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TOUGH ROOKIE .................................................. Giles A. Lefk 6
"Keep those killer fists fastened around a bat or a baseball," was the diamond kid's warning for single-league-bound Eddie Morrison. "A hot hand will get you nowhere with the World's Champion Eagles, all that will count is how hot you are behind second base and at bat!"

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Sure, Lady Linda could win, even against the nation's fastest horses and the 40-to-1 odds — if Eddie kept the fifty out in front every inch of the distance to the finish line.

NO QUARTER ASKED (Tennis) ....................... Charlie Lewis 59
This was one tennis tournament! Eddie Graeme just had to win — though every ace and drive and smash he blasted past Joe Dade he knew was wrecking his friend's future happiness and success!

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It should have been a rookie's dream, becoming a member of the league-leading Titans' sensational double-play combo — but to Eddie Darrow it was a horsehide's has-been's nightmare!

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The greatest mound comeback in baseball history — a has-been hurler pitching two innings of an unimportant game!

FAST-BREAK FIEND (Basketball) .......... Bill Erin 68
The best basketball team in the country, was all Doc Cornoll had to produce or Spalding Col- league was hiring a new head coach.

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Dramatic short stories of your favorite sports heroes.

FIfty TOUCHDOWNS TO GO! (Football) ........ Ray Morrison 96
He looked like All-American material in practice but like a bum against real opposition, and Glen Eberly could win a regular berth on the team now only by getting them a Bowl bid single-handed.

GRUDGE FIGHT (Fight) ............................... David C. Cooke 102
A champion had to be a killer, they told Randy, not a boxer. He had to be big and have long arms, and carry atom bombs in both fists....

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Hitting safely every time would have sewed up a berth in the big leagues for the average busher — but Dote Williams it was going to send back to the bushes!

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Sports FAN FARE

FIVE-MAN ice hockey, to relieve congestion on the rink and produce an even faster game with more scoring, is the dream of Madison Square Garden's Tom Lockhart. It is a change which isn't too drastic when you consider that the sport originally was played with seven men and not too many years ago saw the reduction to six.

"Back in the old days of the seven man teams," Lockhart recalls, "there were no substitutes or spares. Only in case of severe injury was one of the seven men replaced, and then only with permission of the rival captain."

His support of the five-man game comes from seeing the results when one man is in the penalty box.

"They are two entirely different games," Lockhart insists. "When there are five men on the ice it produces a wide open battle with much faster action. It also makes a better game to watch."

"In addition, most of our rinks are too small to accommodate twelve players. The puck, smallest thing in the place, is lost among all those players, and the fans lose track of the action."

Another change is suggested by Frank Boucher, manager of the New York Rangers, who would eliminate the restricting blue lines and have only one line dividing the rink.

Originally there were no lines to separate attack and defense zones. The difficulty with such a setup was that a pass could be made the length of the ice to a waiting teammate who then took a fast shot at the goal.

The blue lines were installed in 1913-14 by Frank and Lester Patrick of the Rangers. Now an attacking player cannot cross from one zone to the other ahead of the puck.

"This tends to slow down the attack," Boucher holds. "And, along with the congestion on small rinks, there is no time or space to organize your attack."

If both of these changes were adopted—which is unlikely without a terrific selling job in Canada—it would produce a real "fastest game" with the accent on speed-skating. More spares also would be needed, because of the increased tempo, thus bringing more players into the big time. It is probably so sensible that nothing will be done about it.

The election of Levi Jackson to the captaincy of Yale's '49 football team in addition to being hailed as an act of forthright good will and understanding, was also hailed by most as without precedent in the staunch tradition-bound Ivy League. This comment went completely uncontested until Wilbur Wood, sports editor of The New York Sun, came up with the information that Harvard beat Yale to it by a matter of 56 years. In 1893, William Lewis, a Negro, both of whose parents were slaves, acted as the Crimson's game captain when they played Penn. A student at Harvard's Law School, Lewis had already played four years at Amherst. But in those days, since eligibility requirements were but a far off dream, everyone got into the game but professors. After finishing his schooling Lewis went ahead to become Assistant U. S. Attorney General.

Baseball is on the upsurge in England and J. F. Helliar of the Essex baseball club has announced that there will be two "major leagues" in Britain next season. Helliar declines to go on record with what would amount to sporting heresy, but indicates that the public needs something considerably less boring than cricket after the stormy winter soccer season.

Chances for a World Series, at least for a number of years, are remote. The British haven't been doing too well in competition with Americans. The Davis Cup in tennis; Curtis, Walker and Ryder cups in golf, and both the British men's and women's golf titles belong to Yanks—Frank Stranahan of Toledo and Louise Suggs of Lithia Springs, Georgia.

But in a couple of years it might be a grand place for an authorized post-season baseball tour by major-league stars.

Joe Devine, the Yankee scout, always gets a kick out of talking about the '27 Series between the Yanks and

(Please Turn To Page 33 For More Sports Fan Fare)
TOUGH ROOKIE

CHAPTER 1

EDDIE MORRISON felt pretty fine as he stepped out onto the sun-splashed turf of the Eagles' home-grounds. He kept his face carefully wooden, trying to assume the lazy, indifferent air of the regulars, and every move gave him away. He couldn't hold it any longer, and his breath rushed out in an explosive burst. He didn't care what anyone thought. He was up with the Eagles, last year's World Champions, and it was fine. It was like walking on clouds, it was like having your own lollipop tree.
The Eagles weren't in first place now, they

Eddie went into the dirt the last split second before the pitch!

WHEN A TWO-FISTED BUSHER BUCKS BIG-LEAGUE TRADITION—
The boss of the World's Champion Eagles was a hard, cold-eyed horse-hider who judged a rookie only by what he could do with a baseball. The new kid was a raw, fiery-tempered graduate of the rough-and-tumble sandlots who'd fought his way into the big leagues.

were stumbling and plowing around in the third slot, but they had two months ahead of them, and they'd get going. Eddie mentally ran over the lists of greats on this club. You couldn't hold a team like this down.

He'd only gotten here today, and he wasn't quite sure of himself. He thought he was a pretty fair second-baseman, but no busher just went out and took over—not with a team like this one.

A harsh voice made him jump. "You part of the scenery?" the voice demanded. "Get out there and go to work."

Eddie grinned painfully. He'd reported in to Del Winters, the manager of the Eagles, and he hadn't been able to tell whether Winters had been glad to see him or not.

Winters was a short man with big shoulders and the beginning of a bulge at the waist. His weather-beaten face had been chisled with harsh, decisive strokes, and his gray eyes shone coldly.

Eddie squirmed as those eyes bit into him. Winters was a hard and successful manager. He'd guided the Eagles to three pennants in the last five years, and two of those pennants had been converted into World Series titles.

"Move," Winters snapped.

Eddie ran out toward second. He didn't know where else to go. He was a shy, sentimental guy with an explosive temper. It was an odd combination, the two traits constantly warring with each other.

When Jules Young, manager of the Colts, had told him he was going up, he'd said, "You keep those fists under control, Eddie. Temper can be a giveaway. A lot of sharp eyes will be on you. And if they can get you

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going, "they'll run you crazy."

Eddie had fastened that advice in his mind. He was going to keep his hands open—except when they were fastened around a bat or ball. He had one friend here on this club, a friend that would keep him straight. He'd looked around for Mike Hayden in the locker-room, and he hadn't seen him. He guessed Hayden was a little late today. He grinned as he thought of Hayden's surprise at seeing him here. Hayden would be tickled, too. Yes, Eddie thought he was mighty lucky.

Huston was working at second-base, and he put expressionless eyes on Eddie. Huston had been the Eagles' second-baseman for so long no one could remember anyone else playing it. His age showed in the deep, weathered creases in his face, it showed in the slight, halting manner with which he moved. He looked old and brittle, he looked like a guy near the end of the trail. Eddie thought, he must hate my guts, and it made him uncomfortable.

Winters hit an easy hopper. Huston moved a step and gloved it. He flipped it over to first with a careless toss. His age didn't show then. It wouldn't. That grounder had been too simple.

Winters hit another one. He hit a screamer to Huston's left, and Huston took two steps, then waved at the ball. He grinned at Winters' scowl.

Winters' bawled, "You! Busher! You going to just stand there all day?"

EDDIE JUMPED. That last one had been meant for him. Huston glanced at him, a watchful alertness in his eyes. Eddie kept his eyes on the ball in Winters' hand, his reflexes as ready as a cat's. He was tall and lean with a head of unruly, black hair, and a pair of happy, humorous eyes. He had long legs and long arms with big hands and feet set on the ends of them. He weighed more than he looked. The weight was concentrated in his chest and shoulders.

Winters laced into the ball. He made it smoke, he didn't give Eddie the smallest kind of a break. It came like blazes ten feet off to his right, and Eddie was moving with the first sound of it being hit. He was bending over to make his scoop, and he forgot all about the bag. A toe caught the corner of it, and he went over on his face. It was a dilly of a fall, it had all the elements of good, high comedy in it. His cap flew off, and he plowed a furrow with his nose. And the ball spun merrily off into the outfield.

That fall jarred Eddie's eye-teeth. He shook his head, trying to gather his scattered senses, and he heard the raucous laughter.

Fleming, the shortstop, was a little guy, and he was doubled over as though he had convulsions. He was the closest one to Eddie, and Eddie's anger and humiliation shoved aside the shyness. The Temper was exploding, and he couldn't help it. He ran over and grabbed the little guy by the shoulders. He lifted him off the ground, and in his rage, he shook him like a rag doll.

"What the devil are you laughing at?" he roared.

He might've shaken the little guy's head off, if he'd been given time. But the Eagles raced to the spot from all over the field. They tore Fleming from Eddie's grasp, and they pushed Eddie around. He was surrounded by big, brawny guys with blazing eyes, but his anger was still a runaway thing, and he was ready to take them all on.

"A tough busher," Braun said. "A very tough busher. Try one of us on for size."

Eddie started to plug up that mouth with a hard fist, but Winters bullied through the ring and stopped it. He was very, very mad, and he still carried the fungo bat. "Break it up," he roared. "Break it up. Or I'll bust a few skulls."

They left Eddie with reluctant steps and sullen faces. He guessed he must've manhandled a popular guy. His anger was gone like the air from a punctured tire, and he was miserable. He'd wanted to hit it off with
these guys, he wanted them to like him.

HE OPENED HIS mouth to apologize to Fleming, and Winters was all over him like a big, black thunder-cloud. "Do you always alibi when you boot one?" he roared. He took a deep breath and said in a calmer tone, one that only covered four counties, "Let's have some work."

He kept pounding them at Eddie, Eddie got twice as much work as the others. He thought his tongue was four feet long when Winters finally let up on him. It must've been his tongue, he was sure, stumbling over something. He'd missed some and fielded a lot. He wanted to redeem himself, and he tried for everything. He was dripping wet and covered with a filmy, muddy paste when the session was over. He thought he hadn't done worth a hang, and he was miserable.

Winters called for batting practice, and Eddie stumbled wearily in. He waited a long time for he regulars to take their cuts, and he got his breath back. He glanced at Winters' face several times, and he couldn't read a thing.

Eddie couldn't help the little secret glow when Huston took his licks. Huston was never a strong hitter, and he looked positively bad now. His strongest blow was a long, lazy fly.

Eddie stepped up to the plate, the big bat in his hands. This was something he knew, he could hit a ball with any of them. He had a beautiful, natural timing in those big shoulders, arms, and wrists, and he could ride a ball a long way.

Maheffy was a tall left-hander, and he studied Eddie with insolent eyes. He wound up and let it go, and it was smoking hot for a batting practice pitch. Eddie thought grimly, this is a pay-back for roughing Fleming, and he knew it'd take time to wear that incident out. He stepped forward with that smooth glide and swung evenly and smoothly into that wicked-breaking curve. He got that wrist snap into it at the proper moment, and the ball screamed on a straight line out over second-base.

Maheffy scowled, and there was cold anger in his movements. Eddie thought he knew what it was going to be. He was right. It came blazing at his head, and he didn't go into the dirt. He waited until the last split-second before he jerked his head back. The ball whipped by his chin, and he had maybe a small fraction of an inch leeway. It'd been reckless and foolhardy, but he wanted to get it through their skulls he didn't scare worth a damn.

Winters growled, "You trying to get yourself killed?"

There was a funny glint in his eyes that Eddie didn't understand. He didn't think he liked Winters very much.

He looked at Maheffy and said in a low, carrying voice, "Try that again, and I'll stuff it down your throat." The dismay rose inside him. Those words had come out before he could stop them. And they wouldn't help him a bit.

AN ANGRY flush mottled Maheffy's face. Eddie heard the rising murmur of rage from the Eagles clustered around the cage. He was making this worse as fast as he could.

He was ready for another duster, but it was a slow, tantalizing curve. Maheffy was good, Eddie could count the stitches on the ball. He held his swing until the last moment, then powered into it. It was a good, clean smack, and the ball took off on a rising line. It kept rising until it cleared the barrier in left-field. It was as good as any he'd ever hit, and it wiped away all his anger. He was suddenly shy and eager again, and he put a conciliatory grin on his face as he looked at Winters. The guy had frosted glass for eyes. You couldn't read a darn thing there.

The scowl was really set on Maheffy's face now, and he reared back
and fogged it through. Eddie smashed it on a screaming line straight back to him. Maheffy hung onto it, but it set him back a couple of feet, and he walked around the mound, shaking his hand.

Winters growled, "That's enough, let somebody else up there."

Eddie felt his despondency return. The regulars were hitting twice as many as Eddie got to hit. He guessed Winters had seen enough.

Fleming passed him and snarled, "Don't let it swell your head, Busher. You won't find any of 'em in your batting average."

Eddie let it pass. It wasn't a normal thing for him to stay mad. He needed friendliness, he needed it like a garden needed summer rain. His heart gave a joyful bound as he saw a familiar figure coming out of the dugout. It was Mike Hayden—Eddie had that friend now, and to hell with the rest of them.

He rushed up to him, and he was a little surprised when he drew near. Hayden was packing quite a bit of suek around his waist, and his face was puffy, his eyes dull. It wasn't the Mike Hayden Eddie remembered of twelve years ago, it wasn't the same one at all. His eyes widened with a sudden thought. Why, Hayden was thirty-four now, he was getting along, and it was hard thing to grasp all at once. The first time Eddie had seen Hayden, Hayden had been twenty-two, and Eddie had been a kid of ten. Hayden was the biggest thing that'd ever happened to Centerville. He'd just finished his first year as a hurler in the majors, and he'd set them all on their ears. Eddie remembered how the kids had flocked around him. And out of all of them, Hayden had picked Eddie for special attention. That'd lasted two years, and during the off seasons, Hayden had talked to him by the hour, telling him stories of the big leagues. He'd given him balls and a glove, and he'd been Eddie's idol. Eddie remembered the day his father had announced the family was moving from Centerville, he remembered how he'd cried. He'd never seen Hayden again until this moment.

He'd written him boyish letters, and Hayden had answered a few of them. Then the period between answers grew longer and longer, and finally no more came.

All those thoughts were in Eddie's mind, as he stuck out his hand. "Mike," he cried. "Mike—" He couldn't put it into words. Being an Eagle was important, but being on the same team with Mike Hayden was the biggest thing in his life now.

Hayden looked at him, and no recognition appeared in his eyes.

"Eddie Morrison," Eddie said softly. "You know, From Centerville."

Hayden stared at him a long moment "Oh, hell," he said disgustedly and brushed by Eddie. Eddie's jaw went slack. If someone had hit him with a bat, it couldn't have been a more numbing blow. He blinked several times and helplessly shifted his hands and feet, not knowing what to do.

CHAPTER II

He sat on the bench and watched the game. The stands weren't half filled, but even then it seemed like a lot of people to Eddie, and he was almost glad he wasn't playing before all those eyes. The Eagles were playing the Bisons and turning in an indifferent job. There was no pepper, no fire in their actions, they just mechanically went through the motions. Eddie thought, it's almost as though they're too good to play these guys. He felt a slow, rising anger. It was a devil of a way to play a ball game.

Olson came up for the Bisons to open the top half of the eighth. He drew a walk from Carver, and Eddie stirred restlessly on the bench. The Eagle infield was listless and silent. He opened his mouth and bawled. "Bear down. Bear down, you bum."

It came out without conscious thought, and he glanced quickly around as soon as he said it. He couldn't interpret Winters' eyes. But he could read the scowling regard the players gave him. His jaw set belligerently. That two run lead wasn't so much. He wasn't the guy they should be sore at.
They should be turning some of that stuff on the Bisons. Parving slashed a hard grounder to Fleming’s right. Fleming went over and made a nice stop. It seemed to Eddie that Huston was a little slow in reaching the bag. He got Fleming’s toss and pivoted to make his throw to first, and Olson hit the dirt in a long, vicious slide. Huston didn’t have time to leap out of the way. Olson kicked out with a foot, and the spikes caught Huston on the ankle and spilled him on his nose. The ball flew out of his hand, and the double-play was ruined.

Eddie jumped to his feet and bounded up the dugout steps. Then astounded, he stopped. No one else was mad. The Eagles were gathered around Huston, they had the proper concern on their faces and nothing else. Eddie turned and went back to the bench, and there was a sickness inside him. This team was indifferent and worn-out, and he thought that none of them knew it.

Huston got up, and he didn’t move so well. He took a few painful steps and shook his head at Winters. Eddie saw Winters looking at him, and his heart bounded. He was going in at second for Huston. He looked down the bench toward Hayden, hoping to see some reflection of his elation on Hayden’s face. Hayden wasn’t even looking his way.

Eddie picked up his glove and went out, his elation ebbing away. The Eagle infield gave him no word of encouragement. Only Benson, the tall, lanky first-baseman, looked over at him and grinned slowly.

Carver scowled at him. He hadn’t forgotten Eddie’s remark about being a bum. Eddie thought rebelliously, he’d rather have a hole out here than me. He was suddenly hot with rage, and he repeated the remark. “Bear down, you bum.” Carver’s face darkened with rage, and Eddie felt a savage sweep of satisfaction.

Fleming venomously looked at him. “Shut up, you busher,” he howled. “Shut up.”

Eddie looked at him and said calmly, “I’ve got to play with you bums, but I don’t have to look like you.” A perverse streak came up in him, and he found himself enjoying their animosity. He looked over at first, and Benson winked at him. Well, not all of them were bums. Eddie conceded. Benson seemed all right.

Carver was sizzling, and he almost wild-pitched the first ball. Jewett had to go high in the air to haul it down. The Bison runners dashed away from their respective bags, and Jewett’s threatening arm drove them back.

“No guts,” Eddie bawled. “No guts.”

Carver’s eyes were full of murderous rage. He looked Eddie over for a long moment, then faced the hitter. His arm came up and over, and he whipped the ball plateward. It was a nice pitch, it scorched the air, and still the batter met it. He put a lot of wood on it, it spanked it along the ground to Eddie’s right. This was going to be mean to handle. It hugged the ground, and he’d never be able to get in front of it or put two hands on it. He made a sweep with the gloved hand, and the ball thunked into the pocket. He picked it out and fired it hard to Fleming. Fleming kicked the bag, leaped high into the air, and laced it to Benson. The throw was a full stride ahead of the racing runner.

It left a Bison on third, but there were two outs, and that runner wasn’t a big threat now. The perverse streak still rode Eddie. He’d tried to make these guys like him, and now he’d go as far as he could the other way. He yelled, “That got you out of the hole, you bum. See if you can get in another one.”

Carver looked like he was going to choke. He got the hitter on four pitched balls. The Bisons didn’t threaten again in the ninth. It was a neat win, but Eddie felt no elation. He’d made one stop, but he hadn’t gotten to hit. Even his yelling tapered off with the last moments of the game. It was kind of lonesome, standing out there, howling all by yourself.

He passed Winters on the way to the locker-room, and Winters didn’t say anything. Eddie suddenly dis-
liked him as much as he did the rest of them. He wished he was back with the Colts.

Carver came over, the flush of rage still in his face. "Say something now. Go on. Open your head."

Eddie carefully looked him over. He tried to hold his temper, but it was slipping away. Maybe a good poke in the mouth was the quickest way to settle this.

"Let him alone," Benson drawled softly. His eyes were narrowed and hard, and Carver looked uncertainly at him. He growled something, then turned and moved back to his locker.

Eddie flashed a glance of gratitude at Benson. He wanted to go over and say something to Hayden, but Hayden was scowling at him, and Eddie let it go.

He sat in the hotel lobby that night, sunk in his gloomy thoughts. He heard the light, careless laughter of some of the Eagles and peered out from his point of obscurity behind the foliage in the Planter's box. Winters had hold of Hayden's arm, and he was leading him toward Eddie's corner. Eddie shrank back. He didn't want to be seen by either of them, but it was too late to leave now.

Winters stopped a few feet away, and he was furious. He snapped, "Why didn't you come to my office after the game?"

Hayden's tone was insolent. "I forgot about it, Del."

Winters drew a deep breath, then he tied into Hayden. He put more knots in him than a sailor could in a halyard. Eddie didn't want to listen to this, but he didn't know what else to do now.

Winters wound up by saying, "And you'll be on time, Mister Great. You'll report when the rest do, or I'll throw your tail off this club so fast—"

Hayden's voice was mocking as he said, "Will you, Del?" A note of anger edged into his voice. "Who made you what you are? Who won those flags for this club?" The mockery came back into his voice. "And what would the fans do to you, if you ever tried anything like that?"

Eddie peeked out. Hayden was sauntering away, and Winters stared after him, his shoulders sagging. He helplessly shook his head before he moved away.

Eddie waited until Winters was out of sight, then slowly got to his feet, thinking about this. There was bad friction between Winters and Hayden. He didn't know all of it, but from what he'd heard, he'd side with Winters. He felt a little stab of disloyalty at the thought.

He started across the lobby, then stopped short. The girl coming toward him made him big-eyed and slack-jawed. The packaging was from Fifth Avenue, but the contents were strictly from Heaven. He guessed her to be about five feet four and maybe a year or two younger than he was.

She was beautifully proportioned and she had golden brown skin. She wore her hair swept up from her head, and the lobby lights struck lustrous sheens from its chestnut strands. Her lips were full and cut for smiling. She drew near, and he saw the color of those eyes was hazel with little amber flecks. She colored a little under his stare, but her eyes never wavered. She lifted her head, then brushed by him.

He stood there, staring at the proud, straight line of her shoulders. He didn't know who she was, she was walking right out of his life, and the thought was a hammer blow in the pit of his stomach. He couldn't let her go like this, he had to rush after her and find out who she was and when he would see her again. He couldn't move. That old shyness had him in its grip, and he swore at it.

He sighed and walked toward the lobby doors. He turned, hoping to catch another glimpse of her, and she stood by the elevators, looking at him. She hastily turned her head as she caught his glance. He felt like yelling and singing, he felt like pounding someone on the back. She was aware of him, and he needed to do all those simple, foolish things to express the great joy within him.

She stepped into the elevator, and he went out of the hotel with long,
jubilant strides. He'd see her again, it just had to work out that way. He felt fine, he felt just like the moment when he'd first stepped out on the Eagles' ballyard.

He came out onto the street, and Hayden and Fleming were there. Fleming said, "There he is, Mike. That's the tough guy. You got there late and missed it."

Hayden scowled at Eddie, and none of those days in Centerville were in his eyes. He said harshly, "You put hands on Hugh again, and you and I will do some talking about it."

Eddie looked at the big man. He kept desperately recalling those days when Hayden had been good to a kid, and he kept his temper down. He said softly, "It was just a misunderstanding, Mike."

"Well, remember it," Hayden growled. He went down the street with Fleming, and Eddie heard Fleming laugh.

He sighed. A man's life seemed to be made up of high and low moments. He guessed it was a necessary combination, but he wished it didn't have to be that way.

CHAPTER III

He went out to the park the following day, and he hadn't seen the girl again. He tried to push her out of his mind. He had to stick with the Eagles now—at least until he knew her. He examined his feelings with a sort of awe-struck wonder. It had happened fast and hard. He'd seen her once, and something had happened to him. He kept telling himself it didn't make sense. He could tell himself that a million times, but there it was just the same.

He kept his eyes on Huston as he dressed, and he saw the swollen, puffed look of Huston's ankle. The guy had gotten a hard rap. Eddie felt a surge of hope. Maybe he'd be in the line-up today.

Winters made that hope a certainty, and Eddie felt the shake inside him as he went out. He hoped it didn't show. Hayden took the mound, and Eddie felt pretty fine to be working behind him. He thought that Hayden had been just a little upset yesterday, he thought the unpleasantness would pass, and everything would be the same between them.

Hayden was wild. He ran the count to three and two on the first hitter then lost him. Eddie picked up handfuls of dust and threw them away. He wanted to yell encouragement to Hayden, but he remembered what'd happen yesterday, and he kept his mouth shut.

Hayden took a long time between pitches, and Eddie felt the tension mount inside him. It was almost as though Hayden wasn't sure of himself. It was a ridiculous thought, and Eddie threw it aside.

Hayden let the ball go, and it didn't look as though it had a lot on it. Eddie heard the crack of the bat. He saw the ball bounding toward him. There was nothing wrong with his eyesight, he just froze, he couldn't move. He heard the screaming crowd, and his eyes were fascinatedly fixed on the ball. It wasn't too hard a chance. It was a little to his right, a step or two and he could be over in front of it. The runner from first was almost on him when Eddie made his belated move. After he got under way, he moved fast enough. He almost made it at that. He touched the ball with the tips of his bare fingers, and it ricocheted off and bounded out into the outfield. It'd been an easy chance. He should've been converted into a double-play. The runner turned second and went into third. Hoskins tried to get the man coming into second, but his throw to Fleming was late.

The Bisons had men on second and third with none out. Eddie wished the earth would open and swallow him. The crowd screamed at him, and the Eagles made vicious remarks. Fleming bawled, "Where's that big mouth now. Where is it, Busher?"

Hayden was a wild man. He threw his glove on the ground and stomped it. He glared at Eddie, and Eddie shivered under it. Benson came over from first and put a hand on Eddie's
shoulder. "It happens to all of us," he said cheerfully. "Relax, Kid."

Eddie took a deep breath, and some of the trembling left him. Yesterday, he'd handled a much harder chance. But he'd been mad then and not all tied up with trying. He looked at Winters, and he was afraid of what he'd see on his face. Winters wasn't making any move, he wasn't taking Eddie out—yet.

Hayden went back to work, and there was a sulkiness in his motions. He got behind on the hitter and had to come in with a fast ball. It was promptly lashed out over third, and both runs rode in on it. Stiers threw it in to second, and the hitter turned and went back to first.

The crowd really screamed then. They tore Eddie apart. They blamed more than those two runs on him, they included all the misfortunes in the world. They wanted Huston back out there, and they made it plain.

Eddie was getting mad. He'd made one error, and he was a bum. Well, maybe he was. But a single play seemed a little thing for which to hang a man. He prayed for the next one, and he got it. It was to his left, a vicious thing a couple of inches off the ground. It hit in front of him with a savage, twisting bounce, and he speared out his hands and pocketed it. He twisted his body and whipped the ball to second. Fleming got his throw away ahead of the racing Bison. Benson reached out for it, and it spanked into his glove in ample time. It was a nice, smooth double killing, Eddie had started it, and it should go a little way toward restoring him. It didn't. The crowd still screamed at him, and he heard the mutterings from the infield. They remembered those two big runs, that play hadn't wiped those out.

The score stayed that way until the late innings. Eddie had been up twice, and he'd smashed a clean, hard single one of those times. But no one had been on, and he'd died on first. Hayden was raving between every inning, and it grew a little monotonous. Eddie wanted to yell, "Shut up," but he held it.

He came up in the last half of the eighth, and the sacks were loaded. There were two down, and it was his big chance. He fouled off the first pitch, and he heard it thud into the screen behind him. He took a ball, then another one, and his nerves were steady as he waited for the one he wanted. It came in smoking, and his eyes picked out the last second break on it. He snapped that bat around, and he was running at the end of his swing. The coach at first waved him on, and he turned the bag at full speed. The Bison outfielders were desperately chasing the ball down deep in left-center field, and Eddie rounded second under a full head of steam. He saw Winters motioning him to hold up, and he went into third standing. Winters' face held no emotion, and Eddie bleakly wondered what you had to do to get a word of praise out of him.

He looked toward the bench. He should shut them up, that should cut off Hayden's mouthings. They sat there with stony faces, and from their looks, Eddie might have as well struck out. Stiers did. But it left the score 3 to 2. And with an inning to go, it should be safe enough.

Eddie was mad. He thought he'd earned the right to expect a few encouraging words. He snarled at Hayden, "Find something to rave about now."

If it sounded cocky, he didn't give a hang. He saw the dark flush mottle Hayden's face, and it was hard to like the guy then.

Hayden ran into trouble with the first Bison hitter and wound up by walking him. Olson hit cleanly, and that put men on third and first. The stands stirred restlessly, and Eddie saw Winters glare at Hayden. Hayden delayed pitching as long as he could, and Eddie thought, the guy's tired. Tired and a little scared. It was a hard thing to believe, but he could make nothing else out of it from appearances.

Between pitches Hayden kept looking at the activity in the bull-pen. Eddie wanted to yell, "Keep your mind on the game," but he kept it to himself. The crowd murmured with a
dissatisfied impatience as Hayden pitched one ball, two balls, then the third one. He had to come in with it now, or the bases would be jammed. That would be a sweet spot, the bases loaded with none out. That two run didn’t look so safe now.

The pitch had nothing on it, and the batter didn’t take it. Eddie’s heart sank at the vicious crack of wood against leather. The ball rose in a high, soaring arc, but it had plenty of carry on it. Stiers ran back a few steps, then stopped and helplessly watched it soar over the fence. It looked like a parade of Bison runners crossing the plate. Eddie sighed. That made it 5 to 3.

Winters jerked Hayden then. He sent in Maheffy. Maheffy shut the scoring gates, but the damage was done. Eddie knew before the Eagles stepped up for their cuts, they wouldn’t do anything. It was in the dispirited sag of their shoulders, in their sullen faces. They went down one, two, three, and a game was lost that should’ve been safely tucked away.

Eddie went in with them, and they were only sullen not sore about losing. They should’ve been tearing up the locker-room. A championship club hated losing. Only Hayden showed any temper. He slammed the door of his locker several times. Then suddenly he reached up, jerked his uniform shirt off the hook and ripped it in two. He threw the ruined shirt on the floor, stood up, and his eyes were savage.

“What’s the matter with Winters?” he yelled. “Putting a damned busher in there and letting him lose the game.”

The rage roared in Eddie’s ears. Sure, he’d allowed two runs, but he’d wiped them out. Hayden had lost it when his control had deserted him. Eddie suddenly yelled, his temper climbing like a bursting dam. “Quit alibing, you fat bum. You lost it when you gave him that nothing pitch.”

The silence was thick and heavy. They looked at Eddie with wondering eyes, and he knew what was back of those eyes. Bushers simply didn’t talk to Hayden like that.

Hayden roared and came charging across the room. Eddie was ready for him. A bellow from the door stopped Hayden. “Hold it Mike,” Winters yelled and hurried into the room.

He saw the ruined shirt on the floor, and his eyes went hard. “That’ll cost you twenty, Hayden. Get on back to your locker.”

Hayden locked his eyes with him for a moment, then sullenly turned away. Winters whirled on Eddie.

“And you. You learn to keep your mouth shut.”

Eddie yelled at him. He might be sent back to the Colts the next moment, but he didn’t give a hang. He said savagely, “I’ve taken all the riding I’m going to take. This bunch of clowns feel like they can blame me for anything that happens. I’m not taking anymore of it. You hear me?”

Winters looked mildly at him, then turned and left the room.

Eddie thought Hayden might pick it up after Winters had gone, but Hayden kept his distance. The silence held, but it wasn’t a pleasant thing. He could feel the physical force of their dislike pounding at him like waves.

CHAPTER IV

He felt better after dinner. He had a puppy’s eternal optimism. If you kept trying, people would like you. He’d caught the Eagles in an emotional low and when it wore off, they’d accept him.

He walked over to the newsstand to buy a magazine, and he stood there absently thumbing through a copy. He turned, still looking at it, and he bumped squarely into someone.

He heard a strangled gasp, had a confused impression of packages flying from a girl’s arms, then saw her bend to retrieve them. It was the girl of last night, and he groaned inwardly. She must think him a clumsy clown. He bent to help her as she was straightening. His chin caught her rising forehead, and he heard her involuntary cry. The packages dropped from her hands again, and she straightened, rubbing a spot on her forehead.
He felt like wringing his hands. He opened his mouth and nothing came out of it. He shut it and tried again. And the same thing happened.

Her eyes snapped with anger. "Please," she said. "Please don't try to help me again. Just step back a few feet. I don't want you falling on me. And close your mouth."

He backed hastily away, his face burning hot. "Aw," he said helplessly. "Aw." His mind was a complete blank.

She picked up her packages and said with acid brightness, "Why, it can say a word. I thought it was some kind of machine running wild."

His eyes held an abject pleading. "Please, Miss. Please. I didn't mean—"

Her eyes softened with their relenting, and he saw a merry gleam come into them. "It's all right," she said softly. "Maybe I can hang costume jewelry on the bump you put on my head. Maybe I can start a new fad."

His heart bounded joyfully. She'd forgiven him. He started to say something, and a gruff voice said from behind, "Sis, is this busher bothering you?"

He whirled, and Fleming was glaring at him. Fleming had backing. Hayden was with him, and he wore a bigger and blacker glare.

