom of the deck, and I played four aces, which relieved him of fifty bucks, so I know that whenever he approaches me there is something in the air besides a bad smell.

Anyway, I am no closer to an answer to my own problem when he swaggers up to our loaded eating bench looking as prosperous as a Bowery barber on his day off.

"Hey, youse!" he growls. "The skipper wants youse!"

"Say, Bambo," I says, "do you smell a skunk or is that just Swivel-Neck Hogan?"

"Awright, awright," he snarls, looking nasty with practically no effort. "Can dat funny stuff! The chief wants youse!"

As I said, I like Swivel-Neck like the seven-year itch, but I have heard he is now strong-arming for "Diamond-Back" Dilbecker, the big shot racketeer, and that he has taken to going around all rodded up with a gat in every pocket, or something.

"Be your age, dish-face," I says, pleasant-like. "You may be the apple of your mother's eye, but you're just a spoiled potato to me." Then I turns to Bambo and slips him my key. "Take this and beat it up to the room when you get through eating, and stick around till I get back. I got to see what this chump wants. It won't take long."

Bambo gets up and hitches his belt up over his dinner. He gives Swivel-Neck a glare that would have raised a blister on a steel deck. "You want I should bounce this cookie, Silk?" he says, eagerly. "I'll lay you five to one I can put him out for an hour!"

"It'd be cheap at twice the price," I chirps. "But let it ride. That'll come later."

WHEN WE get to Dilbecker's swanky-looking apartment, there are half a dozen gun guys loafing in the living room. Any one of them would have kidnapped and murdered his own nephew for a dime, and they all look me over with a sort of professional stare as though measuring me for a Tommy-gun exit. This was pretty fast company for yours insanely, and nobody knows this better than me.

Dilbecker looks up when I come in. He is a short, fat guy, and he is puffy about the gills. I feel more at home when I see him, for Diamond-Back Dilbecker and me is not strangers. In fact, away back when, we grew up within a couple of blocks of each other, and we called him Sloppy, something he'd like to forget now that he's tops in his racket.

"Hi, McGuire," he says, offhand. "Have a cigar." He shoves a box toward me, and when I pocket a handful I can see the pain in his eyes. I smile blandly and shove the stogies down in my pockets, figuring that if I am to go up in smoke it might just as well be good smoke.

"I hear you got a fighter," he begins. "A boy named Bamoulian?"

"Yeah, I got him on for tonight. Going in there for ten stanzas with Emedasco." Now, I wonder as I size him up, what is this leading up to? "And," I continue, "he'll knock the Dead-Shot so cold, he'll keep for years!"

"Yeah?" Dilbecker frowns impressively. "Maybe so, maybe no. But that's what I want t' see you about."



## FIGHTER'S FIASC

He paused, and then pointing a fat middle finger at me, he continues. "You see, I got me a piece of Emedasco's contract, and tonight I think he should win. I'd like to see him win by a kayo in about the third round."

Dilbecker slips out a drawer and tosses a sheaf of bills on the desk. "Of course, I'm willing to talk business. You are getting five C's from Haney. Well, I'll double it. What do you say?"

I bit off the end of one of his cigars, taking my time and keeping cool. Actually, I got a sinking feeling in my stomach and a dozen cold chills playing tag up and down my spine. But what the hell! I'm not having Bambo dive for nobody, and if I'm getting bumped off, I feel I might as well get a run for my dough. I gets up.

"Awright, greaseball," I says, as nasty as I can make it. "You said your piece. Well, now I'm saying mine. I'm sending the Bambo out there t'night to win, an' I'm goin' to see that he knocks that spraddle-legged fish-eater of yours all over the place, see?" I put my hat on and give it a wicked slant in front. "And I know you got gun guys, but that don't make no difference. Bring 'em along, all you got, and let's make it a big party, because I'm goin' to have my mob there, too. And all forty of 'em, the toughest guys that ever hit this man's town, see? I ain't askin' your fighter to dive, Sloppy Dilbecker, because the Bambo will take care of that."

For a minute he is so sore I think he'll have a stroke, but he's bothered, too. He may be a big shot to some guys, but he's just Sloppy Dilbecker to me, the kid I used to chase home from school, and if he was yellow then he's yellow now. I ain't got any gun guys, and wouldn't have any use for 'em if I had 'em, but sometimes a bluff works, and bluff was all I had.

"Awright," he says, so mad he's fit to be tied. "You heard me. Your boy dives t'night or you'll go the way the Dimmer went, see? That talk

about gun guys doesn't go wit' me. Why, you tramp, you been broke for months! Ain't I wise to what's goin' on around this slab? Now get out of here, an' your boy dives t'night, or else!"

I just laugh at him, and when I walk out of there, I look hard-boiled as hell. Swivel-Neck is standing in the doorway, and when I pass I stop and flick the ashes from my cigar on his lapel. Then I walk on, and when I catch a flash of his face in the mirror, his jaw has dropped down so far with astonishment you could've drove a truck into it. Or one of Bambo's hands, which, incidentally, was an idea.

**B**UT, NEVERTHELESS, I am worried. I have no gun guys, and Sloppy Dilbecker has. He may be a rat, but rats can be nasty when they get a chance, and he has the rods to back him up. Only a week ago they dragged "Dimmer" Chambers out of the river, and him all wound up in a lot of barbed wire and his feet half burned off. Everybody knows it is Dilbecker's job, but they can't prove nothing. I am very sensitive about the feet, and not anxious to get tossed off no bridges, but Bamoulia will fight, and maybe—a very big maybe—he'll win!

But the chances were he'd go out like a candle. Lots of guys look good in the street which can't hold their hands up in the ring, even with a chump. Even if Dilbecker has been buying off guys to dive for Emedasco, that big guy is still good enough to whip my boy with one hand tied, or so it looks from this angle.

Nevertheless, I am going to take no pushing around from Sloppy Dilbecker. Maybe it is better to be a live coward than a dead hero, but I ain't taking nothing from nobody, and that's the way it stands when we are dropped off at the Club a few hours later, the Bambo clutching his bag. I am getting rather chilled around the feet by then, although it looks



## ACE SPORTS

like they'll be warm enough before the evening is over.

Several times I look out the dressing room door, and every time I stick my head out there, there is a great, big, ugly guy out there who looks at me with eyes like gimlets, and I gulp and pull my head in. But I say nothing to my fighter. I don't want him worried going into the ring, although he sure don't look worried now. He is cheerful, and grinning at me, and pulling Cotton's kinky hair, and laughing at everybody. I never saw a guy look so frisky before a battle. But he ain't seen Dead-Shot Emedasco yet, either!

Once, I got clear down to the edge of the ring, looking the crowd over. Then I get a chill. Right behind the corner where we will be, is Sloppy Dilbecker and three of his gun guys. But what opens my eyes and puts the chill in my tootsies again, is the fact that the seats all around them are empty. The rest of the house is a sell-out. But those empty seats were almost the last straw. It looked like the word had got around that I am to be fixed up.

It is only a few minutes later when we get the call, and as we start down the aisle to the ring, I am shaking in my shoes. Also, I am wondering why I had to be unlucky enough to get my fighter stuck in there with one of Dilbecker's gorillas. And then, all of a sudden I hear something behind me that makes my hair crawl. It is the steady, slow, tramp, tramp, tramp of feet right behind me.

When I look back, I almost drop the water bottle, for right behind me is that big dark guy who has been doing duty right outside our door, and behind him is a string of the toughest looking cookies you ever saw. They are big, hard-looking guys with swarthy faces, square jaws, and heavy black eyebrows. A line that reaches clear to the door.

While the Bambo takes his seat, I see them filing into the empty seats

behind Sloppy, and believe me, they are the toughest crowd that ever walked. I ain't seen none of them before, and except for one or two, they ain't such flashy dressers as most of Dilbecker's gun guys, but they are bigger, tougher, and meaner-looking; and when Cotton touches me on the arm, I let a yip out of me and come damn near pulling a faint right there. Who wouldn't, with about fifty gun guys watching you?

**W**HEN I look around, Emedasco is already in the ring. He is a big mug weighing about two hundred and fifty pounds, and standing not an inch over six feet seven inches!

We walk out for instructions, and as the bunch of us come together in the center of the ring, the Bambo hauls off and takes a swing at Dead-Shot's chin that missed by the flicker of an eyelash. Before we can stop them, Emedasco slammed a jarring right to Bambo's head, and Bambo came back with a stiff left to the midsection! Finally we got them separated, and I tell the Bambo to hold it until the fight starts, and when the bell rings we are still arguing.

Emedasco charged out of his corner like a mad bull and takes a swing at the Bambo that would have torn his head off had it landed, but Bambo ducked and sank a wicked left into the big boy's stomach. Then, as Emedasco followed with a clubbing right to the head, he clinched, and they wrestled around the ring until the referee broke them. They sparred for a second or two, and then Bambo cut loose with a terrific right swing that missed, but hit the referee on the side of the head and knocked him completely out of the ring and into the press benches.

Then those two big tramps stood flat-footed in the center of the ring and slugged like a couple of maniacs with a delirious crowd on its feet screaming bloody murder. Emedasco was a good sixty pounds heavier, but he was in a spot that night, for if



ever a man wanted to fight, it was Bambo Bamoulian.

Suddenly that big bohunk stepped back and whipped up a torrid right uppercut that jerked Emedasco's head back like it was on a hinge, and then Bambo jumped in and began to slam both hands into the big boy's stomach. The Dead-Shot staggered back and tumbled to the canvas. He came up fast and went back just as fast when Bamoulian crossed the ring in a couple of jumps and drove another right to his chin, and, believe me, that right started somewhere south of the equator. Then Dead-Shot was up again, and when the bell rang, they were standing toe to toe swapping punches like a couple of slug-batty giants gone berserk.

I was so excited by the fight that I forgot all about Sloppy, or what might happen if Bamoulian won, which looked like it might happen now.

But when the bell sounded, Bambo was off his stool and across the ring with a left he started clear from his own corner, and it knocked Emedasco into the ropes. But that big boy was nobody's palooka, and when he came off those ropes it was with a volley of hooks, swings and uppercuts that battered the Bambo back across the ring, where he was slammed to the floor with a powerful right to the beezer.

The dumfounded crowd, who had come to see Emedasco knock over another setup, were on their chairs yelling like mad, seeing a regular knock-down and drag-out brawl like everybody hopes to see and rarely finds. The Bambo was right in his element. The big ape just walked in punching with both hands and as wide open as a Bowery crap game. He pays no more attention to the haymakers that Emedasco is throwing than to so many flies, and thoroughly warmed up now, he is wading in like a fighting fool.

He knocked Dead-Shot Emedasco staggering with a hard left to the

head, slammed a right to the body and then dropped his hands and laughed at him. But Emedasco knew a thing or two, and with one jump he was across the ring and plastered my boy right on the whiskers with a punch that would have shook Gibraltar to its base. And the next thing I know, the Bambo is stretched on his shoulder blades in my corner, as flat as a busted balloon.

I lean over the ropes and yell for him to get up, and you could have knocked me cold with an ax when he turns around and says, grinning: "I don't have to get up till he counts nine, do I?"

And at nine he's up, and as Emedasco rushes into him, I yell: "Hit him in the wind! Downstairs! In the stomach!"

**H**OLDING THE raging Emedasco off with one hand while the big guy punches at him like a crazy man, my prize beauty leans over and says: "What did you say, huh?"

"Hit him in the stomach, you sap!" I bellowed. "Hit him in the stomach!"

"Oooh, I get it!" he says, "you mean hit him in the stomach!" And drawing back his big right fist, he fired it like a torpedo into Emedasco's heaving midsection.

With a grunt like a barn had fell on him, Emedasco spun half way around and started to drop. But before he could hit the canvas, Bambo stepped in and slammed both hands to the chin, and Emedasco went out like a bum out of the Waldorf, and stayed out.

We hustled back to the dressing room with the crowd cheering so loud you could have heard them in Sarawak, wherever that is, and believe me, I am in a sweat to get there.

As we rush by, I hear a wild yell from the big ugly guy who has had his eye on me all evening, and when I glance back the whole crowd is coming for me like a lot of madmen, but I dive into the dressing room and slam the door.



"Hey, what's the idea?" Bambo demands. "Somebody might want to come in!"

"That's just what I'm afraid of!" I groans. "The hallway is full of guys that want to come in!"

"But my brother's out there!" Bambo insists, and before I can stop him he has jerked the door open, and before you could ejaculate Dneproetrovsk, the room is full of those big, tough looking guys.