The girl said quickly, "He wasn't bothering me. He was trying to help me. Mike, you can carry these packages for me." She filled Hayden's hands and took his arm. She led them away, keeping up a constant flow of talk. Eddie was deflated. Hayden had had a possessive air toward her, and she'd accepted it. So she was Fleming's sister. No wonder Hayden backed up anything Fleming said or did.

He went up to his room, and he couldn't settle down. He'd been face to face with her. She'd been angry, then she'd forgiven him. She had. He'd seen it in her eyes.

He heard a knock on the door, and his hand shook as he opened it. He was afraid it was Winters, coming to tell him he was through with the Eagles. He didn't want to leave now, not after tonight.

Benson stood there, a grin on his face. "Can I come in, Kid?"

EDDIE joyously welcomed him. It seemed a thousand years since anyone had offered him friendship.

Benson shook away the offer of a chair and sprawled across the bed. "I saw you come up," he said in that soft drawl. "You looked kinda lonely. I thought maybe we could talk a little."

He was tall and lanky with a thatch of sandy hair. He had a square chin and honest, blue eyes. Eddie liked him, he liked him a lot, and it showed on his face.

Benson said softly, "Kid, everything you feel shows on your face. I saw you looking at Marge Fleming. So did Hayden. There was something between you and Hayden, wasn't there?" At Eddie's nod, he said grumpily, "Well, there isn't anymore. It's finished." He saw the protest form in Eddie's eyes. "I've been with the Eagles six years. You learn a man inside and out in that length of time."

His voice took on a harsh note. "Sit down, Kid. I know what you want, and I know what you're going to get. When a championship ball club starts falling apart, they never blame themselves. They always pick a goat. And you've been elected. You got mad at Fleming and showed it. And Hayden will back him up because of Marge. And the club goes the way Hayden goes." He said wearily, "Not because of any particular love for him. But because success and Hayden are all tied up in the same package. Hayden hasn't won his share this year, and you can see where we are. We were lucky to win the Series last fall. Only Winters and a few others know how lucky. Hayden is over the hill, but he's so blamed big-headed, he'll never know it." His voice slowed to a muttering reflection. "It isn't so hard to understand. Hayden won the first pennant the Eagles had won in years. And since he's been with them, they've gotten the habit of winning. That past record is working for him now. And before they wake up, this club will be wrecked."

Eddie stared wildly at him. Benson
had this all wrong. The sudden, uncomfortable feeling stole through Ed- 
die, that Benson wasn't so far off. Eddie had had a similar suspicio
himself.

Benson said gloomily, "Huston's through. We need an outfielder and 
something to wake up this lousy club." He grinned wryly. "Ain't it 
funny, Kid, how plain you can see it when others reach the end of the 
trail. And you never know it yourself when you get there. That's why cham-
pionship clubs suddenly fall apart."

He stood up and said fiercely, "Kid, 
I like this club, I like the town. And 
I like playing on a winner."

He was trying to tell Eddie some-
ting, and Eddie didn't get it. He said 
helplessly, "Where do I fit in?"

Benson's eyes gleamed. "They're 
down on you already. Keep acting 
like a tough guy. Keep 'em so blamed 
mad they won't have time to think 
about their little title. Maybe they'll 
get mad enough to win a few games. 
You'll get a few fists tossed at you.
If it gets too rough, I'll be behind 
you."

Eddie said slowly, "I've been trying 
to control my temper."

"Let it run wild. When you're 
right." Benson grinned broadly. 
"Hayden's got no claim on Marge. He 
only thinks so. Jar him there. Jar that 
swelled-head good." The shrewd look 
came back into his eyes. "You can 
forget all about her or play it the 
way I've told you. There won't be 
any half-way measures as long as 
Hayden feels the way he does about 
her." He walked to the door and said, 
"You think it over, Kid."

Eddie stared into nothing a long 
time after Benson had left. He wanted 
to believe Benson had it all wrong. 
that Eddie could make the team like 
him. But he was afraid Benson was 
right, just as he was right about Hay-
den's feeling for Marge. Eddie had 
seen that hostile look in Hayden's 
eyes when the guy had seen him 
talking to her. He could give in to 
Hayden there, and he might win him 
back. It wasn't a hard choice to make. 
He said slowly, "I don't want him 
back that way." If he couldn't have 
everything, he knew what he'd choose.

He didn't deliberately look for 
trouble on the field, but he never 
backed a step. He opened his 
mouth and said what he thought, and 
his hard eyes backed it up. He'd been 
off to a good start in making them 
sore, when he'd tangled with Flem-
ing, and he was running at full speed 
now. They were resentful of every-
thing he said or did. They went on 
the road, and they won more games 
than they lost. Eddie's bat was play-
ing a big part. With someone on base, 
he was pure poison. Maybe his field-
ing wasn't as strong, but he tried for 
everything in the park. He made a lot 
of errors, but he got a lot more of 
those tough ones. His tongue kept 
pace with his hitting. They wouldn't 
have him? Okay, he'd make it as mis-
erable as he could for them. He'd been 
in three club-house fights, and won 
them all, and Winters had broken up 
several others. Eddie wasn't happy 
inside. This wasn't his way of living 
at all. But he hadn't picked out this 
road, they'd picked it out for him. 
He'd let several remarks of Hayden's 
pass. He'd taken them in silence even 
though they ground his teeth togeth-
er. He could never quite bring him-
self to tangle with him. Whenever he 
started, the memory of Centerville 
kept rising and holding him back.

He sat in the club car and talked to 
Benson about it on the trip back 
home. "Hell," he said miserably. "This 
ain't worth it. I used to get a kick out 
of playing ball." His voice was filled 
with irritation. "I'm not even doing 
myself any good with Winters."

"You're still playing, aren't you?" 
Benson pointed out. "Huston is walk-
ning around okay, and you're still in. 
We picked up some ground on this 
trip. We're still in third place, but 
we're only four games off the pace. 
You've got 'em mad. Even mad 
enough so that some of it spills over 
onto other teams." His eyes rested 
speculatively on Eddie, and Eddie 
had the feeling Benson knew what 
was troubling him the most. Benson's 
following words confirmed the feel-
ing. "How come I never see you talk-
ing to Marge?"

Eddie said, "I can't just go up and 
start talking to her." What he meant
was that he was afraid to go. He was afraid of her rebuff, he thought that would kill him.

He glared resentfully at Benson's grin. "How can I get close to her? Wherever she is, Fleming or Hayden are always somewhere near."

Benson laughed and got up. "Boy, have you got troubles," he said, and walked away.

Eddie stared gloomily after him. It was very funny to Benson. It wasn't funny at all to Eddie. It was a tough thing to keep seeing her, to even be close enough to hear her laugh and then be afraid to go any farther.

He had no doubt that Fleming and Hayden had told her of their dislike for him, they'd probably influenced her, and it was gnawing Eddie's insides out.

CHAPTER V

They came back for a short stay at home, and they had a chance to make some money. They would play a four-game series with the Owls, and a sweep would put them right up there. Eddie looked at the Eagles in the locker-room and shook his head. This club didn't have that hard, sure confidence, they had a smugness, and when the pennant drive got hot, that smugness would melt like ice in July.

He went out onto the field, and he hardly noticed the size of the crowd. That was something else he'd steeled himself to—the voices of the enemy fans. And he put all fans in that category. He stopped in surprise. He heard some friendly voices coming down from those stands.

Benson saw his look and laughed. "We've been on the road. You're back home now, boy. And they like what you've been doing. Most of those guys can read batting averages as well as a ballplayer."

Eddie felt a new and comforting warmth when he went out to second. The fans had come around. Nothing was impossible. He picked up a grounder and whipped it to Fleming. He howled loud and long as a pure release for his feelings. He saw Fleming's scowl, saw the reflection of it on other faces, and the good feeling faded. No, they hadn't changed. They were set until hell froze over.

The Owls had a lot of scrap. They believed in themselves, they believed they were going places. The Eagles' title didn't mean a damned thing to those guys, they couldn't see it at all.

Hayden went to the mound, and he got nicely through the first inning. Matthews also blanked the Eagles in the first. Hayden set the Owls down in the second, and Eddie got one chance, an easy hopper that sat down in his glove. He was up this inning, he'd follow Stiers, and he went in full of impatience.

Matthews' control slipped in the second. He walked Stiers, and Eddie stepped up to the plate. He wanted a hit so badly he could taste it. In his eagerness, he went after two bad balls. Derisive shouts went up from the Owls, and there was only silence from the Eagles. Eddie flashed a look at Winters, coaching at third-base, and he could read nothing on that inscrutable face. He was all alone up here, none of them believed in him, they'd like to see him fall on his face. The anger came up, washing away the loneliness. It had a calming effect, and he was rock-steady. Matthews had two strikes on him, and Eddie thought he'd waste one. It came nipping at an outside corner, and Eddie held his swing. He also held his breath until he heard the umpire below, "Ball." He let his breath out in a little puff. That had been a close one.

Matthews was sore over that calling, and so was the Owl catcher. He said nastily, "You're lucky, Busher."

Eddie's anger reached the boiling point. He'd been called that too often. He was tired of the contempt in the term.

Matthew reared back, and Eddie thought he'd try and fog it through. He was right. It came string-straight and with blinding speed. Eddie caught the ball near the end of his bat, and he rode it out over the infield. He was off and run-
ning with that long, full stride. He turned first and saw the fielder running it down. He never checked his stride as he tore out for second. Stiers was around third and digging for home.

Zeller came over to take the throw, and Eddie saw it was going to be close. He hit the dirt, and he rode into Zeller. For a moment, he had the terrible temptation to let his spikes flash, then at the last split-second, he pulled them out of the way and hit Zeller with his knees. He hit with an awful authority, and Zeller sailed through the air and lit five feet on the other side of the bag. The impact knocked the ball out of his glove and on out onto the grass.

Zeller bounced up off the ground, and he was screaming mad. Matthews rushed off the mound toward Eddie. Owls came at him from every direction, there must've been a million of them.

He glared at Zeller and said savagely, "Shut up. You were blocking the bag. I could've cut you wide open. You give me part of it the next time I come down."

Zeller let the right hand go. The man had quick reflexes, it came without warning, and it caught Eddie in the mouth. His lips broke, then the rage engulfed him, and he forgot everything else.

He pushed Zeller away with a stabbing left and let the right hook fly. Zeller spilled over on his back. Eddie caught a fist behind his ear. He whirled, and Matthews' contorted face was right on top of him. Matthews threw a wild swing, and it whipped over Eddie's shoulder and around behind his neck. Eddie chopped a short jolt into Matthews' stomach. Matthew doubled over, gagging. Eddie pumped his right fist. It went in there hard and true, it landed on the button, and it rolled Matthews' eyes up into his head.

The Owls had Eddie ringed in now, they were all trying to get a shot at him, and in their eagerness, they got in each other's way. Eddie thought a couple of times he was going down, but somehow he managed to stay on his feet.

The umpires bulled through, and the park police were with them. They hauled and tossed players aside, and they finally got the mess under control. Eddie stood there panting. Benson and Winters were here, and Benson had smear of blood on his face. But the rest of the Eagles hadn't stirred. It'd have been all right with them, if Eddie had gotten his head beat off.

The umpires pitted Zeller out of the game, they gave Eddie the thumb, and they included Matthews. They made a nice, general house-cleaning of it. Winters and the Owls' manager screamed about it, but they couldn't change it. Eddie walked to the locker-room, thinking about it. Winters had sounded as though he wanted Eddie to stay. Eddie slowly shook his head. "That was just wishful thinking."

He thought of waiting in the locker-room until the game was over. He had some things to say to those guys. Then he pushed the idea away. They already knew what he thought of them. A few more words on that score could only add to the already misshapen outline of his nose.

**HE COULD use this time, he had some shopping to do. He had gifts to buy for his sister's kids' birthday.**

He got a kick out of buying things for them, and he didn't stop until he was loaded down with packages. He went down the street, thinking he'd have to get this stuff in the mail in the morning.

He turned a corner, and something bumped hard into him. Several of the packages spilled from his arms, and in taking a backward step to catch his balance, he stepped on a couple of them. He heard the crunch as some toy mashed and said feverently, "Oh, damn."

He glared around for whoever had bumped into him, and the glare faded swiftly as he looked into Marge Fleming's eyes. Her face held the proper concern, and her words
matched it. “I’m so sorry,” she said softly. “I didn’t see you.”

He thought that was a twinkle in her eyes, or maybe he just hoped it was there.

She bent and picked up the crushed packages before he could stop her. The wrappings fell away, and she saw the ruined toys.

“For my sister’s kids,” he said and managed a shy grin.

“What a shame,” she breathed. “I’m going to replace them.”

He shook his head, and she said swiftly, “Then at least I’m going with you to look for new ones.”

He couldn’t get his assent out quickly enough. She took his arm as they went down the street, and it was a natural, friendly gesture. She talked gaily as they walked along, and he stole little glances at her. He liked her voice, he liked her laugh, he liked everything about her.

He asked her advice in making his purchases and listened attentively to everything she said. He decided the packages should be mailed now, and she went with him to the post-office. He dragged it out as long as he could, then blurted out, “I hate to eat alone. Will you have dinner with me?” It was said, and his face looked like an angry sunset, and he was afraid she’d laugh at him.

She said quietly, “I was hoping you’d ask me.”

He couldn’t say anything, but his eyes showed his joy. She looked steadily at him a moment, then her eyes wavered, and the color showed in her face.

It was a fine meal, there was a lot of conversation, and afterward he couldn’t have told you what they talked about. That was odd, because every word was important, not serious for they laughed a lot, but important just the same.

They left the restaurant, and she said hesitantly, “Eddie, I have a confession to make. I deliberately bumped into you.”

The thought flashed through his mind that she’d done it to repay him for an earlier bumping, then he saw it was a far different thing. He wished he could put into words all the things inside him. He could just stand there and look at her.

She laughed shyly and took his arm. “Eddie, it’s too early to go back to the hotel.”

They walked toward the park, and he thought it was the finest evening ever made. They sat down on a park bench, and she said, “I saw the game this afternoon. I followed you after you left.”

He didn’t like that, he didn’t like her seeing him fighting.

“They don’t like you, do they, Eddie?”

Some of his happiness faded, and he shook his head.

“Hugh’s partly responsible for it isn’t he?”

He thought about it, and he couldn’t blame her brother anymore than the rest of them.

She said swiftly, “He can’t help it. Eddie. He thinks Mike Hayden is wonderful. He always has, ever since he came to the Eagles. It’s hard to understand—” Her voice died away.

It wasn’t so hard to understand. Once, Eddie had felt that way. Maybe a trace of it still remained. Hayden had a charm when he wanted to use it. Now was the time to find out something, and Eddie faced her squarely.

“And you?” he asked bluntly.

Her eyes remained on his face. “I was pretty young when I first knew him. Yes, I thought he was wonderful. That’s gone now, Eddie. But there’s no need to hurt him. And it’s only be hurting Hugh.” She took a deep breath and said honestly, “I waited a long time on you, Eddie. There were some things I had to know. So I bumped into you.”

He saw the glow in her eyes, the tiny, tremulous smile on her lips. He reached for her, and she came willingly to him. His mouth hungrily sought hers, and there could never be a more wonderful moment.

She finally pulled away and said in a shaky voice, “You can move after you get started, can’t you?” Her
voice sobered. "Now you know. Now you can be generous with Mike."

He said soberly, "I'll keep the lid on my temper where he's concerned." It wouldn't be hard, he felt only a pity for the guy.

He walked back with her to the hotel, and his feet never touched the pavement. They walked through the lobby, and he saw the Eagles stare in amazement at him. They could see by the way her hand rested on his arm what'd happened. He guessed he'd earned more their respect, he'd earned their envy. He saw Hayden viciously rip a newspaper in two, saw the black hatred on Fleming's face. He sighed. He guessed he'd earned something there, too.

He saw Marge to the elevator, then turned and walked out of the lobby. He couldn't go up to his room now. His soaring spirits couldn't stand four walls pinning them in.

He walked a long way, and the elation never dulled. He felt pleasantly tired and turned back to the hotel. He walked down a dark street and approached the mouth of a shadowy alley. He thought he saw a movement there and stopped, his eyes narrowing. The thought of a holdup entered his mind, then someone said hoarsely, "Morrison."

He turned his head, and a fist hit him full in the mouth. It knocked him reelingly backward, then a shoulder rammed into his back, propelling him into the alley.

That blow had hurt, it'd fuzzed his vision, and he could see only a formless black shadow before him. He struck out at it, and a fist crashed behind his ear. The night was full of a million stars, they kept growing then exploding before his eyes. His head was roaring, and the bones in his legs were like string. He landed once and heard a man grunt, then the blows fell like relentless rain. That first, unexpected blow had taken too much out of him, and he couldn't recover. He knew he was slipping away and tried to hang on. Something smashed into his jaw with the force of a hard-sprung bat, and he pitched forward on his face. Just before he slid down that long, black tunnel, he heard someone say, "Maybe that'll teach you to keep away from her."

CHAPTER VI

He came to and groaned. He rolled over and tried to push himself up, and for a moment his strength wasn't equal to it. He finally got his feet under him and leaned against the welcome support of a wall. He moved his jaw and grimaced painfully. It'd happened in the course of a few seconds, and he'd gotten one heck of a going over in that time. He'd never fully seen them, but he had no doubt as to who they were. Hayden and Fleming. One of them had waited in the alley, and the other had waited in the shadows at its mouth. Eddie guessed that Hayden had hit him first, then Fleming had rammed him into the alley out of sight of possible passersbys.

He took a tentative step, and he could move all right. He walked out of the alley with wobbly steps. By the time he got back to the hotel, he was all right. His clothing was torn and dirty, there were marks on his face, but he hadn't been hurt too much.

He went through the lobby, looking for Fleming and Hayden. It was a good thing he didn't see them at the moment, for he was filled with a murderous rage.

He got off the elevator and walked down the hall to Winters' room. Winters opened it at his pounding, and his eyes went wide at the bruises on Eddie's face.

Eddie said harshly, "Fleming and Hayden worked me over. They waited for me in an alley. I'm not letting it ride."

Winters asked mildly, "Why tell me?"

The surprise checked Eddie for a moment. "I don't know," he said slowly. Except that I guess I wanted to give you a chance to get rid of me before it happened."

Winters was shutting the door in his face. "A man's got to do what he thinks best."
Eddie walked away, a puzzled look on his face. He couldn't get Winters' reaction at all.

He walked into the locker-room the following day, and his determination hadn't weakened. He'd promised Marge there'd be no trouble with Hayden, but this was a different matter. Hayden and Fleming were laughing about something, and their laughter broke off short when they saw Eddie. Even if Eddie hadn't been already positive, the guilt on their faces would've given them away. And besides, Hayden had a small piece of tape under his left eye. Eddie would've bet there was a cut under that tape, a cut his knuckles would fit.

He saw all those unfriendly faces staring at him. He looked at Benson and said harshly, "Don, I've got something to settle. Keep Fleming off me. I'll handle him later."

He stepped close to Hayden, and his voice was a rasp. "You haven't got an alley, and it isn't dark. Maybe you can't fight without those things." He reached down and grabbed a fistful of Hayden's shirt and yanked him to his feet with a savage jerk.

The SURPRISE in Hayden's face replaced with fury. He put a fist in Eddie's mouth, and it knocked him backwards into a locker. He heard the tinny clang, and the noise was magnified a thousandfold in his spinning head. He was a darn fool, he was always giving the other guy the first lick.

Eddie came back with cat-like steps. The old memories had no hold now. He speared a left into Hayden's mouth, rocking his head back. Then he was on him like a sudden rain, and his blows fell almost as fast. He battered Hayden across the room, and he wasn't even aware of the few blows he took in return.

Hayden was groggy, his movements uncertain. Eddie's anger was fading, he'd have been willing for this to stop now, but it had to have an end. He knocked Hayden's fumbling hands aside and buried a fist deep into the man's stomach. Hayden doubled over, his hands going to the hurt. Eddie let the punch go to the unprotected jaw. It was good and hard, it wrote finis. Hayden took a faltering forward step, then his legs wouldn't support him, and he pitched to the floor.

Eddie whirled to face them. Benson was holding Fleming, and the little guy was raging. Eddie said softly, "Let him go. Or does he need a dark night, too?"

The guilty thought of last night held Fleming a moment. Eddie looked at all those hostile faces. "Anybody can pick it up."

A voice said from the doorway, "Nobody will pick it up." Eddie turned and saw Winters standing there. "Hayden had it coming," Winters said. "He and Fleming jumped Morrison last night."

That kicked the ground out from under them. Maybe they couldn't blame Eddie too much, but it didn't make them like him any better.

"Bring him to," Winters said calmly. He watched with interest as someone got a glass of water and threw it in Hayden's face.

The confusion came back to Eddie. He had the odd feeling that Winters had wanted something like this. It was a crazy thought, and still it persisted in his mind.

Hayden opened his eyes and groaned. He pushed himself up to his knees, and Fleming ran over to give him a hand. Hayden got up on wobbly legs. He worked his jaws and grimaced, then his eyes swung to Eddie. He glared at him, then whirled on Winters.

"This is it," he yelled. "Either he goes, or I do. We don't need that busher. Huston's been ready to go back for a long time. You hear me, Winters? You hear me?"

"I hear you," Winters said softly. "And I think you've got something. I think maybe we'd better do something about it." He gave them all a hard, searching look and walked out of the room.

The last trace of anger drained from Eddie. He turned and walked
wearily to his locker. That fight had made up Winters' mind. He was going to do something, and Eddie thought he knew what it'd be. If it came to a choice between him and Hayden—Hell, there'd be no choice. He thought of Marge, and he was filled with a leaden ache. He'd be sent back to the Colts, he wouldn't see her again. He'd gone all the way now, he'd been one very big fool.

He went out onto the field, and the Owls hadn't forgotten yesterday. They were on him from the moment he stepped into view, and they stayed on him. They'd never recovered from that one run lead Eddie had driven in yesterday, and they were hot.

Maheffy took the mound for the Eagles, and after walking the first man, he settled down and got the next one on strikes. The Owl on first made mock dashes toward second. He'd be coming down hard for true, if Maheffy got the next hitter. Maheffy got him on a high pop to third. That made two away, and Eddie knew Stalner was coming down.

Jewett picked the pitch out of his mitt and cocked his arm. His throw was low and hard, ankle-high on the bag. Stalner was fast. He came down the line like a runaway team, and he hit the dirt in a vicious slide. Eddie caught the flashing gleam of spikes. Stalner was trying to cut him down to size. Eddie gloved the ball, leaped high and over those spikes, and made a vicious swipe with his gloved hand. He put the back of it squarely into Stalner's mouth, and the ball clamped in it, gave it an awful weight.

Stalner rolled over and over, his hands going to his split lips. The Owls charged out on the field, and Eddie sighed. This was where he'd come in. But the umpires were ready for it. They stopped it before it got fairly started by keeping themselves between the howling Owls and Eddie. One of the umpires snapped, "He asked for it. He tried to cut him down."

Eddie had been standing with his hands down. He'd been trapped enough by his temper, it'd never happen again. He thought he could've taken a million punches without them shaking his resolve.

The Owls sullenly retreated, but it wasn't over. Their malignant eyes said it wasn't over by a long shot.

Phillips was good that first inning. Not an Eagle got away from the plate. And Maheffy settled down. He struck out a man, an easy roller to Fleming took care of another one, and Stiers caught a high, lazy fly.

Eddie batted second this inning. Stiers was thrown out on a smash to shortstop, and Eddie stepped up to the plate.

Phillips gave him a long, hard eyeing, and Eddie knew what was coming. He went into the dirt the last split-second before the pitch. He got up, his eyes like ice. All right, he'd allow Phillips that one. Phillips came in with it, and Eddie laced into the ball. He got a lot of wood behind it, but it went straight to Scot at third. He checked his run, turned and went back to the bench. Well, you couldn't get them all.

The Eagles couldn't score in that inning or in the following two. Maheffy kept the Owls blanked, and the game grew tighter with each successive inning. Eddie came up in the fifth, and Phillips dusted him off again. The Owl catcher was having a wonderful time, he thought it was a very funny thing. Eddie beat the dust out of his pants and stepped back up to the plate. He still had that temper under control. These guys couldn't make him lose it.

He lashed into another one, and it went on a line, never dropping an inch. But it went straight out to the left-fielder. That was two of them well-spanked, and he still didn't have a hit.

The Owls threatened in the seventh, but a lightning double-play pulled Maheffy clear. Eddie completed the throw to first and looked at Fleming. They hated each other's guts, but they still worked well to-
gether. He sighed as he thought what it could be like, if he and Fleming worked in harmony. His lips twisted mirthlessly. He was overlooking the biggest “if”. If he stayed with the Eagles.

Fleming got a life to open the bottom half of the seventh, and Hoskins advanced him to the second with a sacrifice bunt. It was getting late in the game, and Winters was playing for that big run. He had a chance of getting it, Eddie thought. With Benson, Stiers, then Eddie coming up. One of them ought to deliver.

Benson slashed a wicked shot to Zeller’s right. The Owl shortstop got over and put a glove on it. He managed to bat it down, but it twisted out of his glove and rolled a few feet. By the time he picked it up again, Fleming was on third, and Benson was kicking dust out of the first-base sack.

Eddie’s eyes were burning coals. He’d be up this inning. If Stiers couldn’t do it, it’d be up to Eddie.

Phillips was in trouble, but he wasn’t through yet. He settled down and got Stiers on five beautiful pitches.

Eddie threw away one of his bats and moved slowly to the plate. You got a feeling about tight games like this one. Phillips was wobbling now, but Eddie had the feeling that if the Eagles let him get out of this hole, they’d never get him down again.

Phillips bent a cold, malevolent glare on him, then let the high, hard one go. It came in with awful force, and Eddie went into the dirt. His eyes were wild as he picked himself up. That made three times today, that made enough. He made the effort and pushed that temper back in place. If Phillips followed his usual pattern, the next one would be in there.

Phillips broke the pattern. He threw the next one at Eddie’s head. Eddie twisted his head out of the way fast. Either of those pitches could’ve scrambled his brains. He drew his bat back all the way. He was ready to let it go, he wanted to throw it clear through Phillips. A little ray of sanity broke through the clouds of rage, and he held that bat. He hadn’t been hurt. Phillips was the guy in a hole. He was behind now, and he’d have to do something about it.

Eddie managed a tight and mirthless grin. He said to the catcher, “Tell him to throw two more that way.”

Startled, the catcher looked at him. This guy should be raging. He wasn’t and that put a different face on things.

Eddie put hard attention on Phillips. That thrown bat could’ve hurt the guy but not nearly as much as a long hit would. That was the way to bust the guy up.

He was ready for the snapping curve. The bat lashed around in that beautiful arc, and it sounded like a hit, a good one. Eddie tore down the base-line. He saw the coacher, at first, waving him on and looked toward the outfield. The outfielders were despondently watching the ball sail over the fence. The crowd was screaming its jubilation. Eddie felt wonderful. He’d really busted Phillips, it was a much better job than he could’ve done with his hands.

Phillips got the next Eagle, but as far as scoring went, the game was over. It was in those 4 big runs on the scoreboard, it was in the sagging shoulders of the Owls. Mahaffy finished the game without any trouble, and the Eagles were practically breathing down the Owl’s necks.

Eddie went into the locker-room and that momentary jubilation was gone. This was the last time he’d dress in this place, and the thought brought its aching hurt. He kept waiting for Winters’ summons, and it didn’t come. He went back to the hotel. He guessed Winters would give it to him tonight.

CHAPTER VII

He got a call to come to Winters’ room after supper. He squared his shoulders and put a false look of bravado on his face. He rapped on the door and opened it with Winters, “Come in.”

Winters had an odd grin on his face. He said mildly, “That was a
nice hit. It broke up a tough, tight game."

Eddie shifted restlessly. Why didn't the guy get it over with?

Winters gave it to him abruptly. "I've traded Hayden. To the Owls. We get some cash and a couple of outfielders. And both clubs think they made themselves a deal."

He saw Eddie's confusion, and his grin was broad and real. "I sent Benson to talk to you when you first got here. I thought it'd better come from him than from me at the time. What he told you was the truth. This club's been hipped on Hayden so long, that they go as he goes. Maybe he's not quite through yet, but I know how much he's slipped. And it was better to trade him while he had a little value. I had to have a reason, so the players wouldn't be too hot. Hayden made it this afternoon. Maybe by getting rid of him, it'll break the nutty spell he had over them."

Eddie said breathlessly, "They hate my guts. Will they do any better with Hayden gone?"

Winters said flatly, "That's the unknown. I wanted you up here because you were a fighter with a temper I knew your and Hayden's story, and I knew how much he'd changed from those early days. I figured there'd be a clash between you. And I knew the club would side in with him. That should bring that temper of yours up, and maybe you could make them mad enough to play a little ball. It's helped some." He grimaced, then said evenly, "I think the club's better off. So far, that temper's helped us. But there's a line."

Eddie's face looked like a neon sign. Winters didn't dislike him, he'd kept him over Hayden. He said fervently, "I'd already figured that. I almost blew up at Phillips and then held it."

"I saw that," Winters said quietly. "You used your head. That stuff wins ball games. Good-night, Eddie."

Eddie went down the hall, and his heart was singing. He had to tell Marge about this. He went to his room and called her, and her voice was frozen. His bubbling enthusiasm flattened, then died. "But Marge—"

Her voice rose passionately. "That fight was over me, wasn't it, Eddie? Hugh told me what happened. He said you deliberately picked a fight with Mike. He said the fight got Mike traded. Oh, Eddie." Her voice rose in a little wail. "And I asked you to be generous."

He wanted to shout at her, and he forced himself to ask calmly, "Your brother didn't say anything about what went before that fight?"

"No. He said your temper has made trouble ever since you came. I asked you, Eddie—" He thought he caught a little sob before she hung up.

**HIS EYES** were burning. Fleming hadn't lied, he'd just left out the important things. He'd made out Hayden as the aggrieved, and because he was Marge's brother, she believed him. To hell with Fleming. Eddie would call her back and explain exactly what'd happened. If it made her dislike her brother a little, he couldn't help it.

She hung up when she recognized his voice. He tried twice more, then his stubbornness refused to let him call again. If that was the way she wanted it, all right. He wouldn't beg, not even her.

He walked into the locker-room, and even though he was prepared for it, the concentrated hatred on their faces set him back. They had a crazy belief in their minds, and nothing was going to get it out. The hopelessness welled up in Eddie as he stared at them.

He went out onto the field, and the crowd screamed angrily at him. Their angry screams rose in volume when Winters appeared. The morning papers had carried an account of the deal, they'd also commented that Winters had traded away any chance at the flag.

Hayden came out with the Owls, and he got an ovation. He was an enemy ballplayer now, and they still cheered him. Those kinds of things would drive a man crazy trying to figure them out.

Hayden didn't pitch that afternoon. Eddie wished he had. He went berserk at bat, he got four for five,
and he drove in six of the Eagles’ runs. He had one bobble in the field, a hard, low ball thrown by Fleming to start a double-play. It twisted out of Eddie’s glove, and it led to the scoring of the only two Owl runs. He stared long and thoughtfully at Fleming. That could’ve been simply an error, he’d give the guy the benefit of the doubt.

He walked off the field, knowing his bat had won that game, and still the crowd or the Eagles didn’t like him. But the Eagles had closed ground, they were a game off the pace.

He passed Marge that night, and he thought for a moment she would speak. Then her chin lifted, and she brushed by him. He noticed her face was strained, and he wanted to rush after her. Then the stubbornness asserted itself. He kept on walking.

Hayden pitched the final game of the series. And he was good. Or else he had the Eagles mesmerized into believing he was. Eddie got two hits, but there was no one on base, and no one could hit behind him. Eddie didn’t think Hayden had so much. The guy had tried to bean him twice, and it wasn’t as hard to get out of the way of them, as it had been with Phillips’ pitches. Hayden got himself a shut-out, and the fans’ angry screaming sounded long after the Eagles left the field.

EDDIE WONDERED what Winters thought now, he wondered if doubt was creeping into his mind. He heard some of the Eagles glumly say, “We’ll lose every game we go up against Hayden. Winters was crazy to trade him.”

Eddie slipped on his coat and walked to the door. He turned and said, “You bunch of gutless wonders. He didn’t have a blamed thing. He stood out there and waved his past record at you, and you rolled over for him. Hell, yes, he’ll beat you every time. That wouldn’t take any doing.” He turned and slammed the door hard in their faces.

They had three weeks to go, and they were two games behind. It was no hill for a closely-knit team. But the Eagles weren’t that. They were a long way from it.

They went out and lost two games out of four to the last place Blues, and only an Owl slump kept the gap from widening. Eddie pointed out that Hayden had been knocked out of the box by a second division club. It didn’t do a thing to make them open their eyes, it only added to the terrible weight of their hatred for him.

He’d seen something in that Blue series that’d concerned him a lot. He and Fleming had messed up two double plays. Or maybe that dubious credit was all his. Fleming had started them off well enough. But he’d whirled the ball to second, not waiting for Eddie to get there. One throw went into the outfield, and Eddie had barely managed to glove the other with a long leap. He didn’t know if those throws were deliberate or coming from Fleming’s subconscious mind because he hated Eddie. But either way, it worked against them. He tried to believe Fleming was just playing ragged ball because he was upset. But that raggedness didn’t hold when Fleming had a single out ahead of him. He fielded and threw those all right.

They took the extra game from the Tigers, and the Owls copped the series from the Bisons. Hayden won one of those games, but it was a bad, high scoring thing. But the Eagles commented favorably on it, and Eddie wanted to scream at them. Not a blamed one of them would squarely face the facts.

Eddie’s doubts about Fleming crystallized in the opening game of the Series against the Wolves. The first time the double-play setup came along, Fleming held back the toss a moment, then he flipped a soft, lazy thing to Eddie. That delay consumed that valuable split second, and Eddie tried to make it up. He hurried his throw, and it went a half dozen feet over Benson’s head.

The hitter went safely into second. There was a man on second with only one away, and the sacks should’ve been clean. Carver glowered at Eddie. The pitcher blamed Eddie for that
misplay. He didn’t see or prefer to overlook Fleming’s part in it.

Eddie fidgeted nervously. That misplay upset Carver, and he got behind. He finally had to come in with it, and the hitter slashed a line drive over Eddie’s head. Eddie went higher than he’d ever gone before, and he was still inches below that streaking ball. The runner from second scored, and the hitter pulled up at first.

Eddie wasn’t hollering now. He was tight and nervous, the first time he’d felt that way in a long time.

**CARVER TOOK** a long time with his next pitch. The batter slapped it along the ground to Fleming’s right. Fleming got over, made a nice stop, then threw a hard ball knee-high over the second-base bag. Eddie tried, he strained every muscle in his body, and he couldn’t reach it. The ball ticked the ends of his fingers and went on out into the outfield. By the time it was retrieved, Wolf runners were on second and third.

Carver howled his head off, and the rest of the Eagles joined in. Only Benson was silent, and Eddie thought bitterly, maybe he thinks I’m that bad, too. He walked over to Fleming and said thickly, “You louse. You little louse. You pull that once more, and—”

The undertones of hatred were plain in Fleming’s voice. “There won’t be another time. Look at Winters.”

Eddie slowly turned his head. He saw Winters’ face. Winters was pulling him out of the game.

He went in to the bench, and the resentment and bitterness almost choked him. Winters looked at him and shook his head, and somehow the defeated gesture held and calmed Eddie.

He sat on the bench and watched the Wolves pound out two more hits for an additional brace of runs, and the Eagles never recovered from that early scoring. He looked at the scoreboard before he went in. It was a sad thing. The Owls had won their game, the Eagles were three games behind.

Winters caught him before he reached the tunnel and said, “I want to see you.”

Eddie followed him into the office. He said hotly, ‘Fleming caused that. He’s throwing that thing a step ahead or a step behind—’

Winters said wearily, “I know it, I knew it when I sent Huston out for you.”

Angry color flooded Eddie’s face. “Then why in the devil—”

Winters said patiently, “I could’ve taken Fleming out instead. But Huston doesn’t like you any better. It wouldn’t correct things. And maybe Huston might get the same cute idea.”

His voice held a tiny plea. “Don’t you see, Eddie. There’s still a chance for us. You’ve read the papers. You’ve heard the crowd. If we don’t co-op, I know where I’ll wind up. I’ve got to make the most of what I have. Maybe this move will help things, maybe it won’t.”

Eddie said bitterly, “It won’t. Those guys think Hayden was something wrapped in gold-foil. We’ve got one more series with the Owls, and Hayden will walk out there and beat us silly.”

He saw Winters’ weary face and knew the same thought was big in Winters’ mind. He wished there was something he could do.

Winters said in a tired voice, “Will you keep your head, Eddie? Will you go along and see what happens?”

Eddie said slowly, “I’ll do anything I can, Del.”

With him not playing, he thought the infield went a little smoother. The Eagles won three games in a row, and Eddie pinch-hit in all of them. Twice, he delivered, driving in important runs, game-winning runs. It didn’t give him enough satisfaction. He wanted to be out there every moment.

The Owls dropped a game during the Eagles’ short spurt, and the gap painfully closed up to two games. It stayed that way until the last game before the big series. The Owls dropped a thirteen inning contest, and Eddie thought that should do something for the Eagles’ spirits. They had a four game series ahead of them and a one game deficit.
They were on top of things, if they believed in themselves.

They went back home for the final series, and Eddie listened to them talk on the train, "Hayden tomorrow," Jewett said mournfully. "And you know how that guy goes when the big ones are at stake." Eddie saw the bobbing heads, and he got out of there quickly before he would find himself wading into them.

CHAPTER VIII

The stands were crowded long before the game time. Eddie looked at that sea of faces and wondered if Marge were there. He'd seen her a few times on that last trip, but not a word had passed between them. It was a sad business the way the breach between them had widened, it made him sick each time he thought of it.

He saw Hayden come out with the Owls. Fleming went over to say hello, and Hayden turned away after a perfunctory word or two.

Eddie felt a savage stab of elation. Now, maybe Fleming would see a few things. He saw that Fleming was only confused, it'd take him a long time to put things together and get the right answer. Eddie had been in a like spot, he knew how it could leave a man groping.

Maheffy got the bid against Hayden, and the first inning was scoreless. Eddie saw the Eagles bat, and there was an air about them that said they thought Hayden was invincible. And no team could hit with that riding on their bats.

Hayden dusted off Fleming with the first pitch. Fleming looked startled when he got up. He'll see, Eddie thought bleakly. Hayden had a chance for that World Series dough, and to blazes with anyone who might be in his way.

Fleming struck out, and Benson rolled a weak one down to short. Hayden hit Rimson in the back, and there was a brief gleeful cry from the crowd. Stiers stepped up and got one in close to his chin. He was tight and wary after that, and his best was a puny pop to third.

Eddie's eyes were hot. Hayden was dusting off every hitter, he wasn't letting a man get a toe-hold. The Eagles should be raving about that, and they accepted it with resignation.

It was a scoreless game up to the last half of the fourth. Fleming was up first. Eddie saw the ball leave Hayden's hand, saw it streak toward Fleming's head. He yelled wildly, and it was too late. Fleming partly turned, and the ball hit him back of the ear. Eddie heard the sickening thud of it, saw the lifeless way Fleming dropped. He jumped off the bench and tore across the diamond to Hayden. That'd been bound to happen. One of those dusters was certain to slip.

Hayden's mouth was open, he was staring at the prone figure, when Eddie reached him. Eddie tried to tear off his head with the punch. He knocked Hayden down, and he wanted to cut him to pieces with his spikes.

The Owls charged him, but the Eagles were in on this, this time. They boiled out onto the field, and it was a beautiful, old-fashioned Donnybrook while it lasted. Eddie was busy, he had a lot of punches to duck or absorb and more to throw.

It took the umpires and all of the park police to quell this one. And Eddie was thrown out. He heard the whine of a siren as an ambulance pulled onto the field, saw Fleming loaded onto a stretcher and lifted inside. He was shaking when he went through the tunnel.

He listened to the rest of the game on the locker-room radio. The Owls scored twice in the sixth. In the eighth, the Eagles loaded the bases with two away. Huston stepped up to the plate. Eddie pounded his hands together. He should be up there. Huston struck out, and the Eagles never threatened again. The Owls were two in front with three games to go. It looked as though the Owls were in.

The Eagles came in, and Winters walked over to Eddie. He said harshly, "We needed you. A hit would've tied it up. A long one could've won it."
Eddie said hotly, "If you think I could let that louse get away with that—"

Winters said, "But it was for a guy you don't even like."

Eddie turned that slowly over in his mind. "I didn't even think of that. We're both on the same team. That's all I had in mind." He asked fearfully, "How bad is he, Del?"

"He's still unconscious," Winters muttered. There was no censure in his eyes. "Maybe I'd have done the same thing."

Eddie looked back from the doorway, and the Eagles were watching him. They had a funny look on their faces—a look as though a new idea had hit them, and they couldn't quite classify it yet.

He went to the hospital, and he couldn't see Fleming. He wasn't quite sure why he was there. He doubted Fleming would even talk to him. He stopped a doctor, and questioned him. "A mild concussion. You ballplayers have hard heads. He'll be out in a few days," the doctor said.

Even though Eddie didn't like the guy, it was still a relief to hear those words. He started to go, and he saw Marge watching him from a doorway. He wanted to go to her, and the old restraint held him. She probably even blamed him for this. If Hayden were still with the Eagles, her brother wouldn't be here. Eddie hurried out of the hospital.

The Eagles didn't talk to Eddie while they dressed for the game. He saw something new in their attitude, a sort of grim purpose. A little flare of hope lighted inside him. Those guys were mad, but not so much at him, this time.

Winters sent Huston to short, and Eddie took over his old spot. Carver stepped on the mound, and it took him seven pitches to retire the Owls in the first inning. Eddie saw the temper the Eagles were in by the way they battled in their half of the inning. Three Owl pitchers saw duty before the side was retired. The Eagles had batted around. They had eight runs on the scoreboard, and for all practical purposes the game was over. Carver got better with every inning.

When it was over, they were a game behind with two to go.

Winters said in a small, hopeful voice, "Maybe this is it."

Eddie wanted to agree with him. But they still had Hayden in that last game. He was afraid that would be the big one.

He went to the hospital that night, and he took candy and fruit with him. He gave them to a nurse and said gruffly, "Just tell him it's from a friend." He heard a movement in the room, someone was coming toward the door, and he hurried away. He wasn't asking for anything, he didn't want anyone's thanks.

That third game was a heartbreaker. It was filled with hits and errors, bad base-running and brilliant base stealing. The lead changed hands four times, and each team used three pitchers. But the Eagles won it in the eleventh, won it on Eddie's sharp grounder that ripped through the infield. It was all tied up, they had the big one left tomorrow, and he felt a numbing hollow in his stomach.

He went to the hospital that night with more fruit, and the nurse smiled at him. "He'll be out in the morning. He's all right."

Eddie was glad the guy had recovered. He was glad for Marge's sake as well as for Fleming, for he knew the strain she must've been under. But he also knew a sickening disappointment. It meant he wouldn't play tomorrow. Huston would take over his spot.

He heard the excited chatter in the locker-room before he opened the door. It sounded good and alive and tough, and he wished he were a part of it. He opened the door, and the room went dead. His face was wooden, but he couldn't keep the bitterness out of his eyes. He'd dreamed of being an important part of a championship ball club. It could be—it was hanging so close he could almost reach out and touch it, and it might as well be a million miles away.

He dressed and hurried out onto the field. He'd grown used to crowds, but this one was a little awe-inspiring. He didn't see how another person could
be cramped into the park. He saw that they were in an uncertain mood. They wanted to believe, but there was the fact Hayden was going against the Eagles.

Winters sent him out to second for the infield practice. But Huston was there, and it didn't mean a damn thing. Eddie took his batting practice licks, and he laid one over the wall and bounced several off it. The rebellion swelled inside him. He could feel it in him today, and it wasn't going to to get the chance to come out.

Maheffy drew the assignment, and there was a peculiar eagerness about him that Eddie hadn't noticed before. They all looked that way, and it gave him something to think about.

Then it was time for the game, and the Eagles raced out onto the field. Winters looked at Eddie and growled, "You waiting for someone to carry you out?"

Eddie's heart almost skipped a beat. He heard Winters, or maybe he just thought he did.

Winters said softly, "This is the one we want, Eddie. I've got what I've wanted all season. I finally got me a ball club."

Eddie raced out onto the field. He hadn't seen any change in the Eagles. That hopeful, sentimental streak ran strong through him. Maybe Winters knew something Eddie didn't.

He managed a tentative grin at Fleming, and the guy looked back with a frozen face. Eddie's heart dropped like an elevator with a broken cable. Nothing had changed. Fleming would dump him as he had in those other games. Winters was crazy to take a chance like this.

Maheffy was too eager on Zeller. His pitches were smoking, but he missed the corners. He walked Zeller, and Eddie heard the restlessness stir of the crowd. The Owl coaches were bawling their heads off, and Eddie yelled at Maheffy, "Bear down. Bear down."

Maheffy grinned faintly. The shock of it almost knocked Eddie down. He shook his head. He decided he must be seeing things.

CHAPTER IX

M AHEFFY TRIED to blaze one by Stalner, and Stalner put the wood on it. Fleming picked up that hot shot after the first bounce. Eddie raced for the bag, and here it was all over again. Fleming would whip that one over the bag, and Eddie wouldn't be there. He saw Fleming hesitate. His foot touched the sack, and Fleming tossed him a soft floater, letter-high and in perfect position for the relay to first. Eddie was so surprised he almost dropped it. He made his pivot, leaped high over the sliding Zeller and fired the ball to first. That umpire's jerking thumb was the sweetest sight in the world to Eddie.

He looked at Fleming. Fleming had had him then, and Eddie couldn't understand why he hadn't taken it. It hadn't been a muff. Eddie had seen Fleming take his deliberate time.

Fleming moved over and said, "Close your mouth, Busker."

But it was said in a different tone. Eddie knew he must be crazy, but he could swear it was said in an almost friendly tone.

Fleming said, "Keep your mind on the game."

Eddie wasn't mistaken about Maheffy's grin this time. It was real. And the hostility was gone out of Braun's eyes at third. He was very confused, this was all mixed up.

Maheffy struck out Longatti, and the Eagles went in for their turn. Hayden toed the mound, and Eddie's eyes were really wide now. For the Eagle bench was a concentrated mess of snarling players. Hayden turned a beet-red face toward them, then faced Fleming.

Fleming's face was stony, and Eddie wished he knew what was running through the guy's mind. Hayden threw one close in inside, and Fleming pulled his chin out of the way. He yelled, "Throw another one there, and I'll massage your skull with this bat." There was a grim, intensive quality to his voice, and Hayden's eyes widened.

Eddie couldn't get this at all. He only knew things were different. He
bawled, “Tear the bum’s ears off, Hugh.”

Fleming looked around and gave him a slow nod. Eddie got a vast encouragement from that nod, Fleming didn’t resent his words. None of the Eagles did. They were all yelling with him at Hayden.

Fleming didn’t rip off his ears, but he did work him for a walk. Benson couldn’t solve Hayden’s slants and went down on a pop to Scott, at third. Rimson, one of the outfielders, Winters had gotten in the trade, stepped up to the plate. He slapped a hard single through the hole, and Eddie heard the crowd’s delighted yelling. They weren’t sore about that much of the trade, anyway. He felt a tremendous surge of excitement. Hayden was weakening. They might get him this inning.

Hayden bore down and struck out Stiers. And it was up to Eddie. He planted himself beside the plate, and Fleming’s voice came clearly to him from third. Fleming yelled at Hayden, and the threat was still in his voice, “That goes for him, too, you bum. You throw at him, and I’m coming after you.”

MADDIE WAS slack-jawed. This was getting to much for him. He wished he knew what’d happened. He only knew he felt great, he felt wonderful. He was ready for that first pitch. It came in letter-high and on the outside corner. Eddie bunted it on a line over Zeller’s leaping glove. Fleming roared home on the hit, and Rimson went down to second. That single had been too hard for him to take anymore.

Eddie danced off first, and his yelling was loud and delighted. They were going to wrap Hayden up early.

They didn’t. Hayden struck out Braun. But the Eagles had the first blood, no one could take that away from them.

The second and third innings were scoreless. Both Hayden and Maheffy grew stronger with each out. Eddie knew he was seeing some great pitching. Hayden had reached back into the past and come up with a gem. Eddie came up in the fourth, and Hayden got him on four pitched balls. Eddie thought he’d missed that last zipping curve by a foot.

The game went into the fifth and sixth innings, and since Eddie’s hit not an Eagle had reached first. Maheffy had allowed two hits, but they came at a time when they didn’t hurt.

It was sharp, bitter ball. The infielders make sparkling plays on vicious, skipping bounders, and the outfielders raced a long way to pull down the hits tabbed for extra bases. Fleming started another double-play in the seventh, and the ball was there waiting for Eddie. It was great, playing ball this way, and the pressure of the tight game didn’t bother him at all. They had that one big run, and now it should really be working against the Owls.

Jewett struck out to end the seventh inning. The Eagles were six outs from the flag. They were alive and vibrant, they were full of pep, and they looked like a championship club. They fought every play, protested every adverse decision. And what happened to one man happened to all of them. Eddie drew a deep breath. This was ball as it should be.

Maheffy lost Longatti to open the eighth. The Eagles squall loud and long over the calling of the last one, but there it was. McConnell blasted into the first pitch, and Eddie’s heart jerked up into his throat. It was to his right, it was labelled a clean hit. He took those long, racing strides and dove for the ball. He hit with jarring impart, and he made a desperate grab for the ball. It hit the tip of his fingers and squirmed out of his grasp, rolling to the edge of the grass. By the time it was recovered, Longatti was on third and McConnell was on first.

Maheffy looked at Eddie, and there was consolation in his glance, not censure. Fleming moved over and said calmly, “That was no error, Busher. You were lucky to touch it.”

Eddie shook his head, still blaming himself. Just a fraction of an inch more, and they wouldn’t be in this hole. But Fleming’s words on Maheffy’s look helped—they helped tremendously.
Eddie was afraid Maheffy was weakening. Carver and Shultz worked frantically in the bullpen. But Maheffy settled down and struck out Scott. He got Rush on a pop foul that Jewett chased clear back to the screen and caught, and Eddie could breathe again. They were going to pull out of this. Elfriedes wasn’t too much with a bat.

He was that time. He got hold of one and rode it on a screaming line. It hit between Rimson and Stiers, and they had to go clear to the wall to run it down. By the time it was back in the infield, Longatti and McConnell had scored, and Elfriedes was standing on second. Two runs went up for the Owls, and they were leading 2 to 1. Maheffy got the next hitter, but Eddie still felt sick. That was a big lead the way Hayden was going.

It looked bigger after the eighth inning was over. Maheffy struck out, and Fleming sent a weak roller back to the box. Benson tagged one, but it went straight into Zeller’s hands. The inning was gone. They had three more outs, and the fear grew inside Eddie.

Maheffy struck out two men in the ninth, and Eddie picked up a blazing grounder and fired it to Benson for the last out. They had this half inning left and nothing more.

He’d be up third this inning. He went in and picked out his bat. He went down on one knee and pleaded silently to Rimson. Rimson worked Hayden for the full count, and Hayden was maddeningly deliberate with his pitches.

Fleming came up and kneeled down beside Eddie. He said, “Busher, I tried to get you thrown off this club. I tried to knock us out of the flag.” His voice had a wondering tone. “It takes a long time for some of us to wake up. I thought Hayden was great, I thought he was everything. After he left us, he didn’t even know I was alive. He didn’t come near the hospital. When Marge told him she wanted no part of him, he was through with me. Sis told me you were there every night, she told me you brought those things.” His grin was embarrassed but real. “I straightened her out on what happened between you and Hayden. Women are kinda stubborn. She thinks you should come to her.” He pointed in the direction of a box, back of first base. “She’s over there.”

Eddie turned his head. He couldn’t see her standing, and his heart gave a great bound.

A groan went up from the crowd, and he looked back. Rimson had taken a mighty cut. It’d pulled him off his feet, and the ball was in the catcher’s mitt.

Fleming went on, “Winters told me what you said in the locker-room after I was beaned. We talked it over before you came in today. We finally figured out you’re our luck. Win this one for us, Eddie.”

Eddie felt his throat go tight. It was the first time any of them, except Benson, had ever called him that.” Fleming grinned. “Every guy on that bench is pulling for you, Busher.” Eddie didn’t mind that title now. It had a lot of respect in it, it also had a lot of affection.

Stiers rolled an easy one down the third-base line, and the crowd’s groan rose as Scott charged in. Scott booted that easy hopper. He dropped it and couldn’t find the handle. And Stiers was running like his tail was on fire. Scott picked it up and blazed it to first, but Stiers had a step to the good.

The crowd screamed their jubilation, and Eddie saw Marge on her feet with the rest of them. Hayden walked around the mound, kicking at the dirt, his face black with rage. Eddie thought, Scott’s hurting like hell, and Hayden can only think of himself.

“There it is, Eddie,” Fleming said.

Eddie threw away one of his bats. He stepped up to the plate and every muscle was wire-tight. Hayden was boiling. It’d either work for or against him. Eddie didn’t know.

The pitch scorched plateward. Hayden’s rage was working for him. Eddie’s eyes were awed as he saw that speed. It smacked into the catcher’s mitt, and Eddie had a strike against him.
He thought he knew now what Hayden would try to do. Hayden would burn him down with pure speed. Eddie was ready for the next one, he swung with everything he had, and he got only a piece of it. It whirled off his bat and rose in a high, fast arc over the screen in back of him. There was a tight band around his throat, and his heart hammered like crazy. He was behind, he had only one left.

Hayden's left foot went high, his arm came up and over, and the force of his throw pulled him down off the mound. Eddie saw the white streak of the ball. His bat came around, and the smack of the wood tore yells out of the crowd's throat. Eddie was running. That felt good, it felt good enough to go all the way. The coach at first flagged him down, and there was wild ecstasy on his face. Eddie looked at the left-fielder, and the guy was staring hopelessly at the wall. The ball was gone, it'd sailed over that barrier.

Eddie slowed down to a trot. He heard the crowd yelling his name over and over. He turned second, and he couldn't help the broad grin on his face. Winters was the picture of a crazy man. A young guy couldn't make the leaps Winters was making. And back of him the Eagle bench was wild. Eddie saw the tumbled pile of bats, saw the jumping, screaming men.

He looked at Hayden. His face was the picture of misery, and his shoulders sagged. For just a moment the memory of those days in Centerville came into Eddie's mind. He felt a brief smarting in his eyes, then it was gone. He guessed losing kid dreams hurt everyone.

He turned third, and he saw Marge waving frantically to him. He put his head down and tore for the plate. That winning run was in the bag, he didn't need to hurry for it. But with a girl like her waiting, no sane man would waste any time.

(Continued from page 5)

the deal. "When the Boston Bruins first entered the league 20 odd years ago, old Charley Adams bought practically the whole Western Canada League for something like $50,000—and some of the players included in the bundle were the Cook Brothers, and Frank Boucher!"

IF YOU are one of those golfers disgusted with your drives you may find a note of cheer in the news that a plastic ball being readied for market will add 60 yards to your distance.

But there's some bad to go with the good. An English research addict has figured that only 26.8 per cent of the energy generated in driving a ball 200 yards goes to the ball itself. The rest, he asserts, is absorbed by the follow-through. frictional losses at the club face, sound and vibration.

So the next time you find yourself standing too close to the ball after you hit it, blame it on that for some.

The United States Polo Association moaned recently that the high cost of living had upped the per month cost of feeding a polo pony from $60 to $150.

(Continued on page 77)
He could kill you with either hand. He wasn’t champ for nothing and he’d sure as sunrise knock Cal’s head off, they told Cal if he didn’t get serious.

“Ha!” Cal laughed.

“CAN THE CLOWN KING OF THE RING STAY SERIOUS LONG ENOUGH TO MAKE A FIGHT OF IT AGAINST WELTER CHAMP JIMMY BART?”

THAT’S THE way the story started. It laid the question right on the line and went on from there to shape an answer.

There was slight, careless smile on Cal Block’s face as he read the story. The smile was for his manager, Tom Moses, and the three other

The fans could tell from the way the champ hit the canvas and lay still that the fight was over!
well-dressed gentlemen who were present. The story was about Cal, who had been dubbed the Clown King of the Ring.

Cal laughed when he finished the story and put the paper aside. "There's a lotta truth in that story," Tom warned. "This Jimmy Bart ain't champ for nothin'. He'll knock your head off if you don't get serious."

"The opinion there," and Cal pointed to the paper, "is that I'm going to get my head knocked off whether I fight seriously or not. So why not enjoy myself?"

"See?" Tom said to the other three, and he threw up his hands. "It don't do any good. I talk and I talk, but it don't do any good. One good fighter in five years, I get hold of, and he has to be a screwball!"

"The first few times we got these kind of stories, you said it was good. Very good, you said, and now you beef. Make up your mind, will you, Tom?" There was a good-natured, unworried grin on Cal's face.

"Sure, that's swell. That color, that's good. That got us up fast. Trouble is, now you believe that copy. Now you won't straighten out. Time is past for clowning—for this Bart we gotta work hard. Settle down, will you?"

"I'll work hard," Cal said, and the grin was still there. "I'll work my gloves off the laces, I'll run the leather off my shoes, what more do you want?"

"What more do I want?" Tom said. He turned to the three men. "What more do I want? He asks me that, yet."

The three men had been interested in the scene. The one stirred and spoke. "As far as we're concerned, of course, this color and copy is good for the gate." He looked directly at Cal. "You understand, though, that since this is our first venture into fight promoting, we want more than just a good gate. We want a good fight so that these people will come back again sometime."

"Relax, I'll give you a good fight," Cal said. "I may do it standing on my head, but I'll give you a good fight."

"He ain't kidding," Tom said immediately. "He's liable to stand on his head, that guy. You don't know what I go through."

The three men rose. "Well, we trust you will realize your obligation to us and the fans," the second one said. "It's been a pleasure meeting you, Mr. Block."

They shook hands around, said the polite things, and left. Tom Moses went out with them. These were three wealthy men who were going into the fight promoting business, and Tom wanted them to feel that he would do his best even though Cal might not.

Cal picked up the paper again and glanced over the story. This time there was no smile on his face. He was serious as he re-read the story. Actually he liked to clown and laugh, but this fight with Jimmy Bart was a cross-road in his life. He figured he had to win the fight and the championship.

Cal finished the story for the second time, glanced at his watch, whistled, and was putting on his coat as he left the hotel room. The reason he had to win the fight would be waiting for him on the corner.

She was standing there with her back to him as he came out of the hotel. Mary McGuire, the prettiest Irish lass in the city of New York. Cal admired her slim, straight legs and back as he cat-walked up behind her.

He tapped her on the right shoulder, and was standing on her left side with his hat in his hand over his head when she finally looked that way.

Mary laughed at him, and it turned his insides to butter. "I might have known," she said. "How did you ever get to be a clown instead of a man?"

"My mother was frightened by one at a circus and I was born with bells on," he said.

"Where are we going to eat?" she asked.

"McHoulihan's of Oyster Bay, or whatever it is," he said.

They went downstairs in the spacious, modern dining room and found a table near the wall. They ordered,
and then he looked at her round, lovely face framed in the dark hair which was almost blue with the lights in it.

"I was reading the sports pages today," she said.

"A very bad habit," he said. "Read them enough and you begin to believe them. It's like reading a doctor-book, you feel every symptom."

"They don't give you a chance unless you settle down to serious training," she said.

He shrugged his shoulders. "That's copy. I always settle down to serious training. It gives them something to write about, that's how come I got built up in the first place."

"How did you happen to get such a reputation?" she asked.

"Very simple," Cal said. "I was fighting a Joe down in Cleveland. This was a pretty good fight, but I'd been sick just before and I was shaky. He began to beat me around. Along about the sixth my legs were pretty weak, so I figured, what the heck! I knelt down and let the referee count eight while I rested. I got up, danced around the ring once, and knelt down for another eight. The referee wasn't sure what he could do about it, and the crowd began yelling, but I did it several times. Finally this Joe I'm fighting figures it's his duty to be a hero and knock me out, so he rushes like mad. I cross a right that catches him coming in, and the fight is over with me the winner." He grinned at her.

"So they figured you were a clown?" she asked.

"Some figured I was a clown, some figured I was a jerk, and some didn't like it at all, but it gave the writers some copy and I was on my way."

"Next fight I meet a guy with a big haymaker. Every time he swings I make believe the wind from it blew me back a couple steps. He gets so mad he leaves himself wide open and I cool him. More copy and I saw there was a future in it."

"And what about Jimmy Bart?" she asked.

Cal frowned. "What about him?" he countered.

"Are you going to clown him out of the championship?" she asked.

Cal laughed at her. "I don't think so," he said. "You can't clown a good fighter out of a fight, and nobody'd ever clown Bart out of a title. Have you ever seen him fight?"

She shook her head. "I never saw a fight until I met you," she said.

"He never smiles," Cal said. "He's like a machine. He just keeps moving, picking-off and hitting. He can kill you with either hand and he never wastes a motion. Nobody figures I can lick him."

"Can you?" she asked.

**CAL WASN'T** the clown king now. He was serious. "I think I can—maybe. Here's the way it is, Mary. If I win, I'm the champ, and that's a nice life. Being champ is all right if you don't let it go to your head. You fight twice a year, you're in the chips, you go around the country and enjoy life. A guy and gal in love could have a nice honeymoon like that."

Mary looked up quickly and her eyes moistened a little.

"If I don't win," Cal said hastily, "I'm just another screwball of the ring. I fight every month for peanuts, once in a while get a good gate, and pretty soon I get punchy. A guy in that business shouldn't be married."

There was a puzzled, wondering look on Mary's face.

Cal grinned at her suddenly. "Let it go," he said "What I mean is—I have to win, and if I do—"

"You will," she said softly.

"Thanks for the vote of confidence," Cal said. "Only this fight isn't going to be won by voting."

Bart was a shuffling fighter who fought flat-footed, but whose hands were lightning fast and who hit with terrific power. You couldn't call Bart a boxer, but he was very hard to hit because of those fast hands.

"You got to move around him," Tom said. "Stay on your toes, keep moving, and use that left."

"You think so?" Cal asked.

"Sure I think so," Tom answered. "Didn't I just say so? How do you think you're going to fight him? You going to walk in and mix it with him?"
“It might surprise him,” Cal said. Tom was disgusted. “Nothing from you would surprise him.” He turned to Max Wetzel, a columnist who was listening with interest. “This guy—he says he’ll fight standing on his head.”

“Not a bad idea at all!” Cal said to Max. “He starts to rush and I stand on my head. He has to get on his knees to hit me because he can’t hit below the belt. So I fall on him accidentally and tire him out.”

Tom actually tore at his hair. “You got to box this Bart,” he repeated. “Okay, I’ll box him,” Cal said. “Who have you got for me to spar with?”

“Good boys,” Tom said. “Good boys. Petey Sain, Willie Murphy, and Con Wilson.”

Cal thought them over. Con Wilson was the only good fighter there. Con fought something like Bart. Willie was a cutie who couldn’t hit, and Sain was a broken-down punching bag. “Okay,” Cal said. “Anything else I can do for you, Max?” he asked the columnist who had been asking him a few questions.

“No,” Max said. “I just wonder if you’re really taking this fight seriously.”

“Sure,” Cal said. “You bet. You tell the folks I’m prepping for a knock-out in the first round. Tell them I’m going to be so sharp I’ll be able to shave Bart without touching him.”

Max shook his head and left.

Cal trained well for the fight. Training wasn’t hard for him. He didn’t have a tendency to put on weight and he never got much out of shape.

He ran, worked the bags, and boxed the way Tom told him to do. He cracked wise with the reporters, laughed at Bart’s chances, and never was caught in a serious moment. The reporters watched him box, admitted that he looked good, but predicted that he wouldn’t be able to stay ten of the fifteen rounds with dour, powerful Jimmy Bart.

A week before the fight Tom had to go into New York to arrange a few details for the fight. That evening, before Cal took his shower, after the reporters and visitors had left, Cal called to Con Wilson.

“How about going a couple more rounds?” he asked Con.

Con looked surprised. “Sure,” he said. “What’s the idea?”

“You fight something like Bart, and I’ve been wondering what would happen if I mixed with a fighter like you,” Cal explained.

Con was more surprised. “You’re not figuring on mixing it with Bart, are you?”

“I’m not sure,” Cal said. “Let’s see how we do.”

Con shook his head, muttered something about a screwball, and climbed into the ring. Cal followed him in and they squared away.

Con shuffled forward and Cal came in easily to meet him. Cal shot a light left which Con countered with a straight right. Cal picked it off and banged his left swiftly. Con shot a one-two which Cal caught, on his elbows, then Cal again banged the left and hooked a right to the stomach which was good. Con grunted and moved back a step. Cal drove with pumping hands. For a second they mixed in a flurry of blows, then Cal came up with a right that rocked Con even though they were wearing the heavy gloves.

Con moved back and Cal followed. Cal was a little disgusted. Con didn’t have a heart in this and Bart would be much tougher. Cal finished off what he thought was a round, and then called it off.

Con was still shaking his head. “You can hit all right,” he admitted, “but it’ll be suicide.”

“For who?” Cal asked lightly, and he walked away from the older fighter.

Cal got his first close look at Jimmy Bart when they weighed in the morning before the fight. Bart didn’t smile during the entire proceeding. He did what had to be done in business-like fashion, he shook hands with Cal because his manager said he should, and he was ready to leave. The photographers called for a picture.

“Sure,” Bart’s manager said, and he
stopped Bart. He held up the champion's hand while the bulbs flashed, then Bart left, his face still mask-like.

"How about you, Cal?" one of the photographers called.

"You bet," Cal said. He waved and turned on an exaggerated toothpaste smile. They took his picture, he joked with them, and finally Tom dragged him away.

Cal ate a big dinner that noon right after the weighing-in. His weight was all right and he didn't have to worry. Mary had dinner with him, but he couldn't shake Tom; Tom insisted on staying right with him.

"Coach, here, wouldn't let me go out alone," Cal explained.

"He's a screwball," Tom said. "I should take my eyes off him."

Bart, in the ring, was just as deadpan and unsmiling as he had been at the commission offices. He stood looking at his feet as the referee issued instructions.

"This is a championship fight, and I want you boys to know it," Buddy Kelly, the referee, said. "You know the rules and I'm here to see you fight by them. Break clean when I say, and give the fans a good fight without comics." He looked directly at Cal as he made the last statement.

"Aye, aye, sir," Cal said, and Buddy jerked around, but Cal was already on his way to his corner.

Cal mitted the crowd, winked at the sports writers, and came out dancing when the bell rang for round one. He danced around the steadily advancing champion and flicked twice with his left. Bart had no trouble picking-off, and he followed Cal. Cal danced away, and Bart followed. He shuffled after Cal until he had Cal in a corner, then he moved. Cal shot two still lefts and slid down the ropes to get out of the corner.