I make a break for the door, but my toe hooked in the corner of Bambo's bathrobe, which has fallen across a chair, and I do a nose-dive to the floor. Then something smacks me on the dome, and I go out like a light.

When I came to, the Bambo is standing over me, and the guy with the black eyes is holding my head.

"Awright, you got me! I give up!" I said. "You got me, now make the most of it."

"Say, you gone nuts?" Bambo barks at me, with disgust. "What's eatin' you, anyway? Snap out of it, I want you t' meet my brother!"

"Your *who*?" I yelps. "You don't mean to tell me this guy is your brother?"

"Sure, he came up to see me fight. All these guys, they my people. We come from the Balkans together, so they come to see me fight. They are steel workers over in Pittsburgh."

I am still laughing when we drop in at the Green Fan for some midnight lunch, and it isn't until we are all set down that I remember it is one of Sloppy Dilbecker's places. Just when I am not laughing any more from thinking of that, who should come up but Swivel-Neck Hogan. Only he is different now, and he walks plenty careful, and edges up to my table like he is scared to death.

"Mr. McGuire?" he says.

"Well, what is it?" I bark at him. I don't know why he should be scared, but bluff is always best. And i he is scared, he must be scared of something, and if a gun guy like Swivel-Neck is calling me mister, he must be scared of me, so I act real tough.

"Sloppy—I mean Diamond-Back—said to tell youse he was just ribbing this afternoon. He ain't wantin' no trouble, and how would youse like to cut in on the laundry protection racket with him? He says youse got a nice bunch of gun guys, but there is room enough for all of youse."

For a minute I stare at him like he's nuts, and then it dawns on me. I look around at those big, hard-boiled steel workers, and then I look at Swivel-Neck.

"Nothing doing, you bum. Go back an' tell Sloppy I ain't wanting none of his rackets. I got bigger an' better ones of my own. But just tell him to lay off me, see? And that goes for you, too! One wrong crack an' I'll have your feet burned off to the knees, get me?"

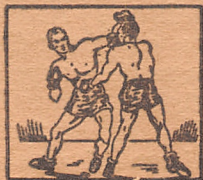
He starts away, but suddenly I get an inspiration. Nothing like pushing your luck when the game is going your way.

"Hey!" I yells. "You tell Sloppy Dilbecker that my boys say they want the treats on the house t'night, an' tell him to break out the best champagne and cigars he's got, or else! Understand?"

I lean back in my chair and slip my thumbs into the armholes of my vest. I wink at Bambo Bamoulion, and grin.

"All it takes is brains, my boy, brains."

"Yeah? How did you find out?" he says, grinning.





# Age Takes a Holiday

*By William J. McNulty*

*Grandfather Time sneaks in among the youngsters in the top rungs of the sports world.*

**Y**OUTH, it is said, will have its way. But even in sports, where strength and vigor are essential, many old-timers will have their fling. Here are a few who are danged near, if not right on top of the sports ladder.

In the strenuous game of hockey, Larry Aurie, crack rifleman of the Detroit Red Wings, admits to 37, so we can safely add a few years, knowing the penchant for athletes in cutting under their real ages . . . . Marty Barry, center of the top-scoring line of Barry to Lewis to Aurie and vice versa, is flirting with the fourth decade . . . . Sylvio Mantha, comebacking with the Boston Bruins in 1937, is 40 . . . . Auriel Joliat, mid-

get star of the Montreal Canadiens for 16 years, can be marked as 40, and the 1936-37 season was one of his best in the past decade . . . . Al (Battle-ship) Leduc, for many years a formidable defenceman in the lineup of the Montreal Canadiens, and for the past two seasons playing coach of the Rhode Island Reds, of Providence, is 40.

Eddie Shore, dynamic defenceman of the Boston Bruins, and highest paid hockey player, is 40. . . . Bill

Cook, defenceman, New York Rangers, is 40, and his brother, Bun Cook, utility man, Boston Bruins is 38. . . . Ching Johnson, defenceman, Rangers is 45. . . . Lionel Conacher, defenceman, Montreal Maroons, is 40.

Hopping over to baseball, Frankie Frisch, pilot, St. Louis Cards, is 45. . . . Bill Terry, pilot, New York Giants, is 42. . . . Frank McGowan,

outfielder, Boston Bees, is 40. . . . Al Lopez, catcher, Bees, is 40. . . . Harry Kelley, Philadelphia Athletics pitching personnel, is 39. . . . Guy Bush, Bee hurling battery, is 42. . . . Lefty Mose Grove, altitudinous southie, Boston Red Sox is 39. . . . Bing Miller, utility player, Red Sox, is 44. . . . Tommy Thevenow, utility

infielder, Giants, is 40. . . . Ossie Bluege, utility infielder, Washington Senators, is 42. . . . Ben Chapman, outfielder, Senators, is 40. . . . Babe Herman, outfielder, Cincinnati Reds, is 40. . . . Frank Shanty Hogan, catcher, Senators, is 38. . . . Smead Jolley, former major league outfielder with the White Sox and Red Sox, and batting and home run champ of the International circuit for 1936, with Albany, is 40, and out on his feet à la Herman and Hogan.





*They called Clarence Tillingworth yellow because he tried to use brains and sportsmanship on the ice. "Tillie" found himself fighting not only his opponents, but his own teammates. And he had to fight—to prove that there were two sides to his hide—that he was a . . . .*

# Double-Backed Puckster



*By Ralph Powers*

**B**EEF MULLIGAN was sore again. This time because a low down, good-for-nothing so-and-so had swiped a spool of adhesive out of his locker. So, since the rest of the Blue Demons, their tempers already ragged from a five-game losing streak, only returned him dirty looks for his squawks, Beef heaved his twenty pounds of brawn and anger straight into the private office of Old Man Craig.

"F'r a kid's shinny stick," he stormed, banging the door behind

him, "I'd chuck my skates outa this outfit! A bunch of cheap crooks an' chiselers! Oney a dope would chase a puck f'r a livin', anyway!"

The Blue Demons' big boss lowered one grizzled eyelid at the young stranger seated across from him.

"That loud sound wrapped up in flesh," he said, "is Beef Mulligan. Beef, shake hands with our new wing, Clarence Tillingworth."

Beef shoved out a huge paw that engulfed the young man's slimmer one.



"Meecha!" he growled. "Hey—where'd ya get that monicker? Clarence Tillingworth! Didn't y'r mom an' pop love ya?"

The kid smiled easily.