Bart came in after him, and Cal continued to throw the left and backpedal. His lefts were doing no damage even when they hit, which was seldom, but it was the fight outlined for him by Tom Moses. Tom was working on the theory that if he stayed fifteen rounds it would be at least a moral victory, and might even surprise the judges into giving him a verdict.

BART FOLLOWED patiently, no expression on his face, and the leather-lunged members of the audience took advantage of the quiet to bombard both contestants with remarks. Again Bart cornered Cal and came after him. Cal shot the left and stepped away, but Bart anticipated him and came along. Bart's explosive gloves went into action and rocked Cal into the ropes.

Cal went for the clinch, but Bart brought up a right that had been somewhere else a moment before. The ring danced and the tide of noise from the crowd came up; Cal felt rather than saw the champ, and held on. The champ got him with a left before he tied up both hands; he held on until Kelly forced them apart, and his head was clear again.

Cal had predicted a knockout in the first round—it would be ironical if it was Bart who scored the knockout. The papers would really give him a ride. Bart might beat him, but Cal's pride wouldn't let him go down in the first.

The champ followed in and Cal couldn't get back on his toes to get away. Bart slammed him back into the ropes, rocked him with a left and right, then clipped him on the point of the chin with a left hook.

Cal came to about the time he hit the canvas. He rolled over on his back and the ring lights almost blinded him. He climbed to a knee and shook his head. The referee tolled "seven." Cal hadn't thought he had been down that long. He heard Kelly say "eight" and figured he should get up. He just made it by a split second.

Bart charged in to finish the fight. Cal managed to get inside the blasting fists without going down again, and he clinched desperately. He hung on until Kelly pried them apart. The bell ran and round one was over.

Cal staggered back to his corner while the crowd yelled for his blood. Bart was wooden-faced on his corner as he listened to the instructions of his manager.

"Stay away," Tom Moses said to
Cal. "You gotta stay away. Get on that bicycle until you get your strength back."

Cal didn't say anything. He took deep, gulping breaths of air, and slowly his brain cleared and the strength came back into his legs. There was no compromise with Bart, Cal knew that now. You had to stay all the way away, which would mean a lousy contest and eventual loss of the fight anyway, or you had to fight it out with him.

He thought of Mary McGuire, the girl with the pug nose and bright eyes. It wasn't fair to her to ask her to marry a lunk whose only distinction was that he had once fought for the championship. The woods were full of trial horses like that, boys who fought the kids going up, and the veterans going down. Nuttier and nuttier, punchier and punchier, but on and on.

The bell rang and Cal went out for round two with Tom shouting last-second instructions at him. Cal walked out flat-footed, and Bart came to meet him with a rush. There was nothing of the clown about Cal as he stepped in to meet the stolid, hard-hitting, vicious champion.

Bart drove in with a one-two to the body. Cal disregarded the smashing blows that almost broke him in two and cracked back with a calculated left and right to Bart's head. The champion was surprised and a little hurt. Cal took advantage of Bart's hesitation and slammed a left hook to the ribs, brought up a right to the head, smacked a stinging left to the nose.

The champion went back and the crowd screamed. Cal kept him off balance with another straight left, then crossed a whistling right. Bart was recovering now, and rolled with the right. Cal forced and drove him back, but his blows were only half hitting. Bart made a stand on the ropes and his rock-hard fists began to beat back.

Cal's lips and he could taste the blood.

They stood toe to toe for a furious moment and fought it out. Bart, his back to the ropes, Cal on top for the moment, they hammered and hit, rolled and picked, and pandemonium took hold of the crowd. They slugger it out, but the champ's gloves were a little faster and his blows a little heavier. As Cal became arm-weary, a right caught him alongside the jaw and rocked him back a step. Bart drove him back to the center of the ring with a punishing flurry, but then he was punched-out too, and couldn't take advantage of Cal's retreat.

They clinched wearily in the middle of the ring, two bloody, game gladiators, and wrestled a little until Kelly separated them.

Cal dropped his arms to let the strength run back, and circled the champ. Bart, with new respect for Cal, also circled. Cal shot two light lefts to draw Bart in, but Bart wasn't ready to mix it again. They sparred in the center for about thirty seconds, then Cal walked back in. He came with short, jolting, jarring blows.

Bart didn't retreat. He met the attack with one of his own. They stood toe to toe for the second time in that round. Cal shot a left that he timed carefully. He came around with his body behind the blow, and if he had missed he would have been wide open. The left caught Bart on the cheek and spun the champ half around. Cal brought a right from his knees to Bart's chin, and the champ staggered back, his knees buckling. Cal laced him back with left and right, left and right. He blasted the champ into the ropes and had him sagging when the bell rang to end the round.

The roar of the crowd continued through the minute the two fighters recuperated.

Tom was so excited he danced from one foot to the other as he shouted at Cal. "You got him! You got him! Keep after him! He's fading fast! Keep after him!"

Cal knew Bart was far from faded. The champ shuffled forward in the third with his puffed face still unreadable. He didn't
charge, but he came on looking for trouble.

Cal walked to him and met him. Their planted feet were spread and they banged away at each other with dogged, slugging, punishing blows.

The champ smashed home a good right to Cal's chin. Cal put his head down and switched his attack to the body. He bored in close and hammered the champ's body until Bart tied him up. Not, however, until Bart had opened every old cut and a few new ones on Cal's face.

Cal thought he had the champ tied up when Bart tore his right loose and slammed it again to Cal's chin. The lights jumped and Cal held tightly to the body in front of him. He couldn't find the right to tie it up and the champ hit him three times before he finally cornered it.

His legs were shaky when Kelly separated them. He saw Bart coming and tried to fight back, but his muscles wouldn't respond fast enough. Bart slammed him and rocked him with measured blows, and Cal sagged to the canvas.

He was on his knees at six, and he breathed deeply as he waited for the nine count and tried to get some strength back. He was up and Bart charged immediately. Cal slowed him with one good left, but then the heavy, punishing blows were robbing him of his strength and co-ordination again. He tried to hang on, but the champ was too smart and kept his arms free as he knocked Cal off his feet.

Cal rolled over on his back and he wasn't sure he could get up. He grabbed a ring stand and hauled himself upright hand over hand. He hung helplessly on the ropes as the champ came in at him.

FOR THE first time Cal saw expression on Bart's face. Deep in the eyes it was—a weariness, a pain of effort, a reflection of muscles that didn't want to respond. There was a pull to Bart's mouth as he hit Cal.

Cal knew what it was. The champ had punched himself out knocking Cal down twice, and the champ's arms were so tired he could hardly lift them. That realization gave Cal strength and second wind. The champ's right came in, but it was only the weight of the glove that landed, there was no drive behind it. Cal clinched and hung on until the bell rang.

Tom was incoherent between rounds. Cal wasn't listening to him anyway. Cal knew Bart had actually been more tired at the end of round three than Cal had been, even though Cal had been knocked down. He hadn't trained for a fight as furious as this. He hadn't expected Cal to get up off the canvas and hit back once he had been knocked down. He had been fighting the clown king of the ring who wasn't interested in fighting when the going got rough.

It was Cal who charged to open round four. Bart had something left and fought back for a few bloody, furious seconds, but then Cal dropped in one of those well-timed left hands. He followed it with the right, then hit again with the left. Left and right rocked Bart back into the ropes, and there a right put him to sleep.

The fans could tell from the way Bart hit the canvas on his face and lay still that the fight was over. Some of them were trying to get into the ring before the referee had finished counting and raised Cal's hand as the new champion.

Tom Moses hugged Cal. "Crazy as a bedbug," he said, "but what a fighter!"

"Tom," Cal said, "you're no good as a manager, but you'd make a good-looking best man."

"Best man?" Tom looked at him. "You gonna get married?"

"Yep," Cal said.

"To that little McGuire girl?"

"Yep."

Tom, standing in the midst of pandemonium in the crowded ring, scratched his chin thoughtfully. "Maybe you ain't so crazy at that."

Cal laughed out loud, and that was the first sound radio fans around the country heard as the announcer got to Cal with a microphone. The fans shook their heads. The clown king of the ring, he'd laugh at anything, even after a fight such as this had been. What a screwball!
GALLANT LADY

by HUMPHREY JONES

EDDIE QUINN stopped his coupe in front of the farmhouse and stepped out. Before going up to the house, he paused and looked around at the uncut grass, the sagging fences, the stable and sheds with the paint peeling off. Forsythe Farms had come a long way downhill since its heyday, when he had first started riding under its gold-and-green silks.

Old Josh Forsythe had been a great sportsman, but a poor businessman and when he had died last year, all his daughter Lucy had inherited had been these grounds, and a stable which contained an elderly stallion, a couple of brood mares with their foals, and a promising filly named Lady Linda. The whole outfit was plastered three deep in mortgages.

The thundering hoofbeats of the nation's fastest fillies and the 40-to-1 odds against her spelled certain defeat for Lady Linda — unless Eddie could somehow keep her out in front from starting stall to finish line!

YOU'LL NEVER FORGET THE BACKSTRETCH BATTLE IN THIS BIG FAST-BREAKING TURF NOVELET!
Eddie felt a tightening in his throat as he knocked and waited for Lucy Forsythe to come to the door. It was the way he had felt the first time he had seen her, and the reason, not admitted even to himself, why he was still sticking with Forsythe Farms, riding with little hope of ever getting his pay in full.

Lucy came to the door, dressed in riding pants and a sweater, her tiny figure small even beside Eddie's slight frame. She stepped outside, pretty and graceful, her smile warm and personal.

"Hello, Eddie." Her voice was low, well-bred.

"Hello, Lucy. Ready to see the Lady show her stuff? It's a good day for it." The sky was slightly overcast and the air was cool, but there had been no rain and the ground was firm and solid below.

Together they walked down to the stable with the rough mile-and-a-quarter oval beyond it. Jeff Anson, the grizzled little trainer, and Lucy Forsythe's only other remaining employee, already had Lady Linda out on the track, walking her up and down under a blanket. The jockey and the girl stopped for a moment at the rail to look her over. Her ears pricked sharply forward, her nostrils alive and sensitive, Lady Linda trod the turf lightly, as dainty as a queen picking her way down a street paved with courtiers' coats.

Eddie turned to Lucy. Her eyes were shining. They both felt the same way about the filly. She wasn't big, but she was all race horse, every inch of her.

"She's looking good today," Eddie said. "She's been getting pretty close to top form the last couple of weeks. You may be in for a pleasant surprise when you look at the clock today."

A small shadow of anxiety flitted across Lucy's face. "Oh, I hope so, Eddie. You know how much depends on Saturday. I couldn't bear to lose her." Lucy was gambling everything, even possession of the farm, on Lady Linda's chances to win Saturday's Beaumont Stakes, and its $10,000 purse.

"Don't worry, Lucy. She's got it cinched. I'll prove that this morning."

Jeff Anson brought her in and started putting the saddle and bridle on her. Eddie went in the stable to put on his boots. Then Jeff Anson mounted and breezed her around the track easily to warm her up further. When he brought her up, Lucy stood stroking the filly's nose till Eddie was ready to mount. Jeff got ready with the stopwatch while Eddie raised himself onto the saddle and nosed Lady Linda out onto the track. He gave Lucy a reassuring smile.

**EDDIE NOTED** approvingly how springily Lady Linda danced underneath him, how her skin trembled with eagerness. But there was nothing jerky about the horse's movements. They were as smooth and rhythmic as those of a carefully synchronized machine. She had natural form, now sharpened to a fine edge.

Eddie took her to the far turn and started her. She picked up speed and Eddie saw Jeff's hand jerk as they passed the starting post and Jeff pushed the plunger on the clock.

Lady Linda stretched, eager to run. But Eddie held her in, keeping her close to the rail, keeping her to a steady, strength-conserving pace. She scampered around the first turn, running free and easy. Eddie let her out just a wrap on the back stretch, to give her encouragement. She gained speed with a surge which told Eddie she had power to burn.

Tightening rein almost imperceptibly, Eddie checked her down again going around the far turn, marvelling as he did so at the filly's responsiveness. It was almost as though she could read his mind, so sensitive was she to the slightest change of pressure on the bit. Eddie's own time sense told him that in spite of Lady Linda's effortless running, they were already a second or more ahead of her best previous time.

He continued to hold her in till they were well around the last turn and the finish was in sight. Then he leaned over her neck, shook out the reins, and whispered, "Go it, Linda!"

Lady Linda ran like a scared cat. Her hoofs made a rapid drumbeat on
the solid track, and Eddie felt a thrill run up his back as the filly fled down the stretch. She crossed the finish in a burst of speed, and Eddie saw Jeff Anson's hand jerk again.

Eddie brought her to a stop at the turn, and danced her back to where the trainer and the girl were waiting. She was breathing hard, but her glossy black coat showed only a thin film of sweat.

"Two even and two fifth." Jeff Anson said, raising the watch. "Only three fifths off the record, and you weren't pushing her."

Eddie dropped to the ground and took the watch, handing the reins back to Jeff.

"What'd I tell you, Lucy? Are you surprised?"

"No. I'm not surprised. I knew Lady Linda could do it. But I'm certainly happy. Do you think she'll do as well in the Stakes?"

"Linda's a thoroughbred, Lucy. She'll do better against competition." Eddie was feeling happy himself, and the glow in Lucy's face was not the least part of the reason.

The two of them walked back to the house then, Lucy's elbow brushing close against the jockey's as they went. The contact sent a wild wish flying through Eddie's mind, but it was followed immediately by the sobering realization that her camaraderie was only part of the warmth of the moment, that he was only a jockey and she was his employer, that any personal gestures would ruin everything.

"Just have Jeff exercise her a bit tomorrow," Eddie told her at the house. "We won't run her again till Saturday." He cast a glance at the sky. "The only thing that could keep Linda from winning the Stakes is rain. And these clouds don't look like rain. So you haven't got a thing to worry about."

Lucy took his hand before she turned away and gave it a pressure which felt almost like a squeeze, but which Eddie decided was a handshake. "All right, Eddie. Goodbye. —And thanks."

"Goodbye, Lucy." Eddie wanting to take her small body in his arms and kiss her, stepped back and went over to the coupe. He drove back to his roominghouse in town in a turmoil of mixed feelings.

SATURDAY CAME, bright and clear. The overcast had blown off, letting the brilliant sunshine down, and the touch of clamminess in the air had turned to an invigorating warmth. The track at Beaumont would be fast, for a fast field of horses. The ten grand purse was attractive enough to draw entry of some of the nation's top three-year-olds.

But in the jockey's room, Eddie Quinn whistled confidently as he fastened on the Forsythe silks. He had had a look at Lady Linda, and noted with satisfaction that she had lost none of her edge since the day before yesterday. Jeff Anson had saluted him with circled fingers, and he had replied with a wink.

Eddie looked around the room. A couple of lockers down, Tommy Wilder, a leading money-earner, was dressing. Wilder would be aboard Escalator, the great colt from the Carstairs farm, today. Escalator was a pacemaker, a front-runner who ground lesser horses down beneath the sustained power of his long stride. Escalator would be Lady Linda's stiffest competition, but the big colt didn't have the filly's capacity of the final burst, and Eddie felt certain that if he rated her right before turning her loose, she could nose out the colt at the finish.

Down at the end of the row was Jig Burns, another old-time rider up today on Fusilier, another likely three-year-old who was drawing short odds, right behind Escalator. Lady Linda, as an unknown quantity, was drawing more to place than to win.

Bill Salvatore, Mickey Munro, they were all top jocks in this test. Eddie knew he wouldn't have any margin for mistakes.

Tommy Wilder came brushing past him. Eddie noted, surprised, that the black-haired little man seemed in a bad humor. Then Wilder stopped and faced Eddie.

"Don't try any funny stuff with
that nag of yours, Quinn,” he said.
Eddie's eyes pinpointed rapidly.
“What's wrong, Wilder? You got your shirt on this one? You ride your mount and I'll ride mine.”
Wilder glared at him, as though on the verge of voicing a threat. Then he jerked away, his face a study in sullen hostility. Eddie wondered if he had got wind of Lady Linda's progress. It was possible, he reflected, that Lucy had done some innocent bragging to Brock Carstairs, with whom she often travelled about socially, and that Carstairs had given his jockey a warning. He shrugged it off.

AS THE ENTRIES paraded proudly to the starting gate, Eddie looked around the stands from his perch atop Lady Linda. He finally spotted Lucy in a front box, but felt a swift pang as she noticed that she was sitting with Brock Carstairs. Between the owners, friendly rivalry. Between the jocks, bitter enmity. He saw Lucy wave to him, but her other hand was resting on Carstairs' arm. Well, he didn't blame her. The hearty handsome Carstairs was of her own class, and wealthy. He was the sort of man she naturally belonged with.

Eddie turned his mind to the race. The horses were nosing into the starting stalls, Lady Linda in No. 3 place. There was a moment of suspense as the horses backed and plunged. Then the gate flashed upward in the sun, and the horses bolted forward.

True to form, the big Escalator surged into the lead, and took the rail before hitting the first turn. Fusilier, starting from the No. 1 spot, fell into second place, with a gelding called Water Boy in third, and Lady Linda fourth.

Eddie held the filly there, just out of the ruck, going around the turn. Water Boy veered wide going into the backstretch, and Eddie let out a wrap to go through the hole. Lady Linda leaped ahead, impatient to run, but Eddie tightened down, holding her firm in third place, on the rail. Up ahead, Fusilier was fighting Escalator for the lead, trying to pull up on the outside. They hammered down the backstretch that way, Escalator setting the pace, Fusilier making his bid, Lady Linda taking it easy.

Nearing the far turn Fusilier began to tire, to fade back. Jig Burns took to the bat, and the horse responded gamely, but the rhythm of his stride faltered and he dropped back again, behind Escalator, then behind Lady Linda.

Now it was Escalator and Lady Linda, going around the far turn. Eddie leaned over the filly's neck, whispering words of encouragement, as he pushed her up along the outside. Escalator was an even length ahead when Tommy Wilder threw a glance back and saw Lady Linda coming up outside. A grimace contorted his features, and he bore out from the rail going into homestretch, trying to force Lady Linda to run wide.

Sensing his strategy even before it was accomplished, Eddie tightened rein on the filly quickly. Responding beautifully, she hesitated for a split second. Eddie swung her over to the rail and let her out again, shooting forward on the inside now.

Eddie's hands communicated their urgency to Lady Linda, and she went into her bid, letting loose that pent-up burst of speed Eddie had been saving for the finish. Looking back again, Wilder saw he had been outwitted. With Lady Linda swiftly coming abreast on the rail, it was impossible to swing Escalator back.

There was a blurred moment as Lady Linda's nose came even with Wilder's stirrup. Then Eddie's eyes popped. He saw Wilder, with a short, chopping motion of his arm, bring his bat up and down cruelly, right across Lady Linda's sensitive nose. He wanted to stand up in his stirrups and yell out to the judges, but he knew the blow had been well concealed.

When the whip took her, Lady Linda broke stride and screamed in pain. Then she stumbled against the rail, and fell back, as Escalator plunged on, Eddie could feel her whole frame quivering beneath him. She jerked her head up and fought the bit. Eddie, in a moment of sick
horror, heard the other mounts thunder by, and saw himself passed by Fusiliers, then by Water Boy, as they neared and crossed the finish line.

As he led the trembling filly back toward the paddock, Eddie saw Escalator’s name go up in the win slot. He listened to the public-address system, nurturing a dull hope for a disqualification on Escalator, but it didn’t come. The favorite had paid off, and the crowd was rising, filing to the mutuel windows to collect their bets.

EDDIE SAW Tommy Wilder sitting atop Escalator in the winner’s circle, a smug grin on his face and he felt the impulse to batter those smirking lips under his fists. But he rejected the idea. It wouldn’t do any good, and it would only make him look bad to Lucy, who believed in sportsmanship above all things, and believed everyone else to be built the same way.

Jeff Anson came to claim Lady Linda.

“You saw what happened?” Eddie said.

“I saw it. But nobody else did. What are you gonna do?”

“Nothing. What can I do?”

“I guess you’re right. Looks like the finish for Lucy.”

Eddie remained silent. The trainer said, “I feel just as bad about Lady Linda. What’s gonna happen to her? You and me are the only ones that ever touched her. If Miss Forsythe has to sell her after today, it may be the end of her, a horse like the Lady.”

Eddie shook his head. They parted. Eddie heading for the dressing room. He sat on the bench for a long time. running the green-and-gold silks through his fingers, before he started to undress.

After he had showered and changed to street clothes, his walked out toward the track parking lot, where he had put his coupe. Halfway there, he saw Lucy standing with Brock Carstairs. He wished he could avoid Carstairs, but he had to speak to Lucy.

“I’m sorry, Lucy, about Lady Linda,” he said. Lucy put her hand out toward him.

“I know. It’s all right. After all, we couldn’t be sure.” Eddie was about to pass on, but Lucy stopped him.

“Don’t worry about Linda, though. She’ll be all right. Brock, here, had offered to buy her from me. He’ll take good care of her.”

Eddie looked at Brock Carstairs. He could imagine what kind of care Lady Linda would get under him. It would mean that Tommy Wilder wouldn’t be riding her, a man who believed in nothing but the bat. That kind of riding would ruin Lady Linda.

Brock Carstairs spoke up in his bluff, hearty voice. “And I’m getting a bargain, too. That’s a fine piece of horseflesh, that filly. Not in Escalator’s class, but a good little horse just the same.”

Eddie looked away from Carstairs. “I’ll go out to the farm and help Jeff until everything’s been taken care of,” he told Lucy. “You can telephone me there about whatever you want done.”

Lucy’s eyes were soft. “Thanks. Eddie, I’ll appreciate it,” she said. He started to move off. She looked after him strangely.

“Eddie, I—” she began, then looked up at Brock Carstairs and stopped.

“Goodbye, Lucy.” Eddie said, and turned away, the familiar conflict of emotions tearing at him as he left her, the same wild wish that he could address her as an equal, not as hired man to employer. He savored a bitter thought on the accident of birth that had started him on the East Side while Brock Carstairs inherited along with his wealth, the privilege of having Lucy on his arm.

EDDIE AND JEFF took Lady Linda back to the farm with them that night. The next day Lucy came out to tell them that the filly’s sale had gone through, and that she would be staying in town after that. The two men were to deliver Lady Linda to the Carstairs farm.

Lucy walked around the farm with Eddie, looking unhappy. She went up to each of the remaining animals and stroked their noses.

“Poor Lady,” she said, as they
came to Lady Linda in her stall. “You’ll be among strangers, now.”
“Why, you’ll still be able to see her, won’t you?” Eddie said. “You’re at the Carstairs place quite often.”
“Yes, that’s true. I’ll get to see her.” Lucy spoke without enthusiasm. She leaned against the wall of the stable and twisted a straw in her hands.
“If only there was a little money left. Or even if we were free of debt.”
“That ten thousand would have turned the trick,” Eddie said.
“Oh, Eddie, Don’t blame yourself. If Lady Linda could have won, she would have. I know nobody could have given her a better ride. It just wasn’t in the cards.”
Eddie was on the point of blurtling out to her about Wilder’s action, but checked himself. If would look like a feeble excuse, without proof.
“I’ve already sold Linda,” Lucy said. “But I’d like you to look after the rest of it. Will you, Eddie? I’m afraid I’m just not up to the job.”
Eddie looked at her. “You sure?”
“Yes.”
“I’ll need your power of attorney.”
“Yes, I know.”
They went to the house and Lucy signed a power of attorney form. Then she left, getting into her car and driving slowly away without looking back.
Eddie looked down at the piece of paper in his hand. Turning disposal of the property over to him meant only one thing. That she really didn’t want to dispose of it at all, that she was just bowing to necessity. But with Lady Linda gone, the heart of the farm was gone anyhow. He was sure Carstairs knew Lady Linda’s true worth, in spite of his patronizing words. And having acquired such a valuable horse, he’d hang onto her.

For the next few days, Eddie went about the farm, lost in a gloomy reverie. He felt strangely lethargic about moving to sell the property. He knew the proceeds would all go to the creditors anyhow, so he saw no reason not to indulge his self-punishing desire to hang around the place for a time. He knew now that he had loved both Lucy and Lady Linda, the one as a woman, the other with an attachment he had never before felt for a mere animal. He and Jeff had turned the filly over to Carstairs, and now nothing remained of either the girl or the horse but past associations.

EDDIE FOLLOWED the newspapers with morbid interest. On the sports pages, he read that Carstairs was entering Lady Linda in the Bay Park Handicap. He also learned that his price for her had been $5,000 a shamefully low figure for a horse of her calibre. On the society pages he learned that Lucy’s name was being linked with Brock Carstairs’ in rumors of engagement.

The day of the Bay Park Handicap, Eddie drove to the track, taking Jeff Anson with him. They bought tickets for a front box to watch Lady Linda run.

Eddie shook his head gloomily when he saw Lady Linda parading to the post with Tommy Wilder atop her. She was acting nervous and jittery, and Wilder was fighting her with the bit.

“She’ll never run for Wilder,” he told Jeff. “He’ll lay the bat on her, and she’ll just go to pieces. I’m surprised she even lets him get in the saddle.”

“Well, she’s got a light handicap,” Jeff said. “Maybe she’ll make a good showing, even with Wilder riding.”

“I’d almost as soon see her sold for fox feed.”

The gate went up for the start, and the horses broke for positions. Eddie soon saw that Wilder knew what kind of a ride to give her. He was nobody’s numbskull. He rated the filly well back off the pace, keeping her under wraps all the way around the turn and down the backstretch. But Eddie knew that when the time came for the spurt, Wilder would lay on the bat.

As the horses came out of the far turn into the homestretch, Eddie saw his fears realized. As soon as Lady Linda had straightened out, Wilder laid on the whip. Lady Linda gave a frantic bound and surged forward. From No. 3 position, she drove past
the number two horse and moved up to challenge the leader. Wilder's tactics seemed to be working, but Eddie could tell the filly was half-crazy with fear.

Then something else happened. Eddie saw the leading jockey raise his arm to put the whip on his own mount. The bat came down inches from Lady Linda's head. Eddie saw her shy violently, then break for the outside rail. Wilder was sawing at the reins, to keep her from plunging into the wood, but she was completely out of control. The ruck passed her, and she crossed the finish line at a walk, her muscles quaking, her coat dripping lather.

Eddie looked along the boxes for Lucy. He saw her in the third one down, with Carstairs. She was crying.

Eddie Quinn and Jeff Anson sat up late that evening, over the Forsythe Farms' books, and Eddie's own bankbooks.

"I just can't do it, Jeff," Eddie said. "I knew I couldn't do it when I saw Lucy standing there crying over Lady Linda. I knew I had to bring those two back here where they belong together."

"Yeah, but how you gonna do it?"

"Well, for one thing I've got Lucy's power of attorney. And for another, I've got about seven thousand of my own savings."

"You thinking of buying Lady Linda back for Lucy with your own money? She'd never let you do that."

"No. With her power of attorney, I can set up the farm as a stock company. I can use the money to buy shares. Then with the same power of attorney, I can buy Lady Linda for Forsythe Farms. I can set it up so my shares go to Lucy as soon as Lady Linda earns enough money to buy them off."

"If you can buy Lady Linda. And if she makes any earnings. It looks to me right now like she's one purely ruined horse."

"I don't think I'll have any trouble buying Lady Linda back after today. I have an idea Carstairs will be chalking her up to loss, and he'll jump at the chance to resell her for a couple of grand profit. I can let my lawyer, or some other third person make the transaction. Carstairs won't know who's buying her."

"Well, maybe so. That still doesn't explain how you're gonna get Lady Linda to run again. It looks to me like you're just pouring seven grand down the rathole."

"I have to admit you're probably right," Eddie said. "But it's the only thing I can do."

"O.K. Jeff said. "If you need any more cash, I've got a couple of grand stuck away somewhere myself."

"Thanks, Jeff. I might have to borrow an entrance fee from you, at that."

THREE DAYS later, newspapers carried the information that Brock Carstairs had sold Lady Linda to a certain J. B. Whitcomb for seven thousand dollars. The next day, Lady Linda was back in her stall at Forsythe Farms.

Eddie was more worried than he would admit to Jeff when he looked Lady Linda over. She had lost almost all of her former easy, confident bearing, and was now nervous and fearful, shying at every nearby movement. Eddie worked her out on the track a couple of times, and noticed that the smooth rhythm was missing from her stride, that she was less responsive to the bit than she had been. He tried running her in blinkers, which did calm her down a little, but she still shielded at anything in front of her. Eddie tried having Jeff ride one of the mares down the track ahead of Lady Linda, and found she became almost unmanageable with another horse in front of her. She still had the speed, but with the kind of race the filly ran, Eddie knew that her shying habit would be fatal, in any test.

Eddie knew now that Jeff had been right about his seven thousand. It was down the rathole. Eddie was past thirty, and it would be hard for him to get another nest-egg together. Eddie was a good rider, when he had a horse like Lady Linda under him, who responded to his methods, but he had never been one of the real top-money boys, who used the bat and booted them in to win regardless.
But he hid his feeling from Jeff as they worked the filly, gentling her, getting her used to the easy hand on the bridle again. Slowly, day by day, they managed to train her back to something like her old form. They still didn’t know how she’d behave in a race.

Surreptitiously, Eddie entered her in a small stake contest upstate, under J. B. Whitcomb’s name, and hiring another jockey, to whom he gave minute instructions. But Lady Linda panicked at the starting gate, and was lost before she had a chance.

Eddie had to admit to Jeff that he was just about licked. The old trainer was pessimistic.

“Looks like we better give up, and get Miss Forsythe what we can out of the farm. She’ll be around here asking questions pretty soon.”

“I know how it looks,” Eddie said. “But I’m going to try one more thing.”

“Is there anything we ain’t tried yet?”

“Yes. I’m going to enter Lady Linda in the Balmoral Stakes.”

“The Balmoral! That’s a fifty grand purse. The best horses in the country’ll be in that one.”

“I know, But Lady Linda is the best. Remember, they judge the entries on their best times, and Lady Linda’s record is still there.”

“Ain’t you afraid of disgracing Lucy if this thing flops?”

“No. Whatever this race’ll be, it won’t be a disgrace.”

“You’re shootin’ at the moon with a popgun, son. And one that ain’t loaded, at that.”

FOR THE DAYS intervening between then and the Balmoral Stakes race, Eddie worked Lady Linda daily on the track. After repeated experiments, he decided that she would never be cured of her phobia. She would run like a skimming bird alone on the track, but put another horse in with her, and she would try to break through the fence.

“Son, you’re just wasting your time,” said Jeff. But Eddie kept remembering Lucy, standing there in the box and crying when Lady Linda failed. And he knew that what he wanted, more than anything else, was to see those eyes shining again, the way they had that day here at the farm. Eddie knew that with the Balmoral Stakes, he was shooting the works on Lady Linda. After that, there wouldn’t even be money for feed, let alone entrance fees.

Eddie Quinn’s heart was in his mouth as he mounted Lady Linda at Balmore Park, while Jeff Anson held the reins. For the first time since the Beaumont Stakes, he was wearing the gold-and-green silks of the Forsythe Farms. He knew Lucy would be there somewhere, for the papers had been full of surprise entry of the discredited Lady Linda in the Balmoral Stakes. The Forsythe Farms sponsorship had been a last-minute switch, as had the information that Eddie Quinn was riding.

Eddie searched through the crowd. Suddenly he saw her, standing alone in an open space, her eyes bright and wide with astonishment. He felt happy for an instant, then sobered quickly at the thought of the odds against him. Lady Linda was running as a forty-to-one shot. Eddie knew that the real odds were much longer than that.

Lady Linda jerked her head as the other horses marched slowly past to the starting gate, but Eddie quieted her with his hand, and managed to get her up to her position. Inside the stall, she settled down.

Waiting for the starting bell, Eddie felt tension rising like a big knot inside him. Everything would depend on those first split seconds. He leaned forward and murmured words into Lady Linda’s ear.

Suddenly the bell jangled, and the starting gate was snatched upward. At the precise instant, Eddie urged Lady Linda forward with his hands and shouted, “Go, Lady!”

Lady Linda leaped from the stall as if shot from a gun, her compact frame coiling and uncoiling like a steel spring. This was what Eddie had been counting on. Lady Linda bounded into first place, and headed for the rail, the rest of the field behind her. Ahead, a clear track.
EDDIE QUINN leaned forward on the saddle, and chanted into Lady Linda's ear, and the words he chanted were those of a prayer. Because to win this race, Lady Linda had to stay out in front, every inch of the way, never letting another mount come into her sight.

Eddie heard a shouted curse behind him, and he knew it was Tommy Wilder, on Escalator, cheated out of his lead and furious. The big, long-coupled colt strove mightily to overtake the filly, only to fall back a little going around the turn. Straightening out in the backstretch, the thundering hoofbeats once more crept up on Lady Linda as Wilder pushed Escalator to stretch his famous stride.

Eddie crooned to Lady Linda. "Please, Lady. Run, Lady. Go it, Linda. Go, baby." The filly ran like a winged thing, without slackening speed. Eddie felt the words catch in his throat, and he felt like sobbing. This wasn't Lady Linda's race at all. She was never meant to be a front-runner. She'd never last. She'd lie down and die before she ever reached that finish line. "Go, baby go!"

Somehow, Lady Linda stayed out in front all the way down the backstretch and into the far turn, with Escalator breathing hard beside her all the way. In the turn, with the advantage of the rail position, Eddie picked up a few precious inches.

When they hammered into the homestretch, Eddie heard the big Escalator coming on again, gaining. By now, he could hear Lady Linda's breath whistling through her nostrils, and feel her lungs strain for air.

"Run, baby, run!" he prayed, and then felt his heart drop clear to the bottom of his boots as Lady Linda's stride labored and faltered every so slightly. She had spent herself, the early pace had taken everything she had to give.

Escalator's head came even with Lady Linda's withers, lunged onward. Eddie raised himself in his stirrups and screamed.

"Run! Run! Lady!"

Then, miraculously, Lady Linda recovered and was back in stride. From somewhere, Eddie himself didn't know from where, she was drawing, from the depths of her fatigue and spent energies, the heart for a final burst of speed. She had always turned it on in the homestretch, and now, after a full lap at top speed, she gathered herself up from instinct and poured on a single extra ounce of power as she hurled herself toward the finish line.

Eddie babbled hysterically as he saw Escalator's head drop back even with his stirrup, and hang there. Then they had flashed past the finish and Lady Linda was faltering to a painful, shuddering stop. She stood in the track, her head hanging, her muscles shaking, the latter dropping off her in great white flakes. Eddie dismounted and held her head in his arms, weeping unashamedly. The little filly had given more than she had to give.

Jeff Anson came running out to the track, and led both of them to the winner's circle. Lady Linda stood, her lungs gulping huge gasps of air, her trembling quieting gradually.

Then with a rush, another person joined the group in the winner's circle. It was Lucy, and she was trying to put her arms around Lady Linda's neck and kiss Eddie at the same time.

Eddie felt the old longing rising in him to take her in his arms. This time, he didn't step away.

YOUR BEST MAGAZINES WITH THE ZIPPY, ZANY, LAUGH-PACKED FEATURES AND FUNNIEST CARTOONS — ASK FOR THESE AT YOUR NEWSSTAND!

JOKER CARTOON COMEDY SNAP

132 PAGES OF SLAPTIVATING FUN!
DIAMOND-KING
FOR A DAY
by RICHARD BRISTER

The kid swung hard meaning to kill it, but the ball splatted into the mitt.

MATT REACHED the park a half-hour earlier than usual. Already a crowd of eager-eyed early birds had taken over the choice seats behind home plate, and along the first and third baselines. Matt stood in his quiet gabardine, his muscular back draped against a pedestal, his summer straw tipped back on his balding brow, and looked down on the neatly-chalked diamond with brooding distaste.

He was not recognized. A couple of shirt-sleeved devotees were engaged in a spirited discussion of the forthcoming game. Matt shamelessly eavesdropped.

"Wingy won't go two innings. I don't care if Matt did use a catch him back when he still had his arm. The guy's an old man. Them Eagles'll knock him out of the park."

"I hope he's still got that fast one," said a voice somewhat wistfully. "I never seen Wingy pitch."

"It ain't like Matt Christian even to use him," said the first voice. "It ain't baseball. Wingy may of been an all-time great in his prime, but he sure washed himself out of the game in a hurry when he once started down-hill. This whole thing's just a stunt. The Commission shouldn't even allow it."

You're so right, friend. You're so right. Matt's wide mouth thinned to

No, baseball annals would never make much of this has-been hurler's pitching two innings of an unimportant game, but Matt Christian called it the greatest mound comeback in diamond history!
a bitter line, and his pale blue eyes glittered. He moved purposefully through shadowy tunnels within the grandstand, nodding constantly, as acquaintances hailed him. He rapped on a door marked “E.P. EDGERTON—Private,” and went in without waiting.

The sharp-faced young man behind the self-consciously large carved oak desk looked at him with small-mouthed annoyance.

“Yes? What’s on your mind, Christian?”

“You going through with it, Mr. Edgerton? You still say Wingy pitches?”

Elwood P. Edgerton lolled back in the red leather-upholstered desk chair. Under his dinky mustache, a faint smile briefly flickered.

“We’ve had this all out once before, Christian. I’m not even going to discuss it. After the publicity buildup we’ve given this comeback of—”

“What comeback?”

“Wing’s performance may surprise you. After all, for only two innings—”

“He won’t last those two innings you been promisin’ the fans,” Matt said. “He’s a down-and-out bum. The Eagles’ll kill him. I may not know much else, Mr. Edgerton, but I know baseball. They’ll kill him.”

The young owner’s expensively groomed figure stiffened behind the huge desk. “You know baseball, Christian. And I know business. When I took over the Blues franchise, we were losing money. Now, by a combination of economy measures and showmanship, I’ve pulled us into the black.”

“Just about. But it won’t last. The only thing that’ll keep the fans coming back through them turnstiles, day after day, is smart baseball and a team that’s willing to hustle. Stunts are okay for a while, but we’re not s’posed to be selling a circus.”

Edgerton twisted the little mustache with a manicured hand. “I’m afraid I disagree, Christian. And inasmuch as it happens to be my money at stake in this franchise—”

“You’ll give the orders. And if I’m smart, I’ll obey them.”

“Precisely. Now, is there anything else bothering you, Christian?”

MATT STOOD there in front of the pompous young man whose multi-millionaire father had provided him with the Blues as a toy to play with. He wanted to say there was something else, that he was quitting. Then he asked himself where a stoutish baldhead with a wife and four kids, like himself, would find himself another player-manager spot that paid twenty-five plus bonus.

He reminded himself that his contract with Edgerton ran for two more seasons after this one. If the kid wanted to tie the can to him, fire him, it was going to cost him two years’ salary to do so. Whereas, if Matt walked out of his own volition, he would go empty handed.

Telling Edgerton off would be fun, but hardly fifty grand worth.

“No,” he said, “I guess there’s nothing else bothering me, Mr. Edgerton,” and he walked out.

Going down the long chute toward the dressing rooms, he thought bitterly that he had forfeited his manhood in thus kow-towing to the assertive young owner. But with a wife and the kids at home, what could he do? The mistake, of course, was in setting a standard. He had been in the big dough just long enough now to start living up to it.

Mary was so thrilled with the big, Colonial-style house out in Larchwood, with the little runabout Matt had given her for her own special use last birthday, with her silver fox cape, her jewels, all the things she had dreamed of as a wide-eyed kid without much real hope of attainment.

Matt didn’t have it in him to take away those things which gave her so much obvious pleasure. And with the kids it would be even harder. They were living the sort of childhood Matt believed in, without care or responsibility, two things with which Matt’s early years had been overcrowded.

He couldn’t ask them to go back to a grubbing-along sort of life now. And besides, he meant to see them all
through college, by golly.

No, he’d had no real choice but to take Elwood P. Edgerton’s orders, he told himself as he walked into the dressing room.

He was still early, he saw. The place was deserted, except for Wingy Davis and leather-faced old Dimmy Jorgens, the trainer. The pitcher was sitting on the rubbing table in his undershirt, while Dimmy worked on his arm. He looked up eagerly, a tall man with bright blue eyes, long legs and arms, and with a lot of unhealthy fat padded here and there about his spare frame.

“How’s it, Matt?”

“Lo, Wingy.”

“This is like old times, huh, Matt? You, me, and Dimmy.”

Back ten years, when the human bulk atop the dressing table had bestridden the baseball firmament like a celestial giant, when Wingy Davis had been compared favorably with Walter Johnson, Matt used to drop in early at the dressing room, when he knew Wingy was pitching.

Wingy liked sitting there, with Dimmy kneading the muscles of his right arm, with Matt quietly talking to him, building him up inside for the test ahead of him. Even back then, Matt thought, with the fans and the writers showering eulogies of praise upon him: Wingy had been prey to strange mental quirks, to black moods and mysterious bouts of melancholia. At such times, it took all Matt’s skill to build up the faltering ego, and prepare the great Wingy Davis to pitch a ball game.

And he had been great. One of the greatest, Matt thought with a strange sensation of pathos. Always, it seemed, the truly great of this world are betrayed by some compensatory weakness. Wingy Davis fluctuated between the belief he was the greatest pitcher who ever played baseball, and the belief that he was a failure.

“How’s the old fin?” Matt said.

Wingy looked worried. “Tell you the truth, not so good, Matt. I don’t feel loose, somehow. I’m kinda worried.”

The old routine, Matt thought. Ten years, during which time a world war had been fought, the Blues had won two world titles, had almost completely revamped their lineup; during which time Matt had graduated to the managership. Key had been sold to young Edgerton, Wingy Davis had sunk dangerously close to the level of bumhood along Skid Row, to be brought out of “retirement” by Edgerton to provide a two-inning vaudeville show for long-memoried and sentimental fans.

Ten years, and yet the dialogue hadn’t changed. It was like playing a ten-year-old phonograph record.

“You got nothing to worry about, Wingy.”

“No kidding, Matt? You really think I’ll be all right?”

“Hell, you’re the best.”

Wingy Davis turned red-rimmed eyes toward Dimmy Jorgens. “You hear that, Dimmy? Matt says I’m the best.”

“Sure, kid.”

Wingy sat there, smiling gently, a long, brooding-eyed man, with stringy tan-colored hair and a taint aura of tragedy hanging like an invisible blanket upon him. There was a mole on the lobe of his large right ear, with a tuft of light hair growing from it. He tugged at the mole absentely and said,

“I dreamed about this day, Matt.”

“Sure.”

“No kidding. I never doubted for one minute I could make a comeback if anyone’d give me a chance. All them years I was down-and-out, grubbing out a livin’ at this and that, odd jobs and what-all, I never let it get to me.”

“Sure,” Matt grinned. After all, what did it cost him to help, if Wingy’s happiness depended upon a little self-deception?

“You wanta know why, Matt? You wanta know why it never got the best of me? I’d think of you, tellin’ me I was great, tellin’ me I was the greatest that ever pulled spikes on. I’d get ashamed of myself, Matt. I’d tell myself how you’d hate seein’ me down in the gutter, and first thing you’d know, I’d be pulling myself together again.”
“Well, that’s swell,” Matt said, not meeting the eager eyes. “That’s fine.”
“I’m in pretty good shape, Matt. I been knocking the pounds off with settin’ up exercises and roadwork.”
“Sure, kid, you’re looking fine. You’ll do all right out there.”
“You really mean that, don’t you, Matt? I mean, you ain’t kidding me now?”
“Why, hell,” Matt rumbled, “you know I’m not one to kid a man. Wingy.”
“That’s right, Matt. You was always dead on the level. I could always pitch for you back in the old days, Matt. I always laid it on the line for you.”
“Sure, Wingy.”
“I’ll pitch for you today. I’ll pulverize them Eagles.”
“Sure you will, Wingy.”
“I dreamed about this, Matt. This is my day.”
“Sure.”
“I’m in good shape. Even if I wasn’t I could still bust that fast one down the line at them. You always said they could never lay a bat on my fast one, Matt. Remember?”
“They never could. It’s in the records.”
“I done all right, hey Matt?”
“Hell, you were great. I’d put you right up there with Christy and Johnson.”
“Hear that, Dimmy? Matt rates me and Johnson.”
“Sure, kid.”
“I guess I’m still pretty good, if Matt says so. . . . Listen, Matt, they’s a big crowd out there already, ain’t there?”
“That’s right. A lot of your old fans, come back to root for you, Wingy.”
“They ain’t here to root for me. They’re hopin’ to see me fall on my face, Matt. They figure I’ve bounced myself right out of the picture. I’m gonna fool ’em Matt. I’m gonna make them Eagles look silly.”
“Sure.”
“I went to, Matt,” said Wingy, in a voice that was beginning to strain. It was pathetic.

Just then a messenger walked in with the news that a contingent of school kids was waiting out in the hallway in hopes of getting the autograph of the great Wingy Davis.

“Why, sure,” Wingy said, with childish pleasure. “I got a few minutes. Wait’ll I get a shirt on.”

“They kids won’t wear him out, will they, Matt?” asked Dimmy Jorgens, when the door closed behind Wingy.

“Let him have his moment of glory,” Matt said. “It’s been a long time for him, Dimmy.”

“You look sour, Matt. What’s eating on you?”

Matt’s mouth turned grim. “I always liked the guy, Dimmy. I suppose he’s got the mind of a twelve-year-old, and the years haven’t sharpened him any, but I meant a lot of what I just told him Wingy was great. He bleeds a lot when he ain’t feeling good, but deep down inside, I think he knows he was one of the world’s greatest pitchers. That’s all he’s got.” Matt sighed. “An hour from now, he won’t have nothin’.”

“Well, Matt, it isn’t your fault. You can’t help what you’re doin’.”

“Well, Dimmy, it’s Edgerton’s show. He engineered the whole thing. But I’m going to be catching him out there, like I used to when he still had something. I’m going to be out there helping him break what’s left of his heart. And I ain’t going to like it. Hell, I used to be proud of the way I make my living.”

His already bitter mood blackened as the pre-game minutes slipped away. He led the team out to the dugout and saw that the grandstand was packed to capacity now and there were precious few open spots in the teeming bleachers.

It came to him that, in his simple way, Wingy Davis had guessed the true motive behind the large turnout. There were some loyal adherents of Wingy up there in the crowded stand, but the bulk of these vultures had paid for the spectacle of a great pitcher’s fall from grace.

He saw young Edgerton in the owner’s box along the first base line. Edgerton smiled banteringly at him, as if the record turnout proved his
judgment better than Matt’s.
Matt fell into conversation with Choo-Choo Jamison, the Eagle pilot, as the enemy team engaged in a pepper session out on the diamond. Years ago, Choo-Choo and Matt had been teammates for two seasons, with the Braves. They still were friendly.
“Who killed her, Matt?”
“Killed who?”
“Your mother. Isn’t she dead?”
“Do I look that sad, Choo-Choo?”
“You’re not kicking your heels, boy. Not saying I blame you. This Wingy Davis deal smells, for my money.”
“That’s because you’re an old timer, Choo-Choo. Back in the old days, there was some sense to the game.”
“You knocking baseball, Matt?”
“If it was baseball, you’d never hear a gripe out of me, Choo-Choo. Back when you and me were getting our start it was a case of go out there and play smart baseball, show plenty of hustle and everything would come out all right. I always used to be proud to say I played ball for my living.”
“Sure, Matt.”
“But this thing today, this stunt with Wingy is enough to turn a man’s stomach. You know Wingy, Choo-Choo. You were on tour with him once, weren’t you? He’s like a wreck. It’s no secret. He’s been a bum for ten years, driftin’ from one sleazy job to another. He’s a wreck, I tell you. All he’s got left is his pride.”
“He won’t have that for long, Matt. It’s too bad. I always kind of liked Wingy.”
“It’s going to be lousy.”
“It ain’t your fault, Matt. It ain’t baseball’s fault neither. No need to get sore at the game because Edgerton’s decided to put on a cheap vaudeville act out here for a couple of innings.”
“Fifteen years ago he couldn’t ‘ve got away with it.”
“Why not? It’s legal. He could stick Babe Ruth in there to pitch two innings if he wanted to. There’s no important club standings at stake. We’re both out of the running this season.”
“The fans wouldn’t ’ve put up with it back in the old days,” Matt said.
“I guess maybe you got something there.”
“Hell, I know it,” Matt said hotly. “That was baseball, Choo-Choo. We always laid it right on the line. The fans had some respect for the game back then. They weren’t like this hard-boiled modern bunch; they were more sentimental. And dead loyal. They’d never have helped a guy like this Edgerton strip the glory away from a great player like Wingy Davis. They’d have boycotted the thing; they’d have stayed away in droves, Choo-Choo.”
“I dunno but what you’re right, Matt.”
Matt felt blue. In a way, he had hoped Choo-Choo Jamison would stick up for the game. Matt did not really want to lose all his illusions about baseball.
“You feel that way, why don’t you quit, Matt? Man’s a fool to stay on a job till he learns to hate it. You got some dough socked away, ain’t you?”
“Some,” Matt said. He could feel his heart pounding. He could sell out, that’s what. The house would bring maybe thirty, and together with what he had in the market, it would be a comfortable nest egg. He could take Mary and the kids out West, always his dream, and try to get into some new line of work out there. It would be a terrible come-down for all concerned, but what was life except a succession of changes? And for a while the climate would keep Mary and the youngsters happy out there. “By God, it’s a thought, Choo-Choo!”
“Hey, I don’t want this thing on my conscience,” said Choo-Choo. “It’s an important move. You’d lose a lot by quittin’ in the middle of your contract, wouldn’t you?”
“Two years salary. Fifty grand.”
Choo-Choo whistled. “Hell, Matt, forget what I said. I run off like that sometimes. A man can buy himself a lot of cigars with fifty G’s.”

IT WAS TIME for Matt to get the stuff on and go out there for the pre-game warmup. He said, “I ain’t smoking these days. Choo-Choo.
Guess you didn’t know,” then he walked toward the Blues dugout.

*Quit*, he told himself. *Quit*. He had thought of it before, but never too seriously, somehow. Choo-Choo Jamiison’s words had set his mind whirling on a new slant. Why should Matt stay with the game till he learned to hate it? The game this new crop of kids played was all business, a cut and dried daily performance from which all the heart, all the zest and bounce and sentimental feeling had been extracted.

“It ain’t baseball. Not like I always knew it. It’s gotten to be just like any other job of work. A man might as well walk into a factory, as walk in this ball park.”

*Quit*.

And why not? Money wasn’t everything in this world. And if his gesture of walking out on fifty grand served no other purpose, it would at least demonstrate an old timer’s disapproval of Elwood P. Edgerton’s brand of baseball.

“Show that young punk there’s some things his old man’s money can’t buy,” Matt thought.

*Quit*!

Somewhere in California there was a rambling hacienda in a picture setting among rolling brown foothills, where a man could pick his oranges right off the vine and sop up gobs of sunshine.

*Quit*!

Why not? He was forty-two. He’d just begun to live high these past few years. There was enough stashed away to keep him and Mary in retirement, if she’d be willing to retrace a little.

By the time Cooley was announcing the batteries over the big P.A. horns, Matt had reached his decision. He went out there, waddling a little within the heavy protector and leggings. He shot a glance toward the mustached young pipsqueak in the owner’s box alongside of first base.

“You got a surprise in store, sonny,” he murmured.

“How was that?” said Wingy Davis. He was moving along out there beside Matt. The crowd had given him an ovation when his name was announced, and again when he stepped clear of the dugout, but he looked nervous.

“Talkin’ to myself, Wingy. Now relax.”

“I’m nervous, Matt. It’s been so long…”

“You settle down. Just pitch to old Matt, kid. Like old times.”

He was tugging at that mole on his right ear, with his brooding blue eyes fixed squarely on Matt. “I’ll pitch for you, Matt. I’ll lay it on the line for you.”

Matt watched the tall, tragic figure shuffle out toward the mound. It was like turning the clock back ten years. The words were the same, and in his simple heart, Wingy Davis had not permitted the bad years to scar him or greatly change him. He was so eager that it hurt Matt to watch him. Matt gulped and brushed at an eye as he stepped behind the plate to take Wingy’s warmups.

He saw big, bush-browed Cantell, Eagle lead-off, swinging three bats. The big fellow was grinning, strutting a little as he stepped into the box, and Matt felt a sick nausea thrust at his middle.

**THIS WAS** going to be murder.

They would all come out here with the single idea of padding their averages at Wingy’s expense. Matt groaned inside, but flashed the sign for Wingy’s fast ball to Cantell.

Wingy Davis swung his arms overhead loosely, brought his left leg forward, and leaned his lank body into the pitch. Matt put his glove up with a sinking sensation. It was coming in as big as a house, grooved belt high, where Cantell liked them.

Matt waited for the crack of the bat against the ball, but was pleasantly surprised to feel it spat into his mitt. Cantell stepped out of the box, shaking his head in self-disgust. While he dusted his hands, the crowd cheered mildly.

The small sounds of approval, coupled with the success of his first pitch in ten years, instilled confidence into Wingy Davis, Matt’s grin, as he flipped the pill moundward, helped the brooding-eyed hurler too.
He came in with a curve. It was not, by any stretch of imagination, the curve of ten years ago. To Matt it looked like a cripple pitch, and he winced, watching Cantell's bat come around to meet it.

Intention is not enough, however. Again the redoubtable Cantell's bat caught a large slice of the ozone, and the crowd noise gained volume.

Matt's grin toward the mound concealed his puzzlement. Could it be that Cantell was letting Wingy Davis' great reputation buffalo him? It occurred to Matt that Cantrell had never hit against Wingy, which gave the pitcher a certain advantage.

Matt smelled the possibility of a strikeout, and signed for the fast ball high and inside, where Cantell didn’t like them. It came up the line dragging an anchor as compared with the fast one of ten years ago. But the control was good. And for a Chinese wonder, Cantell's awkward swing failed to connect for the third time.

The crowd roared its acclaim of the strikeout. Matt grinned foolishly and went out to the hill.

“Nice. Just keep on doin' what you're doin’.”

The long-legged pitcher tugged at that mole on his ear, grinning a mile. “I told you I'd lay it on the line for you, Matt.”

Gensler was up. Gensler was a wiry little redhead, their shortstop, a switch hitter, and crafty. He stepped up to swing lefty.

The not-so-fast ball came in. Gensler fouled it back to the net. Matt signed for the change-up. Gensler looked silly going after that slow one. Wingy always had been deceptive getting rid of his slow pitches, Matt recalled. Then the fast one came in again, and Gensler swung hard, missed by a hair. He went back to the Eagle dugout, disgusted, as the crowd boomed for Wingy.

Two strikeouts. Matt shook his head, and wondered if he was dreaming. He watched Pittman, their first baseman, step up. The guy swung hard on the first pitch. Matt heard the high-pitched sound of impact that told him the ball had been fouled almost straight up.

He slapped the mask off his balding head and went back with a sudden burning eagerness, searching the sky overhead for the ball. He saw it. He had to go back dangerously close to the net. But he took it. The crowd yelled, and a wide grin cut the tension from his taut features. They were at the halfway mark; they'd made it through the first inning.

You never could tell about baseball.

He sat with Wingy Davis, quietly talking, while the Blues batters went out there and suffered a similar fate at the hands of the Eagle pitcher.

“I blanked 'em huh, Matt?”

“You sure did, kid.”

Wingy beamed. Matt didn't know when he'd ever seen a man look this happy. “I dreamed of this, Matt.”

“Sure.”

“That crowd thought I'd flop. Guess I fooled 'em.”

“Relax, Wingy. Don't get too excited.”

“I'll mow 'em down this next inning. We're past the tough side of the order. Don't worry, Matt. Don't take it so serious.”

Pete Chalmers had just struck out, ending the Blues half of the inning. It was time to go out there. Matt flung an arm around Wingy Davis.

“You and me, Wingy.”

“You and me, Matt.”

Buster Manning, their second sacker. A chunky, sharp-eyed son at the plate, with reflexes like lightning. A knotty problem for every pitcher who faced him.

Matt considered and flashed the sign for Wingy's downer and prayed, just a little. One more inning! Just one more inning! It came to him with a harsh little jolt of realization that his own decision was made, and that this looked to be his last season of baseball. A blue mood came on him. Then he forced himself to bear down hard on the problem of teasing Wingy Davis through this one more inning.

The important thing right now was Wingy...
The downer came. It was a poor, sorry imitation of the tricky sinker Wingy Davis once could produce upon order. But the fates seemed to be meeting out true justice here, Matt thought with a small thrust of hope renewed excitement.

Buster Manning swung mightily, and poked the ball into the dirt ahead of the plate. It took one low hop, straight into Wingy Davis' waiting glove. The big man grinned with something of the cockiness he had displayed in better years, and took his time throwing to first for the putout.

Matt went out there, gulping a little. Maybe there was a chance! If it was Fate, the least they could do was meet their good luck halfway.

"Two to go, Wingy. I got a feelin' you're going to make it. How's the arm?"

"Kinda sore, Matt. Guess I strained it throwin' that downer."

Matt glanced at the bullpen, where Lefty O'Doul and Pete Rincon were warming up. "It's up to you, Wingy."

"Hell! You couldn't haul me out of here with a tractor. Matt, I told Mr. Edgerton I'd pitch two innings. And I'm going to."

Matt couldn't look at him. "That's the way to talk, pal."

IN THE WAY back to the plate, he saw Edgerton's small grin of triumph, and remembered how the owner had predicted success for Wingy Davis.

It had not been success so far. It had been luck, as every baseball-wise man in the park, with the single exception of Wingy Davis himself, must certainly realize.

Edgerton's I-told-you-so grin brought a scowl to Matt's face.

"I'll wipe that smirk off his face after this game, when I tell him I'm quitting."

Eddie Borges was up. Matt sighed with an inner conviction that such luck as they'd enjoyed so far couldn't last, and signed for the curve. It came up as big as a house, cutting hard across the middle of the plate, hip-high for Eddie.

The kid swung hard, meaning to kill it. Matt felt the ball splat into his mitt, and frowned down curiously at it. His wide mouth was drawn down at the corners as he turned it to the mound. He signed for the swift, and again Eddie Borges swung mightily at it.

Matt got Wingy to aim at the corners, hoping to get Borges to swing at a bad one. The count went two and two. The crowd tensed with the next pitch to Eddie. It was the so-called fast ball which was a cripple in reality. It was right over. And Eddie Borges missed it by inches.

Matt looked at the kid as he stepped bitterly out of the box.

"Up, late last night, were you, Eddie?"

The kid looked soberly at him. "Not me, Matt." He nodded toward Wingy. "I just ain't onto his style yet."

It could be, Matt thought. He went out to the hill once more, and now his heart was thumping a runaway drumbeat.

"We're almost in, pal. One to go. How's that arm?"

"I still got a few, Matt."

"This is something they'll still be talking about when we're dead and buried. Stay with it, Wingy. These chumps haven't figured you out yet. That deceptive delivery of yours has 'em off their timing."

"I told you, Matt. I told you we'd slay 'em."

Matt went back there. The crowd was making such a racket all around the big park now that you couldn't hear yourself think. Sinkler stepped up, and Matt looked at him, thinking, Just you, pal. One more.

If they could get Sinkler it would be something stupendous. Why, it would be the weirdest comeback performance in the history of baseball. But the important thing was that Wingy Davis would be able to walk out of his ball park, and through the rest of the years of his life, holding his battered head high, with his pride intact.

Matt signed for the swift, and it came down the line and splatted into his mitt, without even an offer at it by Sinkler. Matt kissed the ball be-
fore throwing it back. He was grin-
ning. This was the kind of heart-
wrenching drama that he had missed
in his last few years of baseball.

There was so little true spirit in
the game nowadays. He told himself
that he would lose nothing byquit-
ting. He could not understand these
brittle and businesslike younger
players coming up lately. He felt
no bond of sympathy toward them.

Wingy Davis’ arm was begin-
ing to wilt. The tall, brooding-eyed man
came up with two wild pitches, which
Matt had trouble holding. He put a
curve over the plate, which Sinkler
fouled into the left field bleachers.
The count went to three and two on
the Eagle hitter.

Matt walked out to the hill.
“Stall awhile, Wingy. Arm pretty
bad, is it?”

“No, Matt.”
“You’ll have to pitch to him now.
You can’t afford to pass him. You
haven’t enough left to face a new hit-
ter. . . . Looks like it’s now or never.”
“What’ll I give him, Matt? The
swift?”
“No,” Matt said. “The changeup?”
“Huh?”
“I know what I’m doing,” Matt said,
and went back of the platter.

THE UMP had dusted the plate.
Sinkler was standing aggres-
sively in the box, swinging his bat
in small circles. Matt breathed a prayer
and lifted his mitt, as Wingy Davis
went into his prolonged windup.

It was a tricky delivery, all right,
Matt thought. It looked as if the
curve or the fast ball might be com-
ing up. But Sinkler was clever. He
stepped in deliberately, timing it per-
fectly from the very start, and swung
lustily at it.

That ball had absolutely nothing on
it. It came foozling down the line
like a toy balloon riding a soft breeze.

He stood, stunned beyond com-
hension, staring down at the ball in
his mitt, while the crowd suddenly
went crazy. Matt moved away from
the plate in a daze. He looked his
question at Sinkler, and the man’s
eye opened and closed in a wink, as
he turned toward the Eagle dugout.

Matt’s dazed eyes followed Sink-
ler’s progress, then came to rest on
the grinning figure of Choo-Choo
Jamison. As he watched, Choo-Choo
nodded at him, very slightly, then
looked away.

“Well, I’ll be damned!” Matt sud-
denly snickered, then slapped a hand
against his big thigh. “No wonder we
blew them over so easy.” He felt
shame come in him. “And I been
sayin’ these kids comin’ up had no
sentiment to them. They gave us
these two innings.”

For a moment that seemed terribly
wrong, but then Wingy Davis was
clapping him on the back, beaming
with an exuberance almost doglike,
yelling about the crowd sound, “I
done it, Matt. I dreamed of this day.
Told you I could always lay in on
the line for you.”

“Sure, sure,” Matt said, blinking
moist eyes as he looked away. “You
showed ‘em something,” he said, and
suddenly knew in his heart what the
young Eagle players had done had
been not wrong but terribly right.

He moved toward the dugout with
his head thrown back, his shoulders
straight, thinking how young Edger-
ton had tried to destroy the essential
dignity of the game by this two
inning vaudeville show, and how the
essential fineness of the game had
served to thwart the rich young
owner’s efforts. One man couldn’t
ruin baseball, Matt thought, and told
himself Edgerton would probably
tire of his big league toy and sell
out.

He went out to talk to Emory, Jen-
sen, and La Motta, who would be up
for the Blues this inning. “If any of
you guys gets on base this inning,”
he grunted, “I’ll fine you fifty. This
game starts officially going into the
third, see?”

They understood him all right. Ap-
parently they were way ahead of
him. Maybe he had misjudged this
younger generation of baseballers.
They were okay, he saw. When you
came right down to it, there was no
game quite like baseball.

And how in the devil had he seri-
ously thought about quitting?

THE END
Every cannonball ace Eddie Graeme twisted out of Joe Dade's reach put his friend farther from future success — every forehand drive Joe blasted past Eddie went to wreck Eddie's future happiness!

EDDIE GRAEME'S outstanding skill with a tennis racquet was the product of long hours spent on a private court taking lessons from high-priced tennis tutors, but there was no suggestions of snobbery in the good-looking seventeen-year-old youngster. He didn't care where he played, or who gave him the competition, just so it was competition.

He pivoted sharply now as a ball arced over the net and bounced high off the cement surface of the free public court provided by the city. Behind that blistering drive was a very determined-looking towheaded kid about Eddie's own age. His name was Dade, Joe Dade. Eddie had met him just a few minutes ago.

Joe Dade's tennis form was all wrong, but his determination to win was all right. The stocky kid from the city streets was giving smooth-stroking Eddie Graeme plenty of trouble.

"If I don't settle down," Eddie told himself, "he'll take the set from me."

He slammed a hard forehand drive from his baseline and decided it was

THEY WERE PALS OFF-COURT, DEADLY RIVALS AT THE NET! . . . TENSE CHAMPIONSHIP TENNIS NOVELET!
enough of a forcing shot to warrant going in. He had gone only halfway to the net, however, when the ball came whistling back over the net, to his left.

Eddie Graeme scrambled over, trying to get his racquet into the path of the whistling white pellet. He was just too late. He succeeded only in touching the ball with the wooden tip of his racquet and deflecting it into the alley.

Game for stocky, tow-headed Joe Dade, 5–4 in Dade’s favor now, Eddie Graeme thought, biting his lips. He caught the balls as Dade batted them toward him and walked to the baseline to commence service in what could be a set game, if he failed to hold service.

He flung a ball high and swung sharply at it, telling himself this was ridiculous. He had a better game than Joe Dade. He should be winning without any trouble.

He double-faulted.

Frowning, he swung over to the other side of the baseline and served again. It was good. Joe Dade pounced on it like a hungry cat, sent a bristling drive skimming over the net, to Eddie’s backhand. Eddie tried to lob the ball lazily, then suddenly slammed into it hard, sending a very hot drive into the sand off to Eddie’s left. Eddie couldn’t manage to do more than block it back softly.

Joe Dade ran to the net and killed it with an overhand smash, and the set was all over.

Eddie tried to hide his chagrin as he went to the net and shook hands with Joe Dade.

“Say, that was all right. Want another?”

“Guess not today,” said Joe Dade. His flat hodge-podge of features were creased in a friendly grin, making him likeable-looking, if not exactly handsome. “I’m due at the job.”

“Job?” Eddie Graeme, at seventeen, had never worked at a job of any kind, never had earned a nickel, for the simple reason that he hadn’t had to.

“Clerk in a clothing store down on Market Street. Just part time afternoons, four o’clock until around six. But it pays good. And it leaves time for the tennis.”

“Apparently,” grinned Eddie, and truthfully added, “You have a good game.”

“You’re all right yourself, pal. What’s your racket?”

“My—racket?”

“Whaddaya work at?”

“Why, nothing,” said Eddie, and for some, strange reason, under the burning scrutiny of Joe Dade’s brown eyes, felt embarrassed. “I’m taking it sort of easy this summer. Just finished at Hanover Prep. Taking a breather before I go on to college.”

Joe Dade nodded, as if in complete approval of that program. “You aren’t going after this Hartwell thing, are you?”

Eddie smiled. “This Hartwell thing” was a scholarship set up in the last will and testament of Dixon Hartwell, candy bar millionaire and sportsman who had briefly enjoyed national ranking back in the days when Tilden and Johnston were tops in the game. The Dixon Hartwell tournament was an annual event, open to any pre-college youngster from the city or its environs. To the winner went a scholarship plum such
as is dreamed about but seldom encountered in real life: four full years at this city's Pine College—Hartwell's own Alma Mater—with all expenses paid.