"What's in a name?" he asked. "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

"Huh? Whazzat!"

"Shakespeare," explained the newcomer. "Anyway, it's not my fault my name's Clarence. The boys on the Redskins called me Tillie."

"Redskins?" grunted Beef. "Never heard of them. What circuit do they play in?"

"No circuit, exactly. It's a college team. In New England."

Mulligan snorted contemptuously. One of the old school of hockey men, he was perfectly willing to admit that a college man could, and frequently did, become a star in the major circuits—but not until after the green-horn had spent a few seasons in the loops north of Lake Erie.

"You wanta watch out, kid," he growled, "ya don't git yer head knocked off. This game's a little rougher than in the rah-rah boy schedule."

"'Cowards die many times before their death,'" replied the youngster grinning. "'The valiant only taste of death but once.' I think I can take it, Mulligan."

"We'll see," conceded Beef grudgingly. He drew one foot across the rough flooring, creating an imaginary line between himself and the newcomer. "F'rinstance, if this here's the cage line, an' the cage is supposed to be the desk there—ya're shootin' fer an angle shot an' the goalie's crowdin' you to shoot the puck foul. What would you do if he—"

**B**EEF'S HUGE BULK suddenly retreated back from the imaginary line, fading as though he, in the goalie's position, were fading to protect the cage. The kid moved in swiftly, but just as Beef's vicious body check plunged crashingly toward him,

he side-wheeled, thrust with his hands and skipped lightly to the right. Beef landed sprawling against the hard desk.

"If I'd a stick in my hands," commented the youngster calmly, "you would have smashed into the boards that time. You realize that?"

A reluctant grin appeared on Beef Mulligan's heavy face.

"Not so bad—Tillie," he conceded. "How'd ya know what I was goin' to do?"

"I didn't. But I knew that no smart goalie would fade away from a sharp-angled shot like that—so I was on my guard. 'Beware the Greeks bearing gifts,' you know!"

"The who bearin' what? Oh—I git it! Another pome, huh? Well, Mr. Craig, when are ya figurin' on puttin' this guy to work?"

"Soon. Probably in the next game. Take him out and introduce him to the rest of the boys, will you, Beef?"

Mulligan hooked his brawny arm through the newcomer's slimmer one.

"Sure. C'mon, Tillie. Lemme show these mugs what a real pome-slingin' wing looks like!"

With sturdy Beef Mulligan to champion him, Tillie Tillingworth found a ready welcome with the Blue Demons.

"You're signed up with a good club, kid," Blades Weston informed him, "but a tough luck one. I suppose you know that the Old Man signed you because our two regular wings are on the sidelines; Slick Enslow for at least two more weeks and Bob Brill for maybe the rest of the season. Little-Bit Moore got slammed out of his caging duties in the last game against the Condors. As a matter of fact, we've got practically a new team built around the regular guards, Beef and me. And we can't pull the team through unless you other fellows get us some points."

Tillie nodded thoughtfully. "I know the style of play up here is a lot different from that in the hick team I've



been playing with," he said. "But I'll be in there plugging!"

"That's the old fight!" approved Blades. "Now, come on—let's grab us some chow! We might have lost our last five games, but we didn't lose our appetites. Coming?"

"A jug of wine, a loaf of bread and thou," grinned Tillie, "'seated beside me in the wilderness; ah, wilderness were paradise enow!'"

"Hey?" said the puzzled Blades. "We don't drink during regular season, Tillie. If you expect to—"

"Don't mind him," interrupted Beef. "That's just a part of a pome. He alluz talks like that."

"A poem?" Blades eyed the new player quizzically.

"Well—I don't know. Anyhow—let's go!"

**D**OWN ON one knee, giving a final tug to the laces of his shoes, the young college puckster felt a chill run through him that was no part of the slow, seeping coldness that emanated from the ice beneath him.

Though all about the boxed enclosure in which he knelt was a sea of eager faces, Tillie, for the first time in his life, felt horribly alone—and a little bit afraid. This crowd that thronged the arena was not like the cheerful, friendly crowd of students that used to watch the college games in which he had played. This was a blood-hungry mob. You could sense it in the hectic tone of their chatter; feel it in the way they leaned forward expectantly, hopefully, as the players warmed up in pre-game practice. Tillie shivered slightly and straightened up.

Beef Mulligan, a behemoth on steel blades, slid over beside him.

"Nervous, kid?"

"A little," confessed Tillie. "It'll wear off, I reckon."

"Yup!" nodded Beef. "First game I ever played in the league, they had-da stop the game twicet, thinkin' the ice was crackin'. Oney it was jest my

knees bangin' together. You'll be aw-right soon as the game gits goin'."

Tillie flashed Beef a swift grin, and moved forward to join in the practice. Blades Weston, dribbling the puck down the boards, cut in and clopped the rubber toward his stick. Tillie picked it up deftly, swung out to evade a hard-charging forward and skittered the disc cleanly back to Blades. The guard wheeled, shot it back at him unexpectedly. Tillie's frantic swipe missed the puck by a foot. Somewhere in the arena a critical onlooker hooted raucously.

"Whoops, Cla-arence! Watch yer-self, dearie!"

A dull red flooded Tillie's face. So that was the way it was going to be, eh? Because his name happened to be Clarence, the smart-alecks were expecting to make things hot for him.

A whistle, shrilling, interrupted his thoughts. Unconsciously he wheeled and sped in toward the boards to the spot where Old Man Craig, surrounded by his staff, sat with arms propped over the barrier. Even as he paused there, the deep flush on his face darkened. A careless chorus of laughter drifted out of the crowd to his burning ears, and once more that falsetto voice flung a taunt at him.

"No use asking the coach for help, Cla-arence! You're not in college now!"

Battling to restrain his mounting anger, Tillie skated into his left wing position. His opponent, Jack Leftwick of the Angels, grinned at him mockingly.

"Don't let 'em needle ya, Clarence! We was all amatchoors once!"

"Tillie to you!" grunted the wing. He gripped his stick tightly as the tap-off came, and Joie Boyd shot the rubber straight down the ice to his position. Tense muscles relaxed into smooth-flowing freedom as he swung in, picked it up in the heel of his stick and whisked it swiftly across the ice to his running mate, Jibby Holmes.