Eddie Graeme thought he could see now the reason for Joe Dade's iron determination to win out on the court.

"No," he quickly reassured the city youngster. "I hadn't given the scholarship much thought. My dad's dead set on sending me to Cornell."

HE SAW no necessity to add that the Graemes had been going to Cornell for generations. Or that a certain extremely delectable young lady named Susan Henderson, with whom he was smitten, was also planning to enter Cornell in September.

"Too bad," Joe Dade said.

"Bad?" Eddie Graeme was mystified. What was too bad about attending a first rank Ivy League school like Cornell?

"I suppose they play pretty fair tennis up there in Ithaca," Joe Dade shrugged. "But I figure I'll learn a heap more under Sam Dobbs at Pine. He's one of the smartest tennis coaches in the business. And Pine's got a rep as the best tennis school in the country. I sure hope I can cop the Hartwell scholarship and go there."

It was obvious, in the bright shine of his eyes, in the attitude of overall eagerness that made itself felt in his talk, his jerky gestures, the way he stood, that winning the Dixon Hartwell tournament scholarship was a matter of extreme importance to Joe Dade.

"I hope you make it," Eddie said sincerely.

"I was thinking," Joe Dade said, and looked down, flushing a little. "You going to be very busy between now and the fourteenth?"

Eddie would be busy primarily in sussing pretty Susan Henderson hither and yon. He shook his head at Joe Dade. "Not too busy. Why?"

"That was a good set we just put on. I got a feeling you'll give me all kinds of trouble, once you get wise to my style. Probably beat me."

"Oh, I don't—"

"What I need between now and the start of the tourney is competition. The tougher the better, S'pose you could help me tune myself up?"

It was on the top of Eddie Graeme's tongue to invent some glib excuse. But that eager beaver quality in Joe Dade somehow disarmed him.

"All right," he said. "Be glad to do what I can to help, Dade."

Eddie Graeme's life that summer was idyllic. He seemed to have everything a seventeen-year-old needs to pass a pleasant vacation. He had a car of his own, not a Rolls Royce but not a wreck either. He had good clothes, and his father's country club company gave the idle hours a special meaning.

He had known her since they were both twelve, and he probably had loved her since that long ago day when they first laid eyes on each other. He must have, he thought, for he never tired of being with Susan. They spent practically every waking moment together, at her house or at his, or out in the car somewhere.

Each day, though, Eddie turned up at the public courts, down in the city, and fulfilled his promise to help Joe Dade tune up his game for the Dixon Hartwell tourney.

He got so that he could beat the city boy, as often as Joe Dade could beat him, which was precisely as Joe Dade had predicted. Joe Dade seemed genuinely grateful for Eddie Graeme's help, and he expressed his thanks often.

But Eddie Graeme's interest in the tennis was waning. He could play whenever he cared to, on the private court at home, or out at the country club. He developed a mild resentment toward the necessity if dragging down to the concrete city courts, day after day. He admitted as much to Susan.

"Why don't you call it off then?" she said with characteristic directness.

"I dunno, Sue. I'd feel like kind of a heel. This thing means so much to him."

"There's only one more week before the eliminations begin, Ed. You've probably helped him as much as you're able to, by this time. Honestly,
I think you've been swell about it. Why not just explain to him how you feel? He'll understand."

She was right, Eddie realized. "Yeah, sure. I'll do that, by golly."

Sue wanted him to drive her in to the city on some sort of errand for her mom, the next morning. Eddie thought it would be a good chance for him to see Joe Dade and explain things. You couldn't reach him by phone, but Joe Dade had given Eddie his address, and after leaving Sue out and arranging to pick her up later, Eddie scouted around till he found it.

It was one of those brick row houses, the kind that always make you wonder how a drunk would ever be able to pick his particular house out by moonlight. He parked the car at the curb and punched the doorbell.

A stout, swallow woman with kindly eyes in a work-worn face opened and said, "Sorry, nothing tod—"

"I'm not selling anything," Eddie said quickly, seeing the door start to close. "I came to see Joe."

"Joe's upstairs asleep."

"Asleep? But—I'm supposed to meet him on the tennis courts in a couple of hours. I don't—"

"He'll be there. Joe ain't the kind of boy to keep any one waiting."

Eddie was embarrassed. He was about to excuse himself when a sleepy voice hailed him from the head of the stairs. "Eddie! Where'd you come from? Hey, let the man in, Mom. That's Eddie Graeme. He's the one I been telling you about."

"Hello," said the woman. "It's nice to meet you. Is a good thing you do, helping my Joe get good education. Yes, come in, come in. He's awake now."

Eddie said strangely, "What's this with you sleeping all day, Joe? No wonder you're always so full of ginger out there on the court. How lazy can a guy get, though?"

"Joe ain't lazy," said the woman, fiercely maternal. "Joe works full eight-hour shift in Kruce-Kemper Steel Company, midnight to eight in the morning."

Eddie felt as if somebody had slug-
said, then suddenly stiffened in front of the wheel. "Pull in your belts? Hey! That's not going to change your college plans, is it? We'll still both be going to Cornell?"

Susan turned her pretty head and stared out the window on her side. It was some time before she said anything. Her voice sounded pretty low.

"I hate to tell you this, Ed. It would have been swell, going to the same college."

"Would've been? Listen, Sue you—"

"Ed, I couldn't. Not now. Oh, I suppose if I made a scene and acted like a spoiled pup, Daddy would give in and make things work out somehow. But he's down so low, right now. I can't be selfish and make things harder for him."

Eddie just sat there, watching the road slide toward the car as he pulled it around a turn in the macadam. Cornell without Sue, he thought, was going to be like Siberia for him. He didn't say anything, and Susan went on: "Mother thinks I should take a secretarial course in the city. She did, you know. That's how she got Daddy."

"Hey," said Eddie, feeling suddenly jealous, "you don't need that. You've got somebody already."

"Or I could enroll as a day student at Pine," Susan said "Daddy knows one of the trustees, and he could probably arrange a scholarship for me. At least, partial. It's not expensive at all, and as a day student I could live at home and save plenty. That's probably where I'll wind up, Ed."

Still he didn't say anything.

"We'll see each other on vacations. And summers, Ed. Daddy's business will improve. It always does I may be able to transfer to Cornell at mid-term, or at the start of sophomore year."

"Maybe," Eddie said, "that won't be necessary, Sue."

"Won't be necessary? Why not, Ed?"

"I just had an idea. A very interesting," said Eddie.

"So it's like that," he was saying to the stocky, towhead Joe Dade. "All of a sudden I've got a very good personal reason for wanting to attend Pine College myself, Joe. My dad would much prefer me to follow his footsteps at Cornell, but if I was to come up with a full scholarship for four years at Pine, Pop could hardly resist taking advantage of the saving."

"That makes sense, all right," Joe Dade said, slapping his racquet against his well-muscled thigh. "I can see how you feel about this setup, Ed. But why tell me?"

Eddie Graeme squirmed inwardly and looked at the ground. "Tell you the truth, Joe, I feel guilty, trying to muscle in on this thing after you've worked so hard for it."

"That's crazy," Joe Dade said. "You're just as eligible as any one else, Ed." He grinned, a little stiffly. "And don't be so sure you're muscling in. I'm going to give you a real battle. Matter of fact, I'm going to beat you, Ed."

Eddie looked up, frowning. This wasn't like Joe Dade, this braggadocio.

"You sound pretty sure, Joe."

"I am."

"How can you be sure you'll beat a man in a tennis tourney?"

"I'm hungrier than you, Ed. That's putting it sort of blunt, but it's true. I was reading about the fight game in a newspaper column the other night, where it said the hungry fighter generally wins."

"I've got my own reasons for wanting to cop that scholarship, Joe said Eddie.

Love and hunger, he was thinking. The two primary animal instincts. Eddie would be out there trying to make sure he would not be separated from Susan. Joe Dade would be trying to use the tourney as an all-important steppingstone to material success.

It promised, thought Eddie, to be quite a battle.

[ITAL] LIVED up to that promise. They both swept through the preliminary rounds in a breeze. Almost from the start it was a foregone conclusion that it would be Eddie against Joe, in the finals.

The big day came on a Saturday.
with a thin drizzle in the air. But the makeshift wooden grandstand flanking the court was jammed to capacity. Susan was up there, sitting with Eddie’s father and mother and kid sister. Down front, just opposite the net posts sat a stout, sallow woman with a work worn face which seemed to be years younger today, somehow Joe Dade’s mother sat straight as a stick. She had obviously worn her best dress for this occasion, and pride hung on her like a mantle.

They got started, and suddenly Eddie was aware of the crowd, of the steady drizzle which mottled his face. All he had time to attend to was that whistling white pellet, which seemed to arc back across the net at him as regularly as if he were batting it against a barn wall. Joe Dade had always been a hard man to get a ball past. He was particularly hard to outfox today.

“He said he was hungry,” thought Eddie, “and he wasn’t kidding.”

Eddie had the strokes. He had the terrific advantage of having played the game since he was a toddler, of having been taught the proper methods of stroking at the very outset, until a sound game of tennis had become second nature to him.

He muffed a few strokes in the opening game, and dropped it to Joe Dade. But then he settled down into a relaxed groove. The balls began to come down into court for him nicely. He got his placements working, won a few points, and as confidence flowed into him, took the initiative from careful, hard-working Joe Dade.

Eddie won three games straight, making it 3-1 in his favor. And now he could almost feel the poison creeping into his opponent’s game, at the other side of the net.

Joe Dade, as he himself said, was playing this match from hunger, and he had described that as an advantage. But there is such a thing as trying too hard. Now, as the tide of battle swept toward Eddie, Joe Dade’s flat, formless features twisted into an attitude of strain. Once Eddie saw Joe glance at his mother, who was wringing a bit of handkerchief in her worn hands.

Joe Dade tightened up, sent a ball into the net, and immediately tightened up even more. Eddie swept through three more games without much trouble, and the first set ended at 6-1 in his favor.

They changed courts and prepared to start the second set of this best-out-of-five match. Eddie glanced up to where Susan sat with his mom and pop. He gave her a grin which said, “Guess we’ll both be going to Pine College.”

Sue smiled back, but there was a reserve in her smile which Eddie could not quite understand.

Either it was that which bothered him and momentarily shook his concentration, or Joe Dade’s iron will to win reasserted itself now, for the tide of battle changed swiftly. Eddie dropped his own service, lost another game to Joe Dade, and struggled valiantly to hold his own service the second time around.

On the ad-out point, he smashed his first service ball in, Joe Dade blocked to midcourt. Eddie ran in and full-volleyed, angling his return down along the left alley. Against anybody but an eager beaver like Joe Dade the shot would have been too tough to waste time and energy on.

But Joe Dade scooted over that like a frightened rabbit, lunged with his racquet, and managed to tick the ball back over to the net. It bounced two feet, and Eddie just stood there with his mouth hanging open, feeling foolish, as the crowd applauded Joe Dade’s shot.

There was a lot of iron, a lot of fight in Joe Dade’s chunky frame, and somehow it had turned the tide in his favor. The city boy won that set, evening things up at 1-1, and drove on grimly to annex the third set at 6-4.

Eddie looked up toward pretty Susan and told himself, going into the fourth set, that he must not let this thing happen. He had a better game of tennis than Joe Dade. He should be winning without trouble. If he dropped this fourth set, the match would be all over.

The drizzle had stopped now, and
a hot, August sun was blazing down through the waterlogged air onto the court. Sweat rolled off Eddie's forehead and into his eyes. He took out a handkerchief and wrapped it around his head, and watched Joe Dade repeat that maneuver.

Joe Dade had a lot more flesh on his stubby bones than Eddie carried on his taller frame. The city man's face was red as a beet from the uncommon sultriness of this day, and from exertion. Eddie thought, "All's fair in love and war. And maybe I've got an advantage that I haven't been using."

He always preferred hot weather to cold, always had been able to withstand excessive heat without discomfort. He thought that the same probably could not be said of stocky Joe Dade, and now Eddie began to use his skill at placements to keep Joe Dade on the run.

He gunned for the corners, alternating direction with each stroke, in order to keep Joe Dade constantly running. When a soft shot enticed Joe Dade to the net, Eddie hit a safe lob over his head, forcing the shorter man to run back.

At first it didn't pan out. Joe Dade always had been a "getter," and he could outsteady Eddie now, as he proved by winning three games in succession. Eddie felt tension build up inside of him; he thought briefly of abandoning his plan.

Then signs of approaching exhaustion began to show in the straining face and sagging posture of the man across the net, and Eddie's hopes lifted.

Sweat was rolling down off Joe Dade's flat, beet-red face so fast now that he was unable to keep it out of his eyes. The city man was blinded half the time, and he began to miss on his attempted placements. Eddie passed Joe Dade's service, took hope from that, and rolled on smoothly to win the set finally at 8-6.

"Sets are now at two-all," announced the umpire from atop the wooden stand. "There will be a brief intermission before the concluding set."

They sat side by side on a long green bench, panting, wiping the salty perspiration from their faces.

Eddie looked at Joe Dade and grinned crookedly, "Some scrape," he said. "At least they can't kick, can they?" And he waved at the crowd up there.

Joe Dade shrugged. He looked awfully tired, too tired to waste energy talking or even thinking. Eddie said, "This heat's been a bad break for you, Joe. Doesn't bother me much. I'm so skinny."

"It's pretty hot, Ed," Joe Dade grinned "I'll admit I preferred that drizzle we had at the start. It isn't the heat that bothers me, though."

"What does?"

"I'm sleepy, believe it or not. This is the time I'm usually home napping."

"Thanks for the tip," Eddie smiled.

"It won't do you any good, pal. I'm hungry remember? I'm going to beat you."

Maybe, thought Eddie, as the umpire summoned them back to the arena of action. He hadn't thought much about Joe Dade's daily naps, which usually occupied these hours. Eddie flung a ball high, smashed it across the net, and watched Joe Dade return it.

EDDIE HIT deep and to the left to Joe Dade's backhand. Again the ball was sent back and Eddie drove to the right, making Joe Dade imitate a rabbit once more, as he had in the fourth set. It was Eddie's only chance, to try to wear his man down. He held his own service, but Joe Dade, who had profited by the brief rest, and was playing with the concentration of a zealot, would not be passed. He, too, held service, and they sawed the score upward. It went to 4-4, and then again, the uncommon sultriness of this day began to take its toll of Joe Dade's energy supply.

The city man faltered, driving a ball into the alley, another into the net, and it was 5-4, Eddie's favor. Joe Dade's face wore even more strain as Eddie served to him. The man was all tied up in knots, and the
combination of weariness and tension played havoc with his control. Eddie served good, and the city man sent one past the baseline. The score went to thirty-love, Eddie’s favor, to forty-love.

Now the crowd stirred and some were trickling down from the stands as the umpire intoned: “Forty-love in Mr. Graeme’s favor. Game, set and match point coming up.”

Eddie served, smiling a little. It was all over now but the shouting. He saw the ball whip back at him to his backhand, and flubbed it into the net.

He went over to the other side of the baseline and served again. Joe Dade hit a soft return which Eddie had to run in for. He failed to judge the teaser properly and lifted it beyond the baseline.

Forty-thirty now. The crowd had suddenly settled back in the seats and Eddie’s mouth was grim. Apparently it was dangerous to count Joe Dade out until that final point had been played. The guy was like a wounded bear. No telling when he might rise up and claw at you.

And yet, looking across the net at the guy, Eddie could tell that Joe Dade was near the limit of human endurance now “Still set point,” Eddie told himself. “I’ll get him this time.”

He looked up to where Susan was sitting and grinned at her. That unusual something was on her pretty face which had been there before. She was not smiling.

Eddie’s glance dropped to the fixed-faced woman sitting in a down-front seat opposite the net posts. Joe Dade’s mother had that proud look about her as she watched her son give a battle royal even in almost certain defeat.

“She knows Joe’s lost this thing,” Eddie thought. “She’s getting herself ready to smooth things over for him.”

It came to him with a sudden sharp impact that Joe Dade had been up all night, working in a factory, while Eddie slept, and that it was for this reason, more than any other, that Eddie had been able to hold the iron will to win of the city man at bay.

“Sure,” he told himself, “that’s it. And when you stack up my reason for wanting to win against Joe’s, it doesn’t look good.”

It looked rotten. More so the more he let his mind dwell upon it. He’d always had everything he wanted, and maybe it wouldn’t kill him not to have Sue at the same college with him. That certainly didn’t add up to much against Joe Dade’s chance at a college education, Joe Dade’s only chance at an education.

Eddie felt shame slide through him. Suddenly he flipped a ball up, served, and faulted. He flipped another, and it too failed to hold court.

THE CROWD gasped. A double fault at match point is almost an unknown quantity in tennis.

Eddie served again, rolled spiritlessly with Joe Dade, and finally hit into the alley. A moment later he put one into the net and the umpire was saying: “Games are at five-all.”

Joe Dade went on to hold his own service and it was 6-5, in the city man’s favor. He wore a puzzled expression as he passed Eddie, changing courts. He touched Eddie’s elbow.

“What gives with you all of a sudden?”

Eddie said, “Gives?”

“Listen,” said Joe Dade with a burning light in his eyes, “if I thought for one minute you were trying to make me a gift of this thing, I’d pop you, Ed.”

“What’d you get that craze—”

“I’m not kidding. I never got anything without working for it and that’s the way I like it. Ed. When I’m looking for charity, I’ll wear a tin cup in my mitt an’ a pair of dark glasses.”

He walked on, leaving a red-faced Eddie Graeme to stand uncertainly there by the net post. Eddie walked toward the baseline, and suddenly he saw that Joe Dade was much too big a person to need, or accept, any favors from him.

He threw a ball up, stroked it at savagely, and watched it curl down into court. Joe slammed it back at him. Eddie hit hard off his forehand, and they settled into a blistering ex-
change that had the crowd standing up, yelling like football fans, when Joe Dade finally courted one past Eddie's reaching racquet.

Eddie served again, going all out in an effort to win this point, but no longer resorting to the cheap tactic of the legs off a man who had been up all night working in a steel plant. It was straight slam-bang tennis, in which neither sought a special advantage.

Eddie finally won the point when Joe's placement dropped just off the court. They seesawed it upward, and then it was advantage Joe Dade.

Up in the rickety stands you could hear a pin drop as Eddie prepared to serve at set point for his opponent. He flung the ball high and brought his strings against it.

IT WAS GOOD, Joe Dade swung carefully, sent a forehand into the sand at Eddie's feet. Eddie tried to lob. Joe Dade was coming in toward the net, and Eddie tried to lift the ball past him.

But he was backing up as he stroked at it, and the ball was going to be short, he knew the moment he hit it. He watched it float lazily toward Joe Dade's side of the net. It was coming down in midcourt.

Joe Dade backed up, his eager eyes never losing sight of that ball. He let it drop and take its high bounce, and then he unleashed himself at it, in the same stroke he used for service.

Eddie was up at the net. He saw the ball zip to his left and swung his body, trying to get his racquet in front of it. It hit the wooden tip of the bat, and trickled down the alley on his side of the net...

"Thanks," Joe Dade said in his deep, sober way, as he shook hands with Eddie over the net. "For a lot of things, Ed." And then the crowd was spilling out onto the court to congratulate the winner of the Dixon Hartwell scholarship to Pine College, and Eddie realized that, strangely, he felt as good as if it were he they were cheering.

He felt even happier, four days later, when Susan phoned breathlessly to inform him that her Uncle John, who always had been biased in her favor, was going to finance her through Cornell, at least until her dad was back on his feet once again.

"I just knew something would work out for us to stay together, Ed," she said happily. "Gosh, isn't it lucky you didn't win that scholarship to Pine College?"

Eddie was thinking of Joe Dade as he answered, "I'll say it is, Sue. In more ways than one."

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THE DEAN fidgeted and looked at Doc for help, but Doc, who had sweated out more important battles than the Dean Wilson had ever seen, calmly waited for the Spalding prexy to come to the point.

Doc Cornell, head coach of Spaulding College for the past fifteen years,

The best basketball team in the country, was all Doc Cornell had to produce or Spalding College was hiring a new head coach...
knew the Dean had something unpleasant to say. The man had come to Doc's office, and that meant something was in the wind. Doc didn't particularly care for the stuffy college president he waited quietly.

"We, ahhhh—we have always felt that you were a wonderful influence on our young men," said Dean Wilson. "We, ahhhh—we do not feel that you have done anything but a good job during your long—ahhhhh tenure—at this school."

The Dean cleared his throat and continued nervously. "It was therefore with a great deal of regret, believe me, spurred on only by the disastrous football season behind us and a large group of alumni, that the board of regents decided that perhaps it would be better if we had a younger, more modern coach—one trained in the modern systems, you understand—to coach our teams."

Doc regarded the proxy with his steady blue eyes, and the Dean quailed mentally before the sparks he was sure would fly. Then Doc stirred. He ran a hand over his sparse gray hair in a typical gesture and slowly his leathery face broke into a smile.

"I get it, Dean," said Doc. He was a direct speaking man and not used to beating around the bush. "In other words you're tying a can to my tail."

"Well," the Dean said, spreading his hands palms up, "that is a blunt way of putting it. Believe me, we—"

"I know," Doc said, cutting in. "You think the T formation should be on the football field. You think the kids on the basketball floor should run up and down like madmen and all shoot with one hand. You think I don't know what's going on in modern sports."

The sparks were beginning to fly and the college president rose hastily. "Believe me, the regents only speak for—"

"I know," Doc said impatiently. "Let's call a spade a spade. Let's call it Slugger Hoffman. Don't look so surprised, I know he's been after this coaching job the last couple of years."

"I am in no position to make any statement—" the Dean began stiffly, but once more Doc cut him off.

"You may not be, but I am. I'm in a position to say that the T formation without the proper material will lose just as many football games as the wing-back, or the box, or what have you. I'm in a position to say that a mediocre basketball team will do better with a set offense than it will running up and down the floor trying to handle the ball in a way for which it isn't suited. I'm in a position to say that when I made Slugger Hoffman into a Little All-American halfback here seven years ago it was done with the single wing and Slugger wouldn't have had the speed for the T. Now he comes along and says he knows all about the T. The only thing he knows about is Slugger Hoffman, and he's just using this school as a stepping stone—but he'll have to step over my dead body."

"He's turned out winning teams at Pelligan High," said the Dean staunchly, and he edged toward the door as the fury of Doc's storm rose.

"Sure," Doc said, "it's the biggest high school in this area, he has more material. You get me material and I'll turn out a winning team. The trouble with you fellows is you still think defeat is failure. Well, I don't. Sometimes there's more in defeat than there'll ever be in winning."

The college president was at the door. "Well, think it over, I am merely an emissary from—"

"I don't have to think it over," Doc said. "I know! You blather-brained idiots will get no milk-toast resignation out of me. When spring comes you'll have a fight on your hands. Meanwhile stay away from this office and let me do my job."

THE DEAN slipped out hastily and already his handkerchief was in his hand as he mopped his brow.

When the door closed behind the Dean, Doc glared at it for a few moments as though it were in on the conspiracy. Then slowly he relaxed and a resigned look spread over his seamed face. Now and then, during the past fifteen years, when he had hit a losing streak, he had met op-
position such as this. But this was stronger than any before and he knew where it originated. Slugger Hoffman! He also knew the antidote. A winning team!

Doc thought over the basketball prospects and shook his head. There was no winning team there. He had nothing. There was “Stretch” Mackrides, the center. Six feet three inches tall and a natural athlete, “Stretch” was the only real ball player on the squad. But Stretch had to have help. He had to have feeders and he had to have someone to draw the defense out for him, some good long shot, then Stretch would come into his own under the basket.

Doc shook his head and heaved himself to his feet. He moved to the gym entrance and paused there, unseen by the squad. Almost without exception they would race in at the ball, scoop it up, and slide along on one foot while they flung the ball at the basket with one hand. Doc snorted in disgust. Some players had a talent for that type of shot, a feeling in their hand, a snap in their wrist, but these kids could do much better if they’d stop, set, and shoot with two hands.

Then Doc saw it. A little, skinny lad scooped up the ball, drew his feet together, heels meeting, and held the ball in front of him with his two hands. He flicked his wrists and the ball sailed through the hoop with a neat swish. The kid followed in and dexterously laid-up the rebound.

Doc blinked his eyes and watched the kid. He was a new-comer to the squad. A few minutes later it was his turn to shoot and once more he moved into perfect form and swished the ball through the hoop with two hands. Doc was just about to move out on the floor when he heard a booming voice from the bleachers.

“Hey, kid,” said the voice, “you’ll never get anywhere shooting with two hands like that, you don’t get time. Develop a one-handed shot that you can shoot going away. Let me show you.” All the players stopped as the owner of the voice moved onto the floor. He was a big, burly, heavily-faced individual and Doc recognized him immediately as Slugger Hoffman.

“Oh, Slugger said, and he was a little sheepish. “I didn’t see you, Doc. How are you?”

“Very well,” Doc said positively. “What are you doing here?”

“I just dropped over to watch practice,” Slugger said.

“Well just drop out again,” Doc said. “I’m particular who watches my practices.”

“What?” asked the dumbfounded Slugger.

“You heard me,” Doc said.

“Well,” Slugger said, and his face got red. A sneer came to his lips. “I guess we know where we stand.”

“I think so,” Doc said.

“Any objection if I see the games?”

“Not if you buy a ticket,” Doc retorted.

Slugger turned on his heel and stalked angrily out of the gym.

WHEN DOC turned to his boys, all of whom had stopped playing to watch the tableau, there was the glint of battle in his eyes. “What’s your name?” he asked the kid Slugger had been addressing.

“Rawlings,” the kid said, and a crooked grin came to his face. “Most guys call me Skinny.”

“Oh, Skinny,” Doc said, “you just go ahead shooting the way you were. You did all right.” He addressed the entire squad. “Let’s take fifteen turns around the gym and then we’ll have a little game.”

Throughout practice Doc watched Skinny Rawlings closely. When practice was over there was a new, brighter gleam in Doc’s eye. The kid, although he was only five-feet nine-inches tall and with no weight, was a natural basketball player. He had a thatch of unruly hair which he kept brushing out of his eyes in the heat of battle, but he was a ball-hawk of the Piggy Lambert school. All the time he was in the game he was fiercely after the ball, playing the ball instead of the player. Whenever his man got the ball, Rawlings was
on him. He battled for the ball, swiped at it, pounced on it the minute it was loose. He seemed to be driven by an intense fire.

Doc sat in his tiny office late that night and plotted. Skinny Rawlings was a gift from heaven just when Doc needed it the most. He would be an invaluable guard, and his deadly long shots would draw the defense out. In addition to giving Stretch Mackerides rebounds to work on, it would give the rest of the team room to operate Doc's set offense.

Doc pulled a copy of the team's schedule over to him and drew a circle around the fourth game. That was when Skinny Rawlings would make his full debut. That was the game with State University, the big school. It was only a warm-up game for State and they usually won by a handy twenty or thirty points. But every now and then Doc turned up with a team that gave State a battle, and once, just once, Doc had beaten them. That had been a gala night ten years ago.

Doc didn't think he could beat State. But if he kept Skinny under wraps, if he didn't win his own warm-up games by too much, State would be over-confident. Then there was always a chance.

Doc chuckled gleefully to himself. A winning team was always an antidote for the athletic wolves that howled for a coach's scalp. And maybe, just maybe now, he would have a winning team.

Doc worked hard with his boys. He drilled them diligently on set plays. He worked them hard and when the defense was tight they had orders to give the ball to Skinny and let him shoot. And how the kid did shoot! He was deadly. He was bound to draw the defense out, leave that one hole that would let set plays work and feed the ball to Stretch Mackerides.

"One handed shooters, indeed," Doc scoffed at the mirror in his office. "We'll show them what a two-handed shooter can do. We'll prove that any system will work if it has the right material."

Doc gave his team a fast break, too, Skinny was speedy and Mackerides' big legs ate up the court. They were a hard-hitting combination when they went down the floor together.

Skinny was also the key to their defense. He was all over the floor, hurrying shots, and Stretch was under the basket for the rebounds.

Spalding played a neighboring Junior College in their first game, and were supposed to have no trouble with them. Doc didn't start Skinny, holding him back, and with four minutes left to play in the first half Spalding held a two-point, 16-14, lead.

"This is going to be a sad season for Spalding," boomed out the voice of Slugger Hoffman during a time-out. "With a fast break Spalding should have twice that many points by now." There was an uncomfortable silence in the Spalding rooting section.

Doc nodded to Skinny and the kid eagerly peeled his jacket and reported to the scorer's table.

When play was resumed Stretch took a J.C. rebound and tipped it to Skinny. Rawlings whistled down the floor like a streak. Three J.C. men charged him frantically into a corner. There he whipped the ball to Mackerides under the basket and the big center dumped it through the hoop.

J.C. took the ball, but Skinny stole it right back. He raised four fingers in the air and started a set play. They worked the play which wound up with a fast pass to Stretch. The defense was tight and Stretch immediately had two men on him. He was almost tied-up, but managed to get the ball back to Skinny in the corner. Skinny pulled his heels together, poised, and shot. The ball swished neatly through the net and the score was 20-14.

The J.C. team raced madly down the floor and shot wildly, but missed. Skinny was on the rebound. He dribbled to a corner, letting his team get down the floor, and then came up across the ten second line. Just across the line he poised and let a long one fly. It hit the rim of the basket and went high into the air. Stretch was
under it when it came down and tipped it in. 22-14.

Once more there was a mad race down the floor and again Spalding recovered the ball. Slowly they came back across the ten second line this time, and again Skinny poised way out and let fly. The ball hit the backboard and rimmed the basket. It finally fell through after rolling around and around. 24-14. Again Skinny banged a long one home before J.C. realized it wasn't accidental and came out to meet Skinny. Immediately Spalding worked the ball in to Stretch and he scored from under the basket. The half ended with Spalding holding a comfortable 28-14 lead.

Spalding held that lead through a see-saw second half and won 42-32 without using Skinny Rawlings again.

Doc saw his team to the dressing room and then came up into the hallway outside the gym just in time to hear the booming voice of Slugger Hoffman as he held forth to a group of fans.

"Sure," Slugger said, "Spalding won. But by only ten points over a J.C. team. How are we going to look when we meet some good opposition? State'll pin our ears back with their fifth string. It'll be a track meet, not a basketball game. Our high school team last night scored forty-eight points, and in high school ball we only play thirty-two minutes."

Just then the crowd that was gathered around Slugger saw Doc, and there was an embarrassed shifting of feet. Doc saw several prominent alumni there and the battle light glinted in his blue eyes as he walked up to Slugger.

"It's all right, folks," Hoffman said, and he put on a genial grin for the benefit of those watching. "Doc knows that I don't agree with his coaching system, don't you, Doc?"

"I sure do, Slugger," Doc said, and a reckless scheme formed in his head. "I couldn't help hearing what you said. You think State University will beat us pretty badly?"

"It just depends on how much they want to pour it on," Slugger said, and it was obvious he was hedging a little. "But I'd say at least by ten points."

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Slugger," Doc said softly, and his blue eyes sparked. Through his mind ran a quick picture of his flashing team with Skinny Rawlings sparkling them. "I'll make a wager with you. If State beats us by more than ten points I'll resign my coaching job with a recommendation that you succeed me. If they don't, you make a public statement upholding my coaching."

There was a silence in the crowd while Slugger looked at Doc with disbelief showing in his face. "Aw, now, Doc," he said uneasily, "you know how basketball is—it could go either way. Like that little kid tonight who got hot with those two-handed shots. You'd have had a hard time winning if it hadn't been for that."

"I'm making an offer," Doc said. Slugger hesitated. He knew that Doc was a canny coach and Slugger was afraid. "Points don't mean anything," he said. "They might play around with their third stringers. Beat them, then you'll be doing something. You're paid to win, not to come close."

Doc's jaw snapped like a steel trap. The crowd was watching him. "All right, make it a win," he said. "If you don't accept that you're all wind and no guts."

Slugger's face turned bright red. "I'll take that," he said confidently. "You heard it, folks. After the State game Doc resigns in my favor if Spalding loses."

Doc grinned at the crowd. "Don't worry, folks," he said, "I'll be at Spalding another fifteen years."

Doc realized the crowd thought he was off the beam. For Spalding to beat State was like Lehigh beating mighty Pennsylvania. Doc knew he had been goaded into a bad spot by Slugger. His seamed brow grew deeper furrows and his shoulders sagged a little more as the State game loomed closer on the schedule. But Doc was a fighter.
Spalding played a small Teacher's College and a nearby denominational school before meeting State University. Though they won both games without real danger, the scores weren't impressive.

SKINNY AND the team didn't worry about it. Doc had outlined his plan to beat State and they worked eagerly as conspirators. They even loafed a little when they had the Teacher's College down by fifteen points in the second half, and they came close to over-doing it. Doc almost had to put Skinny back in to save the game, but it finally turned out all right. It helped weld the team.

As a result of all this, Spalding was at a perfect mental and physical peak the Saturday they made the journey to the state capitol for the game against State University.

There was a good crowd in the stands despite the fact that State was rated an easy favorite over little Spalding. It was far from capacity, but a great many State rooters were anxious to see how their team stacked up for the year.

Slugger, of course, was also on hand for the game, along with a good section of Spalding rooters.

Doc didn't start Skinny. He didn't want Spalding in an early lead because it would alert the State coach. If Skinny banged in two or three quick baskets to open things, it would put State in a fighting instead of an experimental mood.

Despite the fact that Spalding's five starters were a hard-fighting unit, at their peak, after ten minutes of play they were trailing by eight points, 7-15. Play was featured by State's brilliant fast break and Spalding's consistent attempt to work set plays.