Jibby, threatened by a box-guard, unloaded the rubber like a hot potato, clipping it outside the cage by more than two feet. Studs Brayden saved for the Angels, slipping the disc into motion with a clean pass to Leftwick. And then, with the visitors on the offense for the first time, Tillie began to see the difference between amateur and pro hockey.

**B**ANKING on the early attempt to create a surprise, the Angel sextet slipped through a bit of dazzling hipper-dipper near their own cage, then swung into a daring five-man offensive. Tillie, accustomed to the slower, more orthodox game of the college ice, felt a surge of confusion as the flashing quintet on steel swept around and past him to penetrate deep into the Demons' second line. As he spun, vainly trying to re-enter the play, a shoulder glanced him brusquely. Two crimson jerseys merged before his line of vision, cutting him off from the blue line.

He cut out desperately—then a crimson thunderbolt descended on him ponderously, and even as he flailed to maintain his balance, the rasping ice-powder grated against his cheek. He sprawled helplessly on the smooth ice as a loud scream of delight rose from the stands! De Brie's knee-high poke had eluded Tiny Cooke's glove for the first score of the game!

As Tillie struggled to regain his feet, Jibby Holmes skated over to him, his face dark with anger.

"What's the idea, Tillingworth? You tryin' to give this game away?"

"Hold it, Jibby! Give the kid a chanst to get his fightin' legs on!" Beef Mulligan interposed his bulk between the irate wing and the new player. "An' you, Tillie—don't never let nobody suck you outa the play like they done that time! When they're usin' a three-man offense, you play up front. But when they start that five man stuff, you fade fast, see?"

"Okay. Thanks, Beef," nodded Tillie gratefully.

He skated back to his position, the jeers of the crowd loud in his ears. The mob, quick to see a slip in strategy, was riding the new player for all it was worth, and the catcalls sent a sickening sense of failure through Tillie. This was a different game from college hockey! Plenty different!

Again the face-off—but this time Joie Boyd got the puck away to Jibby Holmes, who, scorning to trust his green wingmate, nestled the rubber against his blade and took it straight down the middle alley.

Tillie strung along, and was scant inches from the opponent's cage when Jibby's try shot in, straight and hard, to Studs Brayden. The veteran Angel cageman whisked it from the ice in a loping drive to a crimson-clad second line defense man who wheeled and streaked for the center ice. Or tried to! For just as he cuddled the puck toward the blue line, Blades Weston shot a jarring body check into him, and the disc shot from his blade into the waiting wood of dependable Beef Mulligan.

Leftwick closed fast for the Angels, but Mulligan's shift to Tillie was clean. And no goalie on the ice could have handled the young wing's smashing drive to the cage. And for the second time, a flush—but this time one of pleasure—came to Tillie's cheeks as the crowd that had a moment before jeered him, rose and screeched excitedly!

"Tell ya what," offered Beef Mulligan between the first and second periods, "us Blue Demons is goin' places now f'r sure. An' why? Because we got with us a wing that can shoot a puck straight—at last!"

Tillie said nothing. But within him there was a pardonable pride. For after that first-minute misplay that had allowed the Angels to make the initial score, he had played an errorless game. And twice more his drives had registered points for the Demons—so that now the score stood at 3-1 for the home club. But if Beef Mulligan was exultant, his feelings were



not completely shared by some members of the club.

"This game ain't over yet," said Joie Boyd gloomily. "You, Tillingworth—something tells me there's goin' to be fireworks settled around you next period. Them Angels ain't goin' to let you get through a whole game without seein' what you're made of."

"Come weal, come woe, this rock shall fly from its firm base as soon as I!" grinned Tillie.

"Then hold your breath, Mr. Rock," frowned the center, "because there's goin' to be some wealin' and woin' around your position soon!"

Nor had many minutes of the second period passed before Tillie learned that Joie's prognostication was a sound one.

FROM THE MOMENT he took the ice, he discovered that he was being boxed. In every play Tillie found himself being ridden out by a brace of lofty-riding crimson-clads. Twice within the space of as many minutes he went flying over the cold shavings, once as the result of a trip that drew a foul from the ref, and again from a vicious body check that shot him into the boards.

It was Beef Mulligan who helped him to his feet after this second fall.

"There's gonna be trouble here in a minute, kid," he said darkly, "if they don't stop ridin' ya. Y'all right?"

"All's right with the world," grinned Tillie, gingerly caressing a scraped elbow. "Let's get going."

The Angel left wing had drawn a two-minute rest for the unnecessarily violent check, and now, with the Blue Demons in possession of the puck, Tillie signified his intention of riding the rubber home by lifting it on a cross-pass from Blades Weston. Weston and Mulligan fell in behind him as he spearheaded another attack.

Like a blue-jerseyed flash of fire he whirled down on the Angels' goalie, cuddling the disc close to the blade of his stick. Studs Brayden loomed before him like a crimson colossus as he

shot the puck chest-high toward the cage. It plunked against the goalie's leather, slid aimlessly toward the end-line. In a flash, Tillie recaptured it and whizzed it between the goalie's shifted legs. A roar of chagrin and wrath rose from Brayden. In an instant, the animal fight always so close to the surface among certain types of players mastered him, and he flung himself at the young wing, stick high.

Tillie, bewildered, fell back before Brayden's onslaught, and as the ref's whistle called the puck back to center ice, he was gliding smoothly to his regular post. And a curiously frustrated howl rose from the stands as he took his place under the thoughtful gaze of his teammates.

Behind him, Beef Mulligan's rumble reached the wing's ears.

"Y'r in f'r it now, kid! Why didn't ya stand up to the big stiff?"

"Stand up to him? What for? He just lost his head. He'll forget in a minute."

"Not Brayden. Nor the Angels, neither!" mumbled the left defense. "An' maybe not the crowd!"

Tillie shook his head impatiently. What was all the fuss about? In college play, you acted like a gentleman if an opposing player got sore and lost his head. Or his coach yanked him out of the game and gave him a good bawling out for showing such poor sportsmanship.

THE TRIPLE CLACK of the wood brought him to his senses, and he went streaking off to the right as Jibby Holmes nursed the puck down the center to the Angels' territory. Once more the scoring fever was upon him, and he clipped a sharp, "Hi!" to Jibby as the left wing and defense trapped the right wingman. Jibby's poke carried straight to him. He skated in to meet it, and—

Wham! An elbow shot jarringly into his side, and a stick jolted along his left thigh. He staggered, slipped, and threw his arms forward to pro-



tect himself. As he did so, Leftwick moved in swiftly and rode into his stick! The two players went down in a bruising tangle of arms and legs as the ref whistled imperiously.