Doc couldn't afford to let State get farther ahead, so when Spalding took time out he nodded to Rawlings. Skinny pounced on the official scorers to report, and hurried into the game.

The State coach also used the time out for substitution. He put three new men into the game, retiring three of his starters, and that's what Doc was looking for.

When play was resumed the ball was passed in to Skinny and he sped across the ten second line in a sudden change of pace for Spalding. He caught State napping and raced free, poised, shot, and the ball hit the side of the hoop. It rebounded into the right hand corner. Skinny was there when the ball arrived and again drew his feet together to shoot. Skinny saw the center break away from Stretch and come out to hurry his shot. So, instead of shooting, Skinny fired a sudden, two-handed pass to Stretch. The latter, with no guard, dropped in an easy goal. 9-15.

State raced down the floor on a fast break and scored immediately. 9-17.

Skinny Rawlings grabbed the pass from his partner and scooted up the floor. His searching eyes found no opening in a tight State defense. Once more he worked in as close to the State defense as he could and quickly poised for the long shot. It was a perfect bullseye and never touched the rim. 11-19.

State again broke fast, but this time Skinny was in a position to break with them and hurried the State forward into a hurried shot from the corner. Skinny pounced on the rebound and saw that Stretch was already down the floor. Skinny cocked his arm and winged a bulletlike pass the full length of the court into Stretch's big hands just under the basket. Stretch laid it up with no opposition. 13-19.

THIS TIME the Spalding defense was set as State came down the floor and State had to try with a set play. They worked a good shot, but it slid off the side of the hoop and Stretch was there for the rebound. He pitched it to Skinny racing down the floor and Skinny was out-breaking the fast break team. He came across the ten second line and wheeled right down under the bucket. The swish and jump of the net as the ball sailed through the hoop wasn't seen by Skinny as he was already on his way to a defensive position. 15-19.
Again State failed to score and Stretch came up with the rebound. Skinny moved down across the ten second line in possession of the ball and worked into a shooting position. Two State men rushed out to cover him, so Skinny quickly bounced the ball between them to the Spalding man left uncovered. That man pivoted to the basket and quickly scored a lay-in as Stretch blocked for him. 17-19.

State took the ball out of bounds and fired a long pass down the floor. But Skinny, racing to cover, intercepted at the ten second line and whirling, dribbled speedily back down under his own net with a beautiful change of pace. He faked his man out and scored again for Spalding. 19-19.

State took time out and pandemonium reigned at the quick and decisive manner in which Skinny Rawlings had put Spalding back in the game. State's coach returned his three starters to the line-up.

It then turned into a hard, dogged contest. But Skinny Rawlings was all over the floor. His defensive play was amazing for a little fellow playing against tall men. And, on offense, whenever he broke momentarily into the clear he banged away at the basket with deadly accuracy. Under the basket it was Stretch Mackrides pivoting to shoot, tipping in rebounds, controlling the backboard defensively. And when State went off the floor at the half they were trailing 28-27. The Spalding roisters gave its gallant little team a long ovation.

At the half-time period canny Doc Cornell pointed out to his boys what his sharp eyes had observed during the first half. He showed Stretch a weakness in the play of the State center. He pointed out to the team where a State forward was slow in shifting from his man and could be blocked so that Skinny could get a good, medium-long shot. He pointed out Spalding's defensive mistakes and shifted Skinny's assignment to a State forward who had been giving them trouble.

"But this second half is going to be hard, boys. We don't have the reserves that State can put in to give the first team a rest. And State is going to stop fooling and start playing to win. But, kids," Doc Cornell said, and his fighting blue eyes gleamed from under his shaggy brows, "we can win this game if you'll play ball every minute. Now let's go!"

The Spalding College five roared out on the floor like a team possessed. Skinny stole the ball for a quick basket which, paired with a rebound goal for Stretch, gave Spalding a 32-27 lead before the half was a minute old.

Doc stole a look into the stands where he had spotted Slugger Hoffman and drew satisfaction from the glum look and creased brow he saw there.

But State had a good team and they settled down to an uphill fight. Despite Stretch's stalwart work under the baskets and the long shooting of Skinny, State's all around speed and ability were better than that of the five men representing Spalding College. With five minutes of play gone, Spalding was hanging grimly to a one point, 35-34 lead. Then Skinny hit a long one and Spalding moved ahead. 37-34. But State came back with a fast break for two, and then added a free throw to knot the score at 37-37. Spalding called a time out.

"Well," Skinny panted, "if we let them get ahead we'll never catch them, that's all."

"We can't let 'em swamp us now," Stretch said. "The coach has too much riding on this game."

"They've got too much speed," spoke up a forward. "I'm bushed."

Skinny realized they couldn't continue to match speed and fast break with the State team. "We'll give ourselves a rest while we're still in the ball game" he said. "We walk across the ten second line. We slow play down and we don't shoot until we get a good shot. But the minute somebody shoots, everybody else drops back defensively except Stretch under the basket. Let him fight it out.
FAST-BREAK FIEND

I'll stay up until I see whether or not he loses the ball, then I'll either help him or come back on defense."

Spalding had the ball when time was called in. Skinny walked slowly across the center line while his team loafed. He stood out far and dribbled the ball while State refused to come out after him. He waited a moment and then carefully took aim and let go. The ball rimmed the bucket beautifully for two points on what must have been more than a forty foot shot. 39-37.

The moment Skinny fired, three Spalding men fell back on defense. Skinny joined them as soon as he saw he had a basket, and Stretch came down with the State team. State's fast break was no good against Spalding's waiting defense and they had to fall back on a set play. Spalding hurried the play and Stretch took the rebound.

Again Skinny walked slowly down across the ten second line and he again poised forty feet out. But State had seen enough of Skinny's phenomenal two-handed potting and the State forward rushed out to stop him. Skinny quickly shifted with his other guard, took a pass on the other side and brought that forward out. Then he shot a pass down the middle to Stretch who flipped the ball to his forward on the side. This man was free for an easy shot and cleared another two points for Spalding. 41-37 and the crowd went berserk. Slugger Hoffman just sat back waiting for the break to come.

EVERY TIME a Spalding man shot the crowd was treated to the unusual sight of three Spalding men breaking for the State basket as though they were on offense. Time after time State came roaring down the floor only to find the Spalding defense alert and ready. On offense Spalding was the opposite—slow and deliberate. Only a team in the lead could afford to play that kind of basketball, but they were forcing State to play their way.

The minutes went by and still State couldn't get back those four points. With eight minutes to play Spalding was ahead, 51-47.

State had a guard on Skinny that stuck to him like a mustard plaster. They no longer let him set and shoot, but now and then Skinny would slide away cleverly for a quick shot.

Three minutes to play and the score had mounted to 52-49.

Then the State center went for a basket and Stretch fouled him in the act of shooting. But the goal was good and the center also had one free throw. The gym was hushed as the center stood carefully on the free throw line and sank the tying point. 52 all.

Skinny took the ball out of bounds and still refused to hurry. Slowly, in a dead walk, the Spalding team came into offensive territory. They were a tired bunch of boys with less than three minutes left in the game.

Skinny's forward was with him, watching him not letting him get set for a shot. He fired the ball in to Stretch. The tall center took the pass and pivoted. He shot, the ball rolled around the rim and came off into Stretch's hands, but before he could shoot again his arms were knocked down by the desperate State defense. The whistle blew and Stretch went to the line with two shots coming.

Spalding dropped three men back to the ten second line and only one forward was on the free throw lane. Stretch's first shot bounded from one side of the rim to the other and fell off no good. The Spalding rooters groaned. His second one plunked in and Spalding moved into a 53-52 lead.

But when State came down the floor Spalding was waiting. They couldn't move in and finally a State guard took a long shot. It was no good, but Stretch was out of position and the State University center quickly followed through to give State the lead, 54-53.

As the seconds slipped by Spalding fought for a clean shot at the basket. It wasn't forthcoming. Skinny couldn't break free and Stretch was covered like a tree in full bloom. Spalding finally broke a forward free for a desperate one-hander, but it was no good and State took over the ball with seconds to play. State
was still leading by that one big point.

This time it was State that moved slowly across the center line as they guarded their one point advantage. But as the guard dribbled there suddenly appeared a streak of basketball lightning in the form of a Spalding player, unruly lock of hair streaming behind him, dribbled the ball from under the State guard in a mad dash that brought the crowd screaming to its feet.

Skinny broke back across the ten second line followed closely by the State guard. He stopped, let the guard over-shoot him, and then poise—but from nowhere came another State man and Skinny had to duck away. He was now on the verge of taking steps. He was out of position to shoot and from every direction came the surging red and white jerseys of State.

THEN THE desperate Skinny suddenly saw the big form of Stretch Mackrides racing for the Spalding basket. With a wild yell he pitched the ball at Stretch. Stretch took the ball and whipped into the air. Stretch drew himself together and then straightened out full length as he flashed under the basket. His arm snapped up and the ball gently nudged the backboard.

The ball went off as the ball hit the rim and agonizingly rolled around while thousands of fans stood up and yelled. It hesitated at the last second and then pitched forward into the basket for two points and a 55-54 Spalding victory.

A yelling, laughing crowd gathered around Doc Cornell at the Spalding bench and he accepted their plaudits as his sharp eyes searched the stands. He saw the broad back of Slugger Hoffman just about to disappear through an exit.

"Slugger," he shouted. "Oh, Slugger!"

Slugger Hoffman turned slowly and Doc motioned to him. He came slowly back to the gathering around Doc. Doc indicated the local newspaperman who was on hand to cover the game.

"Slugger's got a statement for you." Doc said, his blue eyes on the big, former fullback, "haven't you?"

Slugger shifted his feet uneasily. He turned to the reporter and muttered unwillingly, "I just want to make the statement that I think Spalding has a fine coach and one of their best teams. I think the team is well coached and I don't know where Spalding could find a better tutor for the material they have."

"Thank you, Slugger," Doc said softly as the amazed reporter scribbled the statement madly on his pad. Slugger Hoffman turned and left the gym.

Doc turned away to join his team in the dressing room and, as he crossed the floor, a pudgy little figure fell in beside him.

"Congratulations," Dean Wilson said. "Your team did, ahhh—a magnificent job."

"Thanks a lot," Doc said, and his blue eyes twinkled.

"Do you think we'll win the league championship?" the Spalding proxy asked eagerly.

"We've got good prospects," Doc said cagily.

"Well," the Dean said, "I think I can speak, ahhh—pretty well in authority when I say that, ahhh—Spalding College would hate to see you leave us. That resignation I spoke about earlier in the season, ahhhh—forget it."

"Consider it," Doc said, his merry blue eyes on the Dean, "ahhh, forgotten. And I think, ahhhh, I can speak for the team when I say, ahhhh, that we will do our best to win, ahhh, the championship." Doc Cornell tipped the surprised Dean a wink and disappeared into the dressing room. He was already laying plans for his next fifteen years at Spalding College.

READ THE CURRENT ISSUES OF COMPLETE WESTERN BOOK MAGAZINE AND WESTERN NOVELS AND SHORT STORIES — NOW ON SALE! ASK FOR THESE BY NAME!
Now wouldn't you hate to be a millionaire? ... They are saying out California way that you'll be hearing plenty in the near future about F. Ronald Graham’s Irish-bred Mafosta, a likely-looking stakes horse. His name apparently bespeaks his attitude toward his competition. It is a contraction of three Gaelic words which, freely translated, mean "drop dead."

Some race horse trainers are probably getting away with the doping of race horses, admits Spencer Drayton, head of the turf's FBI. "It is possible that somebody is a step ahead of the parade in figuring a new angle," says Drayton, who is boss of the Thoroughbred Racing Protective Bureau. "Chemists’ tests show up the drugs with which we are familiar but you must realize there are hundreds of new by-products of such drugs as ephedrine and benzedrine. They might not show up in our tests but we'll catch 'em sooner or later."

Just in case you didn’t know, ice hockey sticks aren’t made of hickory, but of ash and elm, and cost $3 each. Some players break as many as five a night. Those pucks cost forty cents but from fifteen to twenty are lost each night.

"When a puck is knocked into a Canadian crowd the guy who doesn’t throw it back is booed," reveals Ranger Coach Frank Boucher. "If a fan in the United States throws it back the crowd thinks he’s crazy!"

Usually a critic of our post-war boxing, former heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey feels that the fight game will be "back on its feet" within two years because poor gates and increased criticism of fights finally has convinced everyone in the game that "the honeymoon is over."

"Already I can feel the new attitude of everyone connected with boxing that the sport must be taken seriously if it is to return to pre-war standards," he explained. "Other important stimulants are increased foreign interest as result of the title victories of Freddie Mills and Marcel Cerdan and the publicity about the lack of talent which is inspiring youngsters in all sections to begin tossing leather."

Jack Dempsey and Jack Kearns, his former manager, have buried the hatchet and will make a movie based on the life of the former heavyweight champ. ... Tom Harmon, the former Michigan football star, is sports director of radio station KFI in Los Angeles, and doing play-by-play sportscasts for both radio and television. ... The National Hockey League’s leading scorer now will get a trophy each year as well as the usual $1,000 cash prize. The new trophy was donated by Boston Bruins’ general manager Art Ross. ... So you don’t think auto racing is too tough, eh? Well, in the American Automobile Association standings all too often there is an asterisk beside the driver’s name, with a footnote at the bottom: "Deceased." That ain’t from old age, either, bub!

Eddie Collins likes to tell a story about the remarkable eyesight of Babe Ruth.

"We’d be sitting in a duck blind waiting for something to show up," Collins said. "It would be early morning, with the sky a deep blue as far as you could see. Not a cloud or a living thing in sight. So we’d just sit and wait.

"Then, suddenly, the Babe would stir a little, take a check on his gun and mutter ‘Here they come,’" Eddie went on. "I’d look around and couldn’t see a thing but miles of sky. Not a duck anywhere. Then, a minute later, I’d see them coming, away off on the horizon.

"But the old Bambino would see them first," Collins added with a shake of his head. "What eyes the big guy had!"

One of the oddities of the turf world is that there isn’t a single stake race named after the revered Man O’War. Yet more than 20 races during the year are named after colts and you never heard of half of them. Betcha didn’t even know the Preakness was named after a horse which turned savage and had to be destroyed.

More Sports Fan Fare in the Next Issue
COMPLETE SPORTS CAMERAS

**WANT ME TO ROLL THE BALL TO YOU, SHORTY?**

**YOU DO, AND I'LL CRAM IT DOWN YOUR THROAT!**

**WITH AN 150 POUND MAN ON HIS BACK, NOAH YOUNG, WEIGHING 188 POUNDS, RAN ONE MILE IN EIGHT MINUTES, THIRTY SECONDS ON APRIL 12, 1915 AT MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA!**

**ONCE AROUND THE PARK, JAMES!**

**WHEN EDDIE STANKY, THEN WITH BROOKLYN, STEPPED TO THE PLATE IN THE NINTH INNING IN JUNE, 1947, EVELL BLACKWELL, CINCINNATI ACE, NEEDED JUST TWO MORE OUTS TO RACK UP HIS SECOND STRAIGHT NO-HITTER. STANKY RUINED THE STRINGBEAN PITCHER'S BID BY LASHING OUT A SHARP, CLEAN SINGLE.... IT WAS STANKY'S FIRST HIT OF THE SEASON OFF BLACKWELL.**

**ON JULY 8, 1889 AT RITCHBURG, MISS., JOHN L. SULLIVAN DEFEATED JAKE KILRAIN ON POINTS AFTER 75 BRUTAL ROUNDS IN THE LAST BARE KNUCKLE CHAMPIONSHIP FIGHT IN AMERICA.**

**THE WINNAH, ON POINTS.... JOHN L.!!**

**COACH! HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THE FACT THAT NO ONE WANTS TO PLAY US?**

**IN BASEBALL'S INFANCY, THE REGULATION BALL WAS GUARANTEED (STAMPED ON THE COVER) TO SURVIVE NINE INNINGS OF PLAY. CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT! ALL I DID WAS FOUL IT... AN' IT WASH BRAND NEW, TOO!**

**IN 1914, THE MISSOURI SCHOOL OF MINES HAD A RECORD OF EIGHT WINS, NO LOSSES AND NO TIES. THEY SCORED 540 POINTS TO NOTHING FOR THEIR OPPONENTS -- AN AMAZING AVERAGE OF 67.5 POINTS PER GAME.**

78
**COMPLETE SPORTS CAMERA**

CORNELIA T. CROSBY, THE FIRST WOMAN TO BE GRANTED A FISHING LICENSE IN THE UNITED STATES, WAS A GUIDE IN THE MAINE WOODS FOR 70 YEARS! IN 1946 THIS 6-FOOT SPORTSWOMAN DIED AT THE AGE OF 93!

"YOUR GAME IS OUT THERE, MINE IS IN THE LAKE!"

THE SITE OF THE JAMES J. CORBETT-BOB FITZSIMMONS CHAMPIONSHIP FIGHT AT CARSON CITY, NEVADA ON MARCH 17, 1897, NOW IS A VACANT LOT IDENTIFIED ONLY BY A MARKER PLACED THERE BY THE STATE OF NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

ON THIS SITE: BOB FITZSIMMONS DEFEATED JAMES J. CORBET IN 4 ROUNDS WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP.

ON SEPTEMBER 7, 1865 AT WASHINGTON HALL, ROCHESTER (N.Y.), LOUIS FOX WAS LEADING JOHN DEERY IN A BILLIARD MATCH, A FLY LIT ON FOX'S CUE BALL AND AFTER A FEW ANNOYING MINUTES, HE "SHOOED" IT AWAY, DISTRAUGHT BY THE INCIDENT, FOX SHOT AND MISSED. DEERY WENT ON TO WIN THE GAME. FOX'S BODY WAS FOUND IN A NEARBY RIVER SOME DAYS LATER. HE COMMITTED SUICIDE.

IN FEBRUARY, 1932, J. SAUNDERS OF NEW YORK RAN 127 MILES, 275 YARDS NON-STOP IN 22 HOURS, 49 MINUTES!

"(PUFF) IF I LIVE NEXT YEAR, I'LL TRY (PUFF) 128 MILES!"

THE BOOKMAKERS OFFERED 10 TO 1 THAT ALEX WICKHAM WOULDN'T SURVIVE A 206 FOOT DIVE OFF A CLIFF AT MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA IN 1918. HALF WAY DOWN, HE LOST CONSCIOUSNESS, AND AS HE HIT THE WATER IN A PERFECT DIVE, HIS BATHING SUIT WAS TORN OFF HIS BODY. HE SURVIVED, BUT HIS BODY WAS BLACK AND BLUE FOR MONTHS AFTERWARDS.

I'LL RAISE THE PRICE TO 100 TO 1!


COME ON! I'LL TAKE YOU ALL ON!

79
THE "GREAT DEAN"

A great pitcher in the fading days of a great season signed to pitch just one more game. He was Dizzy Dean and that one afternoon he pitched four innings, giving up three hits and singling once in two trips to the plate. But that day also marked the end of one of the most fabulous sports careers on record. Dizzy Dean had reached the end of the road but his stories and accomplishments will live forever.

Dean could have been the greatest pitcher in baseball, but an injury cut short his career after being on top for only five seasons. It was tragic too, because baseball experts who have watched the past and present will attest that Dean might have been greater than Mathewson.

Will anyone ever forget the time he first came up to the big time? Gabby Street was then manager of the Cardinals and Dean, only a rookie with one year in the minors as seasoning, made the big time. Cocky, game and colorful, Dizzy called himself the “Great Dean”. The Cards were playing the Athletics in an exhibition that day and the Philly team was maltreating the Cards pitchers. Street, wanting to take some of the conceit and overconfidence out of Dean tossed him into the fray, unprepared and without warning. The bases were filled, but Dean grinned happily and went on to strike out Simmons, Foxx and Cochrane.

Boston fans will never forget the time Dean was scheduled to pitch against their club one afternoon, when he got into an argument with players and newspapermen about the relative worth of the curve and fast ball. Dean announced that he was going to prove his argument, that all he needed was a fast ball. Before game time Dean swaggered over to the Boston bench and announced, “Fellers, I’m not going to pitch any curves today, only fast balls.” The game is history because Dean went on to shut-out the Braves with only three hits and certainly proved his point.

Dizzy Dean was probably at his best in the 1934 World Series against Detroit. His pitching feats during the Series are infamous but his greatest victory came off the mound. It happened when Mickey Cochrane, then manager of the Tigers, was hitting a few during batting practice. Dean walked out to the batting cage in his street clothes, grabbed the bat away from the amazed Cochrane and proceeded to whack a couple of “homers” into the stands. Walking away, Dean turned and said, “And I’m the worst hitter on our team.” The Bengals never recovered from that shock.

His biggest disappointment in baseball came one afternoon in a double-header at Ebbets Field. Dizzy and his brother Paul were the scheduled pitchers. Diz pitched the opener and limited theBrooks to three hits and was pleased with his accomplishment. But in the nightcap, Paul pitched a no-hitter. In the dressing room Dizzy was uncontrivable in his rage. He stormed at his younger brother saying, “If you told me you wuz gonna pitch a no-hitter, I’d a really bore down instead of coasting and I’d have pitched one myself.”

He probably would have, too.
"IRON BARS DO NOT A PRISON MAKE."

One of the strangest fight stories in a long time has just come to light. It's about a welterweight champ who defended his title while in jail—and made a successful defense of it too. He was a British boxer, one of the best ever to show his fistic wares in this country.

Back in those days, Jack Britton was his keenest rival. The British fighter's initial scrap with Britton was in Boston, in 1915. It was a close, humdinger of a contest, and Britton, the loser, demanded a return bout. The welterweight champ agreed, and the match was set for September 27, at the Boston Arena.

Three days before the match, the Britisher was clapped into jail on a civil warrant. It was proved later that it was a trumped-up charge engineered by a gambler. But it started quite a rumpus among the promoters. The champ couldn't come for trial until after the day the fight was scheduled. The promoters had nightmares of their packed house gone with the wind.

But right up to the night of the fight, they kept advertising that the champ would appear. Fight fans believed that promoter Jim Johnston, the famous little man in the iron hat, had some real inside information, and when the card got under way, the house was jammed.

The prelims and semi-final passed, and Britton was already in his corner, when lo and behold, the champ himself climbed between the ropes. He was in fight togs, and ready for anything.

The only thing peculiar about the set-up were his seconds. They didn't look like men accustomed to handling the champ's corner in a title bout. As a matter of fact, they weren't. They just got in the way of the worried youngster who handled the champ. Then a sports writer recognized them as deputy sheriffs.

"How the devil did you get him here?" he asked.

"He ain't anyplace—at least anyplace he shouldn't be," replied one of the deputies.

"What do you mean?" asked the mystified reporter.

"Wa-al, said the deputy, "We moved the jail down here. This here Boston Arena is the city jail until the fight's over. And that's official!" The sheriff leaned back in his chair and prepared to enjoy himself.

The Englishman and Britton fought another corker. The champ kept his title, but the crown was to pass back and forth between them for several years, when Britton definitely ended the series at Canton, Ohio.

I guess it's safe to tell you now, with no deputy sheriffs around, that the champ who moved the jail because he couldn't get out of it, to defend his title, was none other than that highly respected old man of British boxing, Ted "Kid" Lewis. Just how he and "Iron Hat" Jimmy Johnston arranged the deal, is unknown still.

It might interest you to know, too, that the worried young trainer who had to dodge deputies to take care of his first fighter is still a trainer, and handling another Louis. He is Manny Seamon, trainer of retired heavyweight champ Joe Louis!.

**KID WITH THE KNOCKOUT PUNCH**

The New York State Athletic Commission occupies a floor in one of New York's executive buildings. Its doors are guarded by the men in blue of New York's finest, who handle intruders on the days that important fighters weigh in for combat.

Fight fans collect outside this building for a fleeting glimpse of their heros. Years ago, one of these fans was a kid named Tommy. Week after week Tommy would station himself outside, waiting for a famous personality of punch to come along.
Tommy idolized one boxer in particular—Tony Canzoneri—then the greatest of all lightweights. In the presence of Canzoneri, Tommy would yell and cheer, tugging at his hero’s sleeve.

He borrowed a suitcase, so he would be able to pass as a member of Canzoneri’s official party. This was his plan—he would get in and chat with Tony, even ask the star for his autograph. He waited a long time, and then Canzoneri, with his entourage of managers and trainers, started up the stairs for the weighing—in ceremonies.

Tommy, toting the suitcase, followed them into the building. This was his lucky day. Not one officer stopped him. His plan was going on schedule. Inside, success was in sight. There before him was the room where the fighters stepped on the scale.

He was moving through the door when a strong hand seized the back of his collar. “Just a minute. Where d’ya think you’re going?”

“Tony’s me brother—lemme go!” said Tommy.

“On your way,” said the cop.

With his goal so close, Tommy’s plan was collapsing. Suddenly, a dapper little man intervened, saying, “I know this kid. Let him in.”

It worked like magic. Tommy was in the same room. In two minutes, the boy spoke to Tony, collected his autograph, and started to leave. He spoke to his benefactor, standing close by. “Thanks, mister. You were a real pal.”

“That’s O.K., son,” the man said. “I was young once myself.”

“You’re Jimmy Johnston, aren’t you?”

“That’s right.”

This happened many years ago. Tommy became one of the brightest stars in the boxing world. You know him as Rocky Graziano, now the former middle-weight champion.

Jimmy Johnston, the great promoter, was counted out by the Great Referee, and when a benefit show was arranged for his family, Graziano volunteered to fight Reuben Shank, to repay a good guy for a good deed performed many years ago.

Strange, isn’t it, that because of that fight to do a good turn, Rocky Graziano was barred from the ring...and has spent many unhappy hours in the offices of the New York State Athletic Commission...offices that he was so anxious to enter when he was a kid many years ago!

**GREATEST JOCKEY OF THEM ALL**

More than sixty-three years in one profession carries a man ‘way back...There aren’t many people in the world of sports who can boast of a continuous record of such service. Yet, in the jockey’s room at the famed Havre de Grace racetrack, near Baltimore, an aging valet, who helped many generations of riders into their boots and silks, is celebrating his record years in the business.

His name is Jack Forman, but nobody has called him by his right name for so many years that he sometimes finds it hard to remember himself. Everybody calls him Jack Pot, and Jack Pot is satisfied with it...in fact, a little proud. It is a racetrack tradition.

Jack Pot was recalling life at the track as it was many years ago, and he mentioned Tod Sloan. Everybody stopped to listen. It didn’t seem possible, but Jack Pot had once been Tod Sloan’s valet. In fact, Jack had given Sloan the nickname which stuck with him all through his career. “The Mighty Tod” he was called.

Around the turn of the century, there was a horse whose name Jack doesn’t remember any more. He was just a fair racer, winning or losing by a head no matter who rode him.

But Jack Pot remembers the day Tod Sloan was asked to ride him. Sloan romped home with him, eight lengths ahead of the field. It was an impressive win, even more so because Sloan never used a whip on a horse.

When the race was over, track officials took apart his saddle, saddle
cloth, and all his tack, looking for a hidden trick of Sloan's. But there wasn't any. Sloan was just a natural-born rider.

Jack Pot said to him; "If you can win like that with that horse, you must be the Mighty Tod," and the name stuck.

Jack Pot gave a classic example of Sloan's all-around ability with horses. One day walking on Broadway in New York with the immortal Jack Doyle they noticed a truck horse down on the icy pavement. The horse wasn't hurt, but was scared because of the frantic efforts of the cops and the owner to lift him to his feet.

A crowd had gathered and Tod Sloan edged his way through the mob. He got to the horse, stroked its neck for a moment and talked convincingly into the truck horse's ear. The horse immediately calmed down and in a minute was on its feet.

Tod Sloan not only had a way with horses but with dogs and cats as well. In fact any animal. He was famous for his dollar cigars and his flat back ride...but most of all he was renowned for his phenomenal way with horses. He was a true horseman.

And at Havre de Grace as Jack Pot completes a normal life span around the race tracks of the nation he thinks back on the great jockey. For Tod Sloan who won with most any horse was really the "Mighty Tod", America's greatest jockey, and no one knows it better than Jack Pot, a valet who completed more than 63 years on American turf.

HOCKEY'S IMMORTAL GOALIE

Each sport has its scapegoat. There is always one player on the field who usually gets all the knocks and bruises and then limps home that night without the glory. In baseball it is usually the catcher, football has the almost unknown fourth backfield man, the blocking back, and in hockey it is the guy who never scores any points, the goalie.

Usually the netmen get their just praise at the end of the season though when the records are compiled, and like the pitcher earned run average, the goalie who lets the least amount of pucks pass through into the nets get his just publicity.

But we remember the story of a fellow who never in his life was in the goalienet and yet at the end of the evening came out in a blaze of glory. Our story happened during the play-offs of the 1927—28 Stanley Cup Series. That year the New York Rangers were playing the powerful Montreal Maroons.

The first game went to the Maroons and in the second game an inspired Ranger team skated onto the ice. However, gloom soon took the place of determination as the Ranger goalie, Lorne Chabot got hit in the eye with a blazing puck.

The Rangers had no reserve goalie and an idea to put in the Ottawa goalie who was a spectator was nixed by the Montreal team. Faced with a serious problem, the Ranger team finally solved everything when a civilian clad bench warmer for the Ranger team, walked into the locker room and grimly put on the sweaty uniform of Chabot.

The new goalie, had never tended the nets before, just asked his teammates to check, like they had never checked before, and when the game began it was a confident Montreal team that grabbed the puck.

Like hungry lions, looking for the last pack of beef, the Montreal team swarmed down the ice shooting rubber from all directions at the goalie. The grim netman made one miraculous save after another, alternately dropping his stick to catch the flying puck, getting the blade of his skate in front of the flying disc, or sometimes just stopping it with his body.
As the third period opened it was the Ranger sextet that took the lead at 1-0, but midway in the same period the Montreal team managed to push a goal through. But in the overtime period the Ranger center fired home a shot to give the Rangers a well-deserved victory.

And as they left the ice that period, a happy goalie was on their shoulders. For that man who tended the goal that evening back in 1928, a man who was 45 years old, and a man who had never tended goal before in his entire career was the immortal coach of the Rangers...Lester Patrick.

**MAGIC TOES**

"There were giants in those days," may be a line out of a fairy tale, but it is also the favorite subject of conversation when sports old-timers meet...especially in the midst of the football season...and one such story has cropped up a few seasons ago as a result of the Yale—Wisconsin battle.

In 1917, Wisconsin alumni were mourning the death of their greatest player, lying somewhere in a battlefront grave, an unknown soldier...

Many were the tales told about him. He was the greatest punter in football history. In 1899, he stood on the Wisconsin goal line and kicked the ball 100 yards up the field to the Yale Goal. He kicked a 62-yard field goal against Northwestern in a blizzard in 1898, the ball landing against a fence on the fly 20 yards beyond.

He booted a 40-yard dropkick on a dead run against Minnesota in 1899. He punted a ball 110 yards, with the roll, against the wind. In a night football game against the Carlisle Indians in 1896, he sent a "punted forward pass" 50 yards to a team mate for a touchdown, and the Indians wouldn't believe it because they lost sight of the ball soaring above the girders holding the lights.

This will give you some idea of the man who became a legend, whose feats were remembered long after the final scores of the games in which he played were lost from the record books.

The man with the magic toes graduated, and found life too easy for him. He discovered that, unwillingly, he was trading on his athletic reputation to get ahead.

He was fed up with being a football hero. The utterly fantastic feats he performed on the gridiron were not enough for his loyal fellow alumni, who expanded them with each telling. So he disappeared, some said into the Army, where he met his death. Others weren't so sure....

Seventeen years later, in 1934, a motorist passing through Westwood, California, recognized his old classmate. He was astonished when he was told he was Charles J. Mitchell, a wealthy lumberman, who, as far as his neighbors knew, never played football in his life! He got in touch with the alumni, who brought the old-time star back to Wisconsin, and feted him as might be expected for a performer of such unbelievable gridiron accomplishments.

He was Pat O'Dea, the longest and most accurate kicker in pig-skin history, who had shunned fame so dramatically and so thoroughly that he had completely given up his identity for 17 years!

At a dinner held in his honor, Pat arose to tell the strangest part of his story...the part that friends never seemed to remember. When Pat O'Dea kicked the ball 100 yards against Yale in 1899, it was picked up by Richards, of Yale, now completely forgotten, who raced 97 yards with it for a touchdown, the only one made in that game. Four Badgers missed shots at the fast-moving Richards, and the last of them was Pat O'Dea, the safety man. It was the first tackle he missed in three years, and occurred on the kick which has been "Magic Toe" O'Dea's chief claim to fame!

*(Follow Gerard Garrett's Amazing Sports Adventures in the next issue!)*
Here's a quiz for you sports fans that is a bit different than most — so try your hand at this game of skill. 10 for each question and if you guess 100 points you are a pro; 80 points, semi-pro, 60 points, amateur; 40 points, novice.

★ FOOTBALL ★

1) A halfback 'ghost' to early 1920 grid opponents of Illinois, he later joined the Chicago Bears.
   Ken Rouse  Red Grange  Tim Lowry

2) Playing for a little school in Pennsylvania, this All American got bigger teams red-in-the-face.
   Bull Karcia  Jim Thorpe  Chief Bender

★ BASEBALL ★

3) Match the following names with their teams:
   1. Billy Terry .......... a. Senators
   2. Miller Huggins ....... b. Bosox, Senators
   3. Pat Moran .......... c. Athletics
   4. Mickey Cochrane ...... d. Cards, Braves
   5. Bill McKeenie .......... e. Yanks
   6. Charlie Grimm ....... f. Phils, Cincy
   7. Joe Cronin .......... g. Cubs
   8. Connie Mack .......... h. Tigers
   9. Bucky Harris .......... i. Cincy
   10. Billy Southworth ....... j. Giants

★ HORSE RACING ★

4) Taking the Triple Crown last year with no trouble at all, he went to California to win one race. After popping an osselet, he was sent to Florida to recuperate and then to win some more.

5) He used to swing out wide on the turns but a little training cured him of that. Whirling on to take the Derby in 1941, his pilot was Eddie Arcaro. 1941 saw him take the Belmont Stakes as well.

6) He was upset once, but his name still tops all others in America’s racing annals. A red chestnut, he outlived most of his competitors, dying only a short time ago. He was mighty impressive.

★ FIGHT ★

7) Jack Dempsey has won the Neil Trophy for service to the fight game. Others who have received this honor are Ike Williams, Rocky Graziano, Benny Leonard and Barney Ross.

8) Although Jack Broughton is referred to as the “Father of Boxing”, there were really many. Among other fighters were Daniel Mendoza, Harry Sellers, and Jim McLarnon.

★ BASKETBALL ★

9) If a team, leading in the second period, decides for certain reasons that they must forfeit the game, will: the score stand, a tie declared and a rematch planned, the other team win by 2-0? It happened in the Olympics.

10) If a hoopster, dribbling toward his basket, falls but retains possession and then slides forward to make a shot which is successful: the score is good, the other team takes possession for “traveling,” a jump ball is called for?
SPIKE SHY, MEANS

EDDIE DARROW stepped into the shadowy Titans' dugout with the feeling that he had been suddenly dumped on a new and hostile planet.

Somehow, everything was different. Gazing out over the sun-splashed field, he could see how different it was. The stadium was much bigger, the crowd more colorful, the grass greener, and the infield smoother than any he had ever seen.

Gray-thatched Clem Crocker, genial manager of the Titans, smiled out of a weather-battered face.

"Looks different, eh, kid?" he asked, guessing it right.

Eddie started half-guiltily at the manager's words, then recovered.

"Yeah. It looks sort of big-leaguish." He grinned, almost sheep-

DIAMOND DYNAMITE IN A DRAMATIC FEATURE-LENGTH BASEBALL NOVELET!

Lannin came in, his spikes flashing as he headed for the sock.

ishly. "I've always dreamed of playing on a field like that," he added.

"Well, sit down and dream some more, busher," cracked a voice from the bench. "Cause you ain't gonna play on it for quite awhile yet."

Eddie felt hot blood rush into his face at the taunt. He recognized the voice at once. The gruff, surly tones had haunted him all through spring training down south, and had bid him a sarcastic goodbye when he'd been shipped back to the minors for more seasoning. Now that he'd been called back to the Titans again, the voice was taking up where it had left off.

Eddie turned to face "Corky" Lannin, the Titans' sensational second baseman. Hot words flooded to his lips, but he held them back. After all, he thought, maybe a busher shouldn't talk back to the great Lannin... not on his first day with the team, any-

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YELLOW!  by H. C. BUTLER

Why Lannin had taken such a violent dislike for him during spring training, Eddie didn't know. The fact that they were both second sackers didn't quite account for it... because Eddie hardly considered himself a serious competitor for Lannin's job. Nevertheless, Lannin had treated him not only with disrespect but outright antagonism right from the beginning. It hadn't quite added up....

The signal came for the team to take the field against the Comets, and the first-string Titans got up almost wearily and trotted out on the field. Eddie found himself a spot on the bench and watched eagerly.

Eddie had played three years of minor league ball, but this was the first time he had ever seen a major league team go into action when the chips were down. The Titans and the Comets were in a hot fight for first place, and it promised to be something worth watching.

It was. The Titans had "Wild Jim"

Well, probably a league-leading team shouldn't have made a raw rookie a member of a double-play combo that sports scribes were comparing to the all-time great one of Tinker-to-Evers-to-Chance...
Kinney, the erratic southpaw, on the mound. Eddie watched him get the first batter on three straight strikes, then walk the next on four balls. He was that way.

**Eddie** moved to the edge of the bench, intensely interested. The stage was set for a nice double play, and the Titans had the best double play combination in baseball. Kurt to Lannin to Vance had been the Titans’ get-two combination for many years, and the men who knew were beginning to classify it as one of the best ever seen.

For several years sports writers had been comparing the Titans’ double play combo with the all-time great one of Tinker-to-Evers-to-Chance—and comparing it favorably. Kurt at short, Lannin at second, and Vance at first had gone along racking up double killings like it was the easiest thing in the world to do.

Now, they did it again. Kinney fed the Comet batter a sinker and he smashed it into the ground. It was a fast hopper over second, but Lannin got it in a long, head-first dive. On the ground, he flipped the ball to Kurt at second, who relayed it to first—and that was that.

“What a stop!” breathed Eddie, a little awed.

Manager Crocker’s tan face split in a tired smile.

“You think so, kid?” he said.

The question puzzled Eddie. Much as he disliked Lannin personally, the guy had made a sensational stop out there to start the double killing. To Eddie, it looked like real, top-notch, big-league ball.

The Titans thundered into the dugout for their turn at bat. Methodically, they picked up a run on Lannin’s single, a sacrifice, and another one-baser, and trotted out on the field again.

Eddie settled down to watch the Titans cling to the one run lead. They clung to it for eight innings, during which time Kurt to Lannin to Vance killed three Comet rallies with fast twin killings, and Lannin, himself, made four next to impossible catches.

In one case Lannin faded to his left for a fast grass-cutter, finally diving for the ball. The ball trickled off his glove for a scratch hit, but it was a great try.

“He sure goes for ’em,” said Eddie absently.

Manager Crocker shrugged his shoulders, smiled again.

“He tries, son. He always tries.”

Eddie frowned. He couldn’t quite understand what Crocker had meant. His inference had been that Lannin should have had the ball, but to Eddie it looked like an impossible chance.

With the score still 1-0 in the ninth, the Comets almost tied the score. But a typical Titan play ended the game.

The Comets had Fenner on first as a result of a walk. Two men were out when Cash singled to right. Fenner wheeled around second and headed for third—without reckoning on the rifle-like throw the Titan right gardener whipped into the hot corner.

**Groove**, the Titan third-sacker, blocked the base and took the throw. He slapped the ball on the sliding Fenner at the same time that Fenner’s spikes chopped at his leg. But Fenner was out and the game was over—and Groove went limping into the clubhouse for first aid.

On the way through the run-away, Eddie saw Lannin loom on his right. Lannin was a big, chunky man, with an iron jaw and eyes that looked like black jelly beans. He gave Eddie a lopsided grin.

“You saw how Grove took that guy’s spikes to get him out, didn’t cha?” he said. “That’s for you to watch, busher!”

Lannin didn’t wait for an answer, but walked on ahead. Eddie saw a lot of faces turn in his direction, and there were sly smiles on a couple of them. His face burned hotly. The big second baseman’s remarks had been well chosen. It shot Eddie’s mind back to the spring in Florida, when he had tried to make the grade with the Titans.

Eddie had done well in his tryout—fielding with big-time finesse, batting over .300, and running the bases with speed. There had been only one thing that had raised doubts in Man-
ager Crocker’s mind—and the seeds of doubt had been planted by Lannin.

In an intercamp game, Eddie was playing the keystone sack for the Yannigans against the Regulars. In the first inning Lannin had got on first, then had tried to steal second. He had come riding into the keystone sack with spikes high, and Eddie had done some fast thinking.

Whatever chance he had of remaining with the Titans depended on his playing every day. If he was hurt, he’d never have a chance to prove himself. So Eddie had danced away from Lannin’s eager spikes, and had missed the tag!

Lannin had made the most of it later, in the clubhouse.

“The kid’s all right,” he said to Crocker, “except he’s spike shy. A pivot man on a double play combination can’t be too worried about spikes!”

That was the seed. The seed sprouted a week later in an exhibition game, when Eddie was again at second.

Late in the game Eddie had raced to the bag to take a toss from Kurt at deep short, for a forceout of a man coming down to second. How it had happened, Eddie didn’t know. It had been one of those things. In his eagerness to get the ball, Eddie had missed the bag with his foot as the runner slid in.

Lannin chose to misinterpret it immediately. He had smirked at Eddie in the dugout.

“What a matter, busher? You still scared of them spikes?”

Eddie had made a hot retort, but it hadn’t helped him any. Suspicion had been planted and nourished—and it grew. Before the team hit home, Eddie had gone back to the minors “for more seasoning.”

Now, wearily, Eddie trudged back to his locker and peeled off his uniform. He took a quick shower, dressed quietly. Just as he finished the clubhouse boy came over.

“Crocker wants to see you in his office,” he said.

Eddie leaped up, heart suddenly pounding. He gave his necktie an extra tug and started for the office door. Lannin, partly dressed, looked at him with beady black eyes.

“Don’t worry, busher. How can he fire you? You ain’t done nothin’ yet!”

There were a few laughs, and Eddie swore under his breath and walked into Crocker’s office red of face.

CROCKER was a gray-haired man about fifty-five, with china-blue eyes nestled under shaggy white eyebrows. He had a nice smile that wrinkled his face in deep lines. He waved Eddie to a chair, and Eddie sat on the edge of it.

“You probably wonder why we called you back,” Crocker said flatly. “I’ll get around to telling you in a minute.” He took out a battered pipe, crammed tobacco in it and lit it painstakingly. Then his blue eyes, under arwninged eyebrows, surveyed Eddie almost critically.

“You had your eyes on Lannin out there today, didn’t you, Darrow?” he said. “What did you think of him?”

Eddie frowned. The question hardly made sense. Why would Crocker ask him—a raw rookie—for his opinion of Lannin’s play? Eddie groped for words, then said:

“He does a lot of second-basing.”

“He’s done a lot, you mean,” said Crocker. A troubled frown settled over his wrinkled brow and he puffed meditatively on his pipe. “Kurt and Lannin and Vance had been playing together for ten years. During that time they’ve built up a great rep as a double play combination. Maybe they rate with Tinker to Evers to Chance, I don’t know. But facts are facts, Darrow. They aren’t clicking together like they used to.”

“They got three today,” said Eddie quickly, wondering briefly why he was always being thrown into a position where he defended Lannin.

“Oh, sure!” Crocker nodded. “They still have good days. But the touch is gone. And the reason is—Lannin.”

Eddie thought about that one. So far, Crocker hadn’t said anything specific. It was hard to believe that the great Kurt to Lannin to Vance combo was on the way out—yet Crocker was inferring as much.

“Lannin is 38,” Crocker went on
easily. "Five years older than Kurt or Vance. He's slowing up, Darrow. He doesn't have the speed around second he used to have—he's feeling it in the legs, where they all feel it first."

Eddie spread his hands.
"But those stops he made—"
Crocker smiled wearily.
"Ten years ago," he said, "Lannin would have made those stops easily, gracefully, without leaving his feet. You remember the stop back of second that started the double play in the first? It looked good. But if Lannin had been two steps faster—like he used to be—he'd have scooped up that ball without going into the dirt for it. Same way on that grounder he just missed. Looked like a great try—except that he wouldn't have had to dive for it ten, or even five, years ago. He'd have had it in his hip pocket."

Eddie felt shock seep through him at Crocker's words. He had the feeling he was hearing words spoken at the funeral of a great man.
"That's where you come in, Darrow," he said. "We know that very soon now we'll have to replace Lannin. Lannin should know it too, but he doesn't. Not many ball players will admit it when they're through. Anyway, we called you back to give you a chance at second."

At first, Eddie hardly understood the words. They sounded too incredible. Ever since he could remember, Kurt to Lannin to Vance had been making headlines. Now, out of a clear sky, he was expected to make it Kurt to Darrow to Vance—and it didn't seem possible.

"You were our best prospect down south," Crocker went on, puffing his pipe. "There was only one weakness we noticed about you—something that could keep you from being a major leaguer. You're spike shy when runners slide into second."

Eddie felt a sudden, annoyed shiver run through him. He decided abruptly that this was the time he should put Crocker straight about this spike shy business.
"I'm not spike shy, Crocker!" The words exploded in his mouth. "What happened down south I can explain. Lannin took a dislike to me the first day we met, and in the Regular-Yanigan game at training camp, he tried to ride me down with his spikes. I didn't want to get hurt, because I only had a few short weeks to prove what I could do, and I figured if I got hurt I never would make the team. The game wasn't important anyway, so I got out of his path. Later on, in that exhibition game when I missed the bag with my loot, it wasn't because I was spike shy. It was just one of those things."

It sounded a little weak, but it was the best Eddie could do. Crocker's gray eyebrow swept down over his eyes.
"You may be right—I hope you are. Anyway, you'll have a chance to prove it on the field tomorrow. Oh, and another thing, Lannin won't like you any better when I tell him to take a rest while you play. But you'll have to try to ignore his remarks and get along with him. If you can prove to him you're the better man, he'll become resigned to the change. Most of them do."

Crocker dismissed Eddie with a wave of his hand, and Eddie went out into the locker room with his head in a violent turmoil. Most of the Titans had left, including Lannin, for which Eddie was thankful. It left him alone to think about tomorrow—his test day.

**MANAGER** Crocker didn't announce his decision to try Eddie at second until shortly before game-time, and then he did it diplomatically.
"You're tired, Lannin," he said to the big second-sacker. "How about taking a rest today, while I try out the kid?"

Lannin's jelly bean eyes came up sharply, and his face froze.
"You're the boss, ain't you?" he clipped. Then he turned away, red-faced and anger-flushed.

Eddie trotted out on the field to open the game with a nervous twitching in the pit of his stomach. Here he was—a raw rookie—about to take his place with the fabulous Titans, and
Somehow it didn’t feel real. It especially didn’t seem real to be breaking
up the sensational Kurt to Lannin
to Vance double play combination.
Apparently it didn’t seem real to
Kurt or Vance either. As they went
out on the field, Eddie heard Kurt
remark to the big first baseman.
“How d’ya like that? Crocker puts
a green kid in at second and breaks
up the best combo in baseball. Where
does he get his ideas, anyway?”
Vance just shook his head and
walked over to first. And Eddie saw
at once he was going to have a tough
time proving himself to these two
men, as well as Lannin, sitting on the
bench.
Eddie prayed for some breaks in
the first few innings, until he could
get his feet on the ground. And he
got them too. In three innings only
two balls were hit his way—one an
easy pop fly, the other a made-to-
order grounder. He handled both
flawlessly.
At bat, Eddie managed to dump a
blooper single into right field the
first time up, and scored a moment
later on a ringing double by Vance.
The Comets, in the third, made the
score 1-1 on a homer by Sad Sam
Sanders, their big cleanup swatter.
But Eddie knew he was working
under critical eyes. He could feel
the cold, unyielding glances of Kurt
and Vance on him all the time. And
each time he came back to the bench
after an inning, Lannin was either
ready with a remark or an icy stare.
In the fifth Eddie set the fans
on their feet. The Comets put a man
on first with one out. Dirk, on the
mound for the Titans, fed the next
batter a low ball inside. The hitter
swung and lashed a grounder over
second.
Eddie faded over as if he were on
a greased run away. He slid on his
wishbone, but he nailed the ball be-
hind the bag. Still on the ground,
he flipped the ball to Kurt at second,
who snapped it to first for the twin
kill.
Eddie came back to the dugout
with the roar of the crowd in his
ears—and it sounded good. Crocker
patted him on the back as he came in.

“Nice play, Darrow,” he comment-
ed.
Lannin didn’t like the compliment.
He kicked with his spikes at the dug-
out floor.
“Sure! Nice play! But wait until
the kid has to be pivot man on one
of those twin kills. He ain’t gonna
like them spikes comin’ into him!”
Eddie flushed and sat down. He
felt like making a retort to Lannin,
but he didn’t. He was smart enough
to realize that the best way to show
Lannin up was by a stellar perform-
ance on the field.
Both pitchers were having a
good day, and the 1-1 deadlock
continued until the Comet half of
the ninth. Then fate took a hand
with Eddie.
With one away, the Comets’ Groff
poled a single to left. Sanders then
rapped another one-baser into right,
sending Groff to third. With Hooker
coming up, the Titans pinched in the
first and third basemen, while Kurt
at short and Eddie at second played
it halfway, hoping for a double play
ball. What they hoped for came true
—almost.
Hooker hit a slow grounder to
short. Kurt gobbled it up as Eddie
came over to second for the force.
Kurt snapped the ball to Eddie for
the force-out just as the runner from
first slid into the sack.
Pivoting for the throw to first,
Eddie saw the runner’s spikes, high,
glistening, coming at him. To avoid
them he leaped high in the air, un-
corking the throw to first while he
was off the ground. The ball smacked
into Vance’s big mitt—but an instant
too late!
They had missed the twin killing by
an eyelash, and the runner on third
had scampered home!
Eddie felt his neck go hot. He saw
Kurt standing with his hands on his
hips, a disgusted look on his face.
Dirk, on the mound, kicked at the
dirt angrily.
A fly ball retired the side a min-
ute later and Eddie trudged into the
dugout to meet Lannin’s caustic
voice.
“What’d I tell you?” Lannin was
snapping at Crocker. "The kid is spike shy. Why don't you send him back to the bushes, where he belongs?"

"I'm not spike shy!" The words leaped from Eddie's mouth almost before he knew it. "That was a slow grounder to short. Not fast enough for a double play."

Lannin leered at him.

"Listen to the kid! Not fast enough, he says!" He spat on the floor. "Look, sonny! If you'da stayed on your feet and threw that ball to first, it woulda had more zip on it and you woulda got your man. But no! You're afraid of them spikes, so you jump in the air and throw—and you lose time on the play. You ain't supposed to do fancy dances out there, busher!"

Manager Corcker stepped into the breach, his voice mild but authoritative.

"Cut it, boys! We'll get them this half."

But the Titans didn't get them, and were tagged with a 2-1 defeat. And the bitterest losers of them all were Kurt and Lannin and Vance.

Manager Crocker, though, was inclined to give Eddie more of a break. He took him aside after the game.

"You did all right, kid," he said. "That last double play was tough, so forget it. One play doesn't make or break a player. I want to see more of you before I decide."

It was heartening to Eddie to know that Crocker, at least, was on his side. He went out for his second game feeling a little better inside, but still battling against the cold appraisal of Kurt and Vance, and the open antagonism of Lannin.

Crocker kept Eddie in the game for two weeks, during which time Eddie gained confidence. After the first few days he was playing a nice game around the keystone sack, and even Lannin was forced to remain quiet most of the time. But in his silence, Eddie knew he had made a definite enemy of Lannin.

At the end of two weeks even Kurt and Vance had begun to accept him. They didn't seem to watch him with that show-me attitude any more, and although they were quiet and not overly friendly, they had begun to accept him for what he was. Lannin, however, didn't. He seized on the barest chance to ridicule Eddie—and Eddie, steeling himself against it, let the criticism run off him like water.

Once, when Eddie fumbled a throw from the catcher on a steal of second, Lannin opened up.

"Musta had your mind on them spikes instead of the ball, eh, rook?" he asked acidly.

Eddie just ignored him, and the words fell on deaf ears all around.

Another week passed, and by that time Eddie felt confident he had made the grade—and that he would stick. Even the sportswriters were beginning to wake up. They had started singing his praises, in a way that indicated they were going to be quick to forget the great Lannin.

It was just when Eddie was mentally congratulating himself on having overcome all opposition that tragedy struck.

Eddie walked into the clubhouse one day to find the place curiously quiet. The players, usually joking and horseplaying, were dressing in somber silence.

Puzzled, Eddie went to his locker, sat down on the bench near a rookie catcher who had been friendly with him. The catcher looked up at him, eyes bleak.

"You heard the news?" he asked.

Eddie shook his head.

"Crocker—he had a heart attack. He's in the hospital. The docs says he won't be able to come back to baseball—ever."

Eddie's jaw dropped at the news. Crocker in the hospital? Crocker gone—out of baseball? It didn't seem possible.

"Who's going to take his place?"

The question came to Eddie's lips naturally, the words tumbling out.

The rookie made a wry grimace.

"Lannin! Front office just announced it."

Eddie sat there, silently, feeling as though somebody had suddenly dumped ice cold water down his back. So Crocker was gone! And Lannin
his sworn enemy, was to be manager of the Titans!

IT WAS a bad blow to his hopes. All at once he felt that he had lost his big chance to make the grade with the Titans. That he had lost his only true friend on the club, the only guy who believed in him.

Under Lannin, he would never get a break. Under Lannin, everything he had built up so far would mean nothing. Eddie had the feeling that something was slipping away from him—something he wouldn't be able to get back.

Eddie dressed gloomily, went out the runway into the dugout. Lannin was standing on the dugout steps, gazing out over the field. When he saw Eddie his face twisted in an arrogant smirk.

"Hi, busher!" he greeted. "Take a place on the bench. You're sitting it out today."

Eddie felt hot anger bubble inside of him. So it was starting already!

"Why am I being benched?" he demanded.

Lannin's jaw set and his jelly bean eyes glistened.

"In case you ain't heard, I just been made manager of this club. Playing manager, in case you ain't heard! I've had a lotta ideas about how to run this outfit for a long time, and now I'm gonna run it my way. One of my ideas, sonny, is that I'm a better second baseman than you are. So I'm puttin' myself back in there. You don't have no objections, do you?"

Eddie felt himself tense inside, like a spring. He wanted to lash out and knocked the smirk off Lannin's face, but he knew it wouldn't do him any good.

"Looks like you're the boss," he said tightly.

"Glad you know it, rookie," Lannin said nastily.

Eddie sat on the bench and watched as Lannin took over at second base. They were playing the Comets again in a late season three-game series. The race was still close, with the Titans only a game behind the front-running Comets.

The first game went to the Titans. Eddie watched it in gloomy silence. Lannin, back at second, put on a show for the fans with several spectacular catches—but Eddie saw now what Crocker had seen so long ago.

Lannin made sensation stops because he was slow getting to the ball. He was making the easy ones look hard.

It was a struggle until the eighth. With the score deadlocked at three, Lannin came up with two men on. He blasted a game winning homer into the stands to make the final score 6-3. After the game he cornered Eddie in the clubhouse.

"That's the way we play it in the big leagues, busher," he said, leaving Eddie staring at him silently.

With both teams tied in the run-loss columns, the second game was bound to be a blinger. It was. Both teams had good pitching and an air-tight defense, and it wasn't until the ninth inning that the Comets racked up a score to win the game 1-0.

That put the Titans in a spot. If they could win the third game they would tie again for the league lead. And they would have a good chance to go on to the pennant, because the balance of the schedule favored them heavily.

LANNIN, of course, started himself in the field again, and Eddie felt the same churning resentment he had felt for the last two days. He watched the first two innings slide by without a score, and then it happened.

MARKO, the Comets' shortstop, dropped a blooper back of second. It was a low fly and Lannin scurried out on the grass for it, trying to take it over his shoulder. Meanwhile, Slade, the center gardener, came in fast.

The ball fell between them for a hit, but that wasn't the worse part. There was a sickening thud as Lannin and Slade crashed. Both went down on the grass, Slade getting up unhurt to retrieve the ball. But Lannin was out cold!

It took several minutes to revive him. When he was at last helped into the dugout, Eddie saw a gash in
his forehead where he had taken the brunt of the collision. He was dazed and pale and shaking.

Lannin stood a moment on the dugout steps, beady black eyes waver ing over the bench unsteadily. Then his voice came, shaking like the rest of him.

"Go on in, kid," he said to Eddie. "But remember—this is an important game. If you show me that yellow streak in there, I'll have you back in the minors before night!"

Eddie went out, his heart bouncing in his mouth. He was realist enough to know that Lannin's injury had given him one last chance. He would have to be not only good, but sensational, if he wanted to convince Lannin of his worth. This was it—and there was no shrinking it.

On the very first play Eddie had a chance to prove himself. Kole, a tough Comet hitter, drilled a grounder to left. He faded over, snapped it up, and nailed the runner at first with a neat throw. It made him feel better.

Lannin, nursing his forehead in the dugout, made no remark about it in the dugout after the inning. So Eddie went out determined to do a little more for the Titan cause.

In the fifth the Comets put a man on first. With no score, he tried to steal second. The Titan catcher's peg was in the dirt near the sack, but Eddie scooped it up and put the ball on the sliding runner. And at the same instant Eddie felt a sharp pain along the back of his gloved hand. The runner's spikes had put a neat gash in his hand, drawing blood!

Eddie turned his back to the infield, hiding the bleeding hand. A wild panic seized him suddenly. He didn't want to go out of the game now! This was his chance—his last chance! The only chance he was going to get!

He held the hand in back of him as he faced the next hitter, letting the blood run into his glove. A quick glance at the wound had told him one thing. It was a jagged, inch-long cut—a painful injury but one which would likely stop bleeding quickly.

When he came into the dugout he saw a new respect in Kurt's eyes. Vance was looking at him curiously too. Lannin's blackish eyes just surveyed him coldly, then turned away.

The sixth, Eddie made two nice stops back of second. In both cases his injured hand throbbed from the contact of ball against glove. But he gritted his teeth and stayed in there. He had no choice, now, but to stay in.

In the Titans' half of the seventh, with his hand now bleeding very little, Eddie did his bit at the plate. With the count full, he caught a fast ball on the fat of his bat and rode it into the stands with Kurt on ahead of him. It gave the Titans a nice 2-0 lead.

In the eighth the Comets threatened. They got men on second and third with two out, and Sam Sanders walked up to the plate. On the first pitch he rapped a sizzler between first and second.

Eddie raced to his left, saw he wasn't going to get it, and dove for the ball. His body cut a groove in the base path as he slid along, but he felt the ball smack into his glove and stick there. He felt something else too—a sharp pain in his hand that almost caused him to drop the ball.

But he held on to the ball. Still on the ground, he snapped a throw to Vance at first to get the runner by a gnat's eyelash. It saved two runs that would have tied the game!

THEN CAME the hectic ninth.

Fighting to come from behind, the Comets started things in their half. Luigi poled a long double against the screen in right. Marko, the shortstop, responded with a clothes-line single to right and Luigi romped home with the run that made it Titans 2, Comets 1.

The Titan hurler settled down then and got the next man on a pop-up to third. That left Marko on first with what could be the tying run, one out, and Fenner at bat.

Then came the key play of the game. Fenner, trying to punch one into right field on the hit-and-run, lashed a fast grounder down the first base line. Vance, playing close to
the bag, speared the ball and stepped on the sack. Meanwhile, Marko legged it for second.

It was one of those double plays in reverse. With the hitter nailed at first, Eddie would have to tag Marko coming into second.

Eddie sized up the situation in a jiffy. If Marko made it to second, it would put the tying run in scoring position with Larkin, a nightmare clutch hitter coming up. If Eddie could get Marko on his slide, it would end the threat and save the game for the Titans.

And then Eddie saw that Vance’s throw was going to be wide of the base.

Eddie faded over to the third base side of second to get the erratic throw. He scooped it out of the dirt a few feet from the bag, just as Marko started his slide. There was only one thing for Eddie to do, and he did it.

He dove head-first at the second base bag, arm out-stretched to tag Marko as he came in.

Eddie never quite knew what happened. All he knew was that there were spikes and dust close to his face—and that he was reaching out to tag the sliding Marko. Then the spikes and dust were gone, and in their place were stars and pretty colors battling each other before his eyes.

Then came a smothering blackness.

Eddie frowned at the words. He didn’t know quite what to say, and Lannin saved him the trouble. There was a crooked, half-sheepish smile on Lannin’s square face.

“I guess I had you wrong, busher,” he said gruffly. “Maybe you weren’t so spike shy as I thought. You played half the game with a spiked hand, which wasn’t easy. And you sure went after that last tag, head-first—and the spikes didn’t scare you a bit. That takes guts!”

Eddie swallowed hard, not quite believing what Lannin said.

“Did we win?” he asked weakly.

“Did we win!” Lannin laughed.

“I’ll say we did! You got Marko going into second, and saved the day for us. And not only that, kid—we’re on the way to a pennant now!”

Eddie felt a warm feeling drift through him. He grinned up at Lannin and the new manager went on.

“I decided another thing, too, kid. You played a great game out there today. You were fast around second—faster than I am. I been feelin’ it in the legs lately, but I didn’t want admit it. I was rough on you because I thought you’d take my job, sooner or later. Guess I was tryin’ to put off the inevitable. Naturally, I didn’t think of gettin’ this manager’s job. That changes the picture.”

“You mean—”

“I mean that you’re my regular second sacker now, kid. The old double play combination of Kurt to Lannin to Vance has had its day—and it was a good day. Now it’s going to be Kurt to Darrow to Vance—and damned if that don’t sound just as good!”

Eddie felt his body relax on the table. It was funny. Fifteen minutes ago he’d been fighting to hold a place on the Titan team. Now, he was their first-string keystone sacker!

It felt good to be a full-fledged member of the Titans, Eddie thought. And it felt even better to be a member of a sweet double play combination—like Kurt to Darrow to Vance!

THE END
A Bowl bid hung in the balance, and Glen knew he could never help his team win it as long as he looked like an All-American back in practice and like a gridiron bum against real opposition!

GLEN EBERLY slowly opened the locker room and stepped inside. The hubbub of forty players dressing abruptly ceased, and Glen could feel antagonistic stares boring into him. His heart sank for a moment. But there was no turning back now. It was too late for that. He squared his shoulders and walked forward towards Harvey Daniels, the Wesley U. coach.

Glen recognized Daniels immediately. The shock of snow-white hair that the old master sported was well known all over the country. Glen wondered what kind of reception he would get.

Daniels gave him a passing glance. “Get into uniform, Eberly. I'll see you later.”

That was all. Glenn was glad for one reason anyway. He would at least have a chance to show what he could do before the coach passed judgment on him. Some of the players began trotting out onto the field as he dressed. No one spoke to him. But he wasn't surprised, he'd expected that.
Glenn had known what he was in for when he decided to come to Wesley. Stories of his hot temper and lone-wolf style of play made him an unwelcome addition to the squad. And being a week late for practice didn’t help either. But that wasn’t stopping him. For Glen Eberly had to make good at Wesley.

The boys were throwing the ball around when Glen came out on the field. He jogged over to join some of them. They ignored him for a while but finally a ball bounced over to him. He picked it up and kicked a good fifty yard punt back. One of the men standing nearby called out:

“Don’t let him fool you. He’s probably spying for Doc Eberly.” The others laughed.

Glen wanted to make some kind of retort but he held back. It was a tough job he had picked for himself. The son of the coach of Wesley’s hated rival, Tilton, trying to win a berth on the Wesley eleven!

A few minutes later the men began to scrimmage. Glen remained on the sidelines for a while and then coach Daniels motioned him to go in with the scrubs. Glen’s blood surged. It would be good to get the feel of the pigskin again. He knew his timing and coordination were a little off but his lean body was in good shape and he felt confident of making a good showing.

Daniels gave the ball to the scrubs at the forty and told them to see what they could do. Wesley worked from the T. On the first play the quarterback handed off to Glen and he made for a big hole that he saw off tackle. Only the hole wasn’t there when he hit the line of scrimmage and he was crashed to earth without gaining a yard. Glen tried again, this time on a fake reverse around end. He was spilled for a three yard loss. Twice more Glen carried and twice more the varsity line rushed through to knock him down before he could get started.

The quarterback called another player’s signal for a while and he got a chance to catch his breath. Glen was discouraged. He realized that he had been running from behind the scrub forward wall but he felt that he should have done better. He gritted his teeth angrily. A few seconds later Glen got a chance to carry and rammed through center for five yards. Then the varsity team took the ball over.

T HE REGULAR big four stood behind their powerful front line waiting to go into action. They were quite a crew. Quarterback Herb Ring, the best T man in the East; flashy breakaway runner Buzzy Lewis, the star of the team; blocker Ray Zack who could knock down a brick wall, so they said; and plunging fullback, Al Hosker. This was their third season together and it would take some doing to break into that gang. Especially for a guy who had been kicked off a team coached by his own father!

They went into action and you could see right away what had made them famous. It was only the scrub line they were facing but they made a sieve out of it. Lewis on off tackle and guard slants and Hosker booming through the middle and Herb Ring spreading the defense out with a snappy forward every so often. But, as always, it was Buzzy Lewis who was the center of attraction. He was unstoppable.

The scrubs were given the ball again, and Glen put every ounce of energy he had left into his play and several times chalked up small but adequate gains. He was taking the full brunt of the attack but finally beginning to show some advancement.

Then on one play he thought he had broken into the clear and was going all the way. But Buzzy Lewis cut over and knifed him down with a diving tackle. Lewis snickered as he got up:

“Not so hot taking it on the chin, eh? We don’t like quirksers on this club.”

Glen’s blood rushed to his head hotly and he had to fight hard again to keep his temper in check. He didn’t want to start a fight with Lewis, a man whose job he had to win. Glen went back to the huddle and asked to carry the ball. He wanted to run into Buzzy Lewis once more.
Glen raced for the sidelines throw-
in every pound of his frame into each
stride. He saw Lewis heading over to
back up the line and he drove for-
ward. The next minute what seemed
like a ton of bricks crashed into him.
He blacked out for a moment and
when he came to, he saw a mountain
of a man standing over him. The big
guy helped Glen to his unsteady feet.

Glen watched the rest of the game
from the bench. He learned that the
huge lineman who had knocked him
cold was "Tiny" Russell, six-foot-
five, the two-hundred-fifty-pound
center.

After practice he went to see Vice