"Leftwick and Tillingworth! Off for two! Double foul!"

"Wait a minute, ref!" stormed Tillie. "I didn't foul him! He rode into my stick. L—"

"Off for two!" repeated the ref coldly, eyeing his timepiece.

Tillie opened his mouth, closed it again, and skated to the sidelines. Leftwick, his mouth gaping in a belligerent grin, had already clambered into the penalty chamber and leered at him as he came over the boards. The crowd was taking it up now, sensing drama soon to be enacted.

Leftwick wasted no time.

"This is as good a place as any," he snarled, "to teach you where you get off. Now, Clarence—"

He jerked off a mitten, and with his calloused palm cuffed the young wing across the cheek. The sudden shock of it, the unexpectedness of the attack, staggered Tillie. He fell backward as the opposing wingman flung another smashing forehand blow to his unprotected cheek. Then instinctively he clutched at the other man's arm.

"Hey, wait a minute, Leftwick. What are you doing? I didn't—"

"You done plenty!" rasped the bellicose Angel. "If you think you c'n rough me—"

In a flash, Tillie got it! If Leftwick could provoke him into a fight there in the penalty box, the ref would toss both men out of the game for the remaining time. And the Angels had plenty of reserves, whereas the Blue Demons—

"Hold it, sorehead!" Tillie rasped crisply. "I'm not doing any fighting in the box. Now, cut it out, or you'll be in more of a mess—"

"Oh, I'm a sorehead, am I?" howled Leftwick. He crowded the younger man to the rail; slapped him brutally

across the face again. "Well, I'll show you—"

Tillie half raised his arm, dropped it again. This wasn't sporting. He ought to take this guy apart, but he couldn't afford to do it. He'd have to—

The referee skated over to the penalty box, his face stern.

"Out of the box, Leftwick," he ordered, "and out of the game!"

A slow trickle of blood ran crazily down the corner of Tillie's mouth where Leftwick's coarse sleeve had cut him. Leftwick laughed coarsely.

"Clarence toodle-oo!" he said mockingly. "I hope I'll see you again some time."

Tillie bit his lip and looked at the referee. The arbiter stared back at him coldly.

"Time's up, Tillingworth," he said briefly. "Get in there—and keep it clean!"

"Who—that sissy?" sneered the banished Angel wing. "He's too scared to do anything else!"

**T**ILLIE climbed back into the rink. A chorus of jeers greeted him from the sidelines, and an Angel partisan taunted him loudly so that all might hear and laugh.

Doggedly, Tillie took his position as the teams readied for the face-off. Jibby Holmes, across the ice, refused to meet his stare. There was a frown on the brow of Blades Weston, and the set of Joie Boyd's shoulders was disapproving. Only on Beef Mulligan's face was there any friendly sign—and there was a shadow of doubt in the eyes of the bulky defense man. Hot anger surged into Tillie's taut frame. What did they expect?

Then suddenly the puck was flying at him, and his stick was cradling it down the ice. Greb Hawkins was coming at him head on, and Tillie eased up to slip by him. The Angels' defense man clipped in swiftly, stick held high as for a cross check!

Tillie's fists tightened on the stick. Hawkins wouldn't dare do that. He'd



turn out! He'd drop that stick to the ice.

But he didn't! As the wing flashed down, Hawkins came directly at him, his crimson jersey like a red flag of danger. And just as it seemed that the two men would crash in mid-ice, Tillie cut out! And the puck, skidding from his blade, was picked up by an Angel.

And then, as a maddened crowd howled deliriously and the puck shot from the Angels' wing's blade straight to the heart of the cage, a replacement came flying from the Demons' box onto the ice, and a metallic voice announced:

"Substitution! Bergen for Tillingworth!"

Tillie's heart sank. And as he skated slowly to the sidelines, he turned hopefully toward Beef Mulligan. But the big defense man, his lips pursed, refused to meet his glance. . . .

Old Man Craig pressed the tips of his fingers together thoughtfully, and studied the two men before him.

"Well, Weston?" he said finally.

Blades Weston shook his head.

"We won last night's game," he said, "so I ain't complaining—too much. It was Tillingworth's smart wing work that got us the three points, an' then Beef an' me held off the Angels. But as for the rest of it—"

"And you, Beef? What do you think?"

"I don't know what to think, boss," said Mulligan miserably. "I liked the kid from the minute he knocked me off'n my pins, here in this office. But the way he acted last night—" He hesitated. "Maybe the crowd is got him sized up right. Maybe he is yella. If that hadda been me or Blades in the box with Leftwick, we woulda knocked the guy's block off. But Tillie—"

"Another thing," said Blades gloomily, "he spouts a bunch of poetry—an' everybody knows that that's sissy stuff. I'm afraid, chief,

we've got a wing that's good on offence—but he can't take it!"

The Old Man nodded slowly. "And we all know what that means," he said.

"Sure. Every team in the league will make it a point to ride him right outa the game in the first few minutes. And we'll be right back where we started from. A good defense team, with no dependable wings."

"Well, it's tough," grumbled Old Man Craig. "But we've got to use him until we can scout up another man to take his place. What did you say, Mulligan?"

"Nothin', boss. I was jest thinkin' to myself. You know, that there Tillie is a smart kid. There might be some-thin' goin' on we don't know about."

"I hope you're right," sighed the chief, "but I'm afraid that you're letting your liking of the boy affect your judgment. Still—we'll learn tomorrow night when we mix with the Eagles. And that will have to be his last chance to make good. For we can't afford to take chances this late in the season, with a possible championship at stake. The Blue Demons can't use a player who is yellow!"

"SO THAT'S the way it is, kid," said Beef gruffly. "I'm givin' it to you straight because that's the one way I know how to tell it."

Tillie Tillingworth's jaw tightened. So they all thought he was yellow? Just because he had been too smart to let Leftwick and the rest of the Angels ride him into a fight, he was marked as a sissy.

"Listen, Beef," he began hotly; then he stopped. How could he explain to huge Beef Mulligan, roughest customer on the pro ice, that his refusal to mix it with the Angel wing had not been based on fear? In Beef's simple code—and in that of the other Demons—there was only one thing to do when a man slugged you. That was to slug him back—and harder than the other guy.

"Yeah, kid?"



"Nothing. I was just thinking there are times in a man's life when it takes more real guts to be yellow than to be brave. Maybe that sounds hokum to you—but it's so."

Beef's brow knitted. "It don't work out, kid. It can't never take guts to be yella. Ya gotta stand up for yerself in this world. Oney the—the poets, an' sissy guys like that, run away from trouble."

"It takes guts to go to war," doesn't it, Beef?" asked Tillie. "Especially when you don't have to?"

"It sure does!"

"Once, not so long ago," said the young wingman, "there was a member of the titled nobility in England who was a cripple—he'd been born with a clubfoot. Because he was handsome and titled and brilliant, many lovely women hovered around him constantly."

"But he wasn't satisfied with that. He knew of the sad state into which the once glorious nation of Greece had fallen. How it was being oppressed—robbed, plundered, exploited. So in spite of his clubfoot and the pleas of his friends, he left England and journeyed to far-off Greece to aid in the war for Greek independence."

"Greece won that war—and won back its independence. But that titled man, who'd left a life of ease to fight for a principle, lost something that every man tries to cling to. He lost—his life! Is that sissy stuff, Beef?"

"Hell, no!" said Beef. "That took plenty of guts. Who was the guy?"

"His name," said Tillie, "was Lord Byron. He was a poet, Beef."

Beef nodded understandingly. . . .

The Eagles had heard the dope! Tillie Tillingworth, tensely waiting for the face-off, knew that as surely as if every one of the invaders had come to the Blue Demons' arena wearing a placard that said: "Get Tillingworth!" Even had they not been tipped off by the vengeful Angels, they would have gotten wise within the space of minutes after

skating onto the home club's ice. For a crowd of fans, spotting Tillie, had singled him out for that ridicule and razzing that only a hockey-hungry mob knows how to dispense.

Tillie gritted his teeth, and cast a sidelong glance at the players' bench, mentally cataloguing the possible—or impossible—replacements, should the Eagles gang up on him. As undoubtedly they would. Enslow, Brill, both injured. Bergen and Wade—nice guys, but not finished material. It was up to him to stay in the game. And the Eagles would probably make it tough.

"Montreal" Cassidy, rangy Eagles' face-off man, took the puck, slipped it lightning-fast to the Birds' left wing, Bluenose Duvernois.

**J**IBBY HOLMES closed on the wingman fast; his poke-check failing by inches, but Blades Weston stopped the Frenchman short of the blue line, and the puck skittered into free territory near mid-rink.

Tillie and his opposing man, Ray Carper, made a bid for the rubber at the same moment, and it was the Demons' wingman who collected it, shot it immediately to his running mate far down the ice. Tillie had just one glimpse of Jibby gathering in the disc—then Carper rocked into him a flying smash that sent both men to the ice.

No foul. Tillie picked himself up quickly, skated after Holmes, who had crossed the blue line with the puck neatly sliding before his blade. Stubby Howell threw a body check into the Demons' wing that worked, and Hank Ambler's long retrieve caught Jibby offside.

The face-off, the pass—and this time it was Ray Carper who attempted to dash with the puck into Demon territory. Tillie poke-checked the puck from the wingman's stick and began a dash down the side that swept him within shooting range of the Eagles' cage. The goalie, scowling fiercely, swelled his big body across the nar-



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row cage as Tillie shot a drive straight to one gloved paw. The free puck popped into the open, and this time as Tillie dashed for it, it was little Stubby Howell who slammed a vicious body check into the slender wing.

For those in the packed stands that first period passed all too swiftly, with the Eagles and Blue Demons engaging in one of the prize ding-dong battles of the year. But to Tillie, whose every attempt to tote the rubber was met with stubborn, bruising resistance, it was a slow, dragging period. Time after time his forays into enemy territory ended with him on the ice. And when the Eagles had the puck, there was always a shoulder rising against him, an unexpected knee, a stick jabbing at his midriff.

When, near the end of the period, the front line was dragged out for an extra-long breather, Tillie's arms and body were bruised and beaten, and his only thought was to drag himself to the bench and flop there.

It was there that Beef Mulligan found him when the defense skated off the ice, at the end of the period, to approach the junior wingman with an expression of deep contempt on his face.

The ref had gone off the ice, and the crowd settled into the humming buzz. And in that muffled hush, Beef's voice, deep and rumbling, carried clearly through the walled arena.

"You, Clarence! Git your yella carcass off'n the bench an' let a man sit down!"

Stunned, Tillie drew himself up and looked at his teammate. Why—why this was incredible! Beef was his friend, had been his friend since he joined up with the team. A public assault like this—

"Beef," he stammered. "Beef—I—"

"You heard me, didn't ya?" snarled the hefty defense man. "C'mon—let the guys that done the work get some rest. You been lyin' on the ice all



period. You oughtn't to be tired, ya sissy!"

The crowd, captured by this bit of inside drama, let loose a chorus of mocking laughter. Mingled shame and wrath burned hot inside of Tillie. His fists clenched.

"Beef, stop it!" he ordered. "I'll—"

"You'll what?" spat the older man contemptuously. "Why, you yellow-bellied rah-rah boy, you ain't got the guts to resent anything! Not even—this!"

**W**ITH A JERK, he removed the heavy glove from his hand, slapped it across the younger man's face! Tillie fell back, shocked; then, with a roar of rage, he leaped forward. His overhand missed Mulligan as the two came together with a rocking crash. Old Man Craig, puffing and wild, separated the two as they flailed wildly at each other.

"Tillingworth! Mulligan! Stop it, both of you, or you're out of the game for good! Break, I tell you!"

Reluctantly, Tillie moved back, his eyes flaming anger. The heavier man grinned mockingly.

"Show-off stuff!" he sneered. "Ya knew somebody would save ya from a lickin'! Well—it'll wait till the game's over! An' it's the last game you'll play on this team—sweetheart!"

Forcibly, Craig dismissed the defense man to the dressing room. Tillie sank glowering to the bench again. So that was the way it was, eh? Beef Mulligan had merely played up to him, pretended friendship and encouragement as long as there was a chance for him to remain with the team. But now that he was washed up, with the Old Man probably expecting a new replacement for his position, Beef was showing his true colors.

The uproar of the crowd added fresh fuel to his indignation. Armed with fresh taunts, they were flinging the gibes of Mulligan at him in wholesale lots. And when play was resumed

(Continued on page 109)

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(Continued from page 107)

in the second period, he was the first of the team to leap over the boards into the ring. If this was his last game, he'd make it one these swelled-headed pros would remember! There was still time to leave his mark on a few of those players who had slapped him all over the lot earlier in the game.

Revenge game! And he started on that revenge plan from the opening face-off when, collecting the puck from Joie Boyd's tap, he flamed his way down through the surprised Eagles to blaze a scorcher right past the goalie's mitts for the first score of the night.

But even as he skated back to his position, still hot with anger, Beef Mulligan was at his elbow.

"Luck!" sniffed the defense. "They'll be after your scalp worse'n ever, poet!"

And they were! Roy Carper, taking the puck from Montreal Cassidy, bore down on Tillie at the very next face-off, trying to ride him out of the way. But Tillie, itching now for trouble, didn't give an inch. His body was like a stone wall as the two men crashed together, and it was Carper who crashed to the ice, stick clattering, as the puck danced crazily to the boards. And now the ref ordered a raging Tillie to the penalty box where for two minutes he screamed threats to his own and the opposing team equally.

Again he was on the ice, and this time it was Duvernois who felt the crush of his attack as the Frenchman met him in center ice on a brisk foray for a free puck. Tillie's wrath, already boiling, hit a new high when a cock-eyed ref judged him out of the game again for unnecessary roughness—and promptly made up for it when his period was lifted by jamming the puck through Gray after a breakneck race down the ice that ended with himself, the puck, and the Eagles' goalie all tangled up in the meshes of the cage!

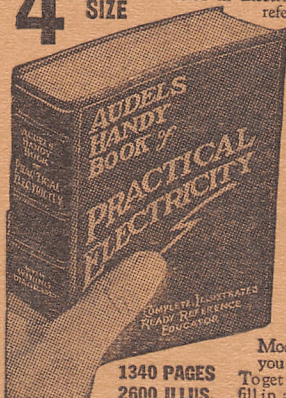
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**T**HE END of the second period found the Demons leading by four points—and offered the fans the unusual spectacle of a rookie wing making a pass at veteran Blades Weston for seemingly no reason at all. Only Tillie and Blades knew that, as the two sought the bench, Weston had murmured under his breath:

"Don't pay no attention to Beef, kid! He don't understand that us poets has sensitive souls!"

In the final round, the desperate Eagles jammed five front-line men into the game in an effort to keep the puck in their opponents' territory—but not before Tillie had evened his score with Stubby Howell by slamming that defense man into the boards with a check that slapped the breath clean out of the Bird's body!

And then, against the weakened defense of the visiting team, the poem-quoting puckster went crazy—slamming, fighting, whirling his way down the ice time after time to keep that frantic five-man attack away from the Blue Demon cage, and twice to whack blazing pointers into the wicket behind Gray!

With minutes left to play, Tillie got one more shot at his enemies—and it was during that brief time that justification came! For, as he took a pass from Jibby Holmes to jam his way over the Eagles' blue line, he crashed recklessly down upon stubborn Montreal Cassidy—and Cassidy gave way before him.

And just as Jack Gray stumbled to his knees in a wild miss at the shot that made the final score 7-0, the game ended, and bedlam broke loose in the arena! The fans, who earlier in the game had been screaming taunts at the new wing, were now calling on high heaven to witness that here, at last, was a forward star.

That was that. There was one thing, though, that the fans didn't see—and that only the exultant Demons saw in their dressing room after the game. For it was there that Tillie



Tillingworth, still bristling with ire, accosted big Beef Mulligan for a showdown.

"I took it from you out there, guy!" he stormed. "Now you're going to take it from me! Put 'em up, and we'll settle this right now!"

But Beef Mulligan only grinned.

"Some day, kid," he said, "you're gonna learn that us dumb guys ain't altogether dumb. You don't think I really meant them things I said out there, do ya?"

"Wha—what's that?" demanded Tillie, his anger beginning to seep away.

"Sure it was a gag, kid. We knew you was too much of a gentleman to play a hard game—the way hockey has to be played in the pro circuits—until you got really sore. An' since you wouldn't get sore at the Eagles, why, I jest got you sore at us! An' it panned out!"

Slow comprehension dawned in Tillie Tillingworth's mind. He hesitated; then stuck out a hand.

"You win, Beef!" he said. "From now on the poetry stuff is out! They'll never get another chance to think that a member of the Demons is yellow!"

"Not too hasty, kid!" warned the smiling Mulligan. "You've learned how to scrap, awright—but don't let it get ya top heavy. There's still one pome that good hockey players hafta remember!"

"Yes?" said Tillie.

"The guy who fights," said Beef, "'an' pulls his freight—will live to fight some other date! An' that's Shakespeare, kid!"



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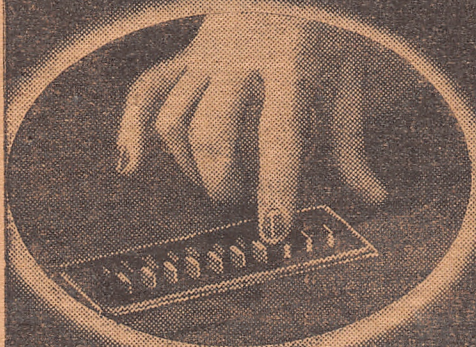


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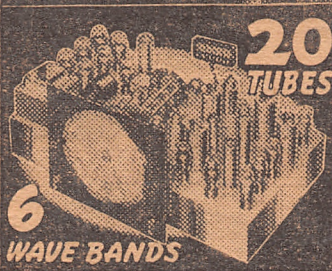
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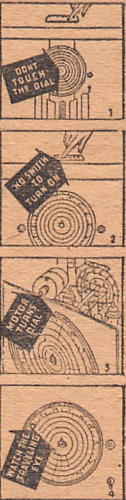
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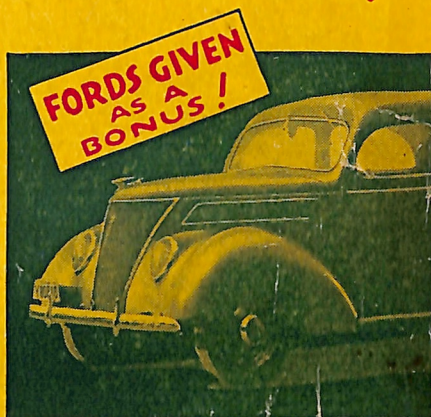
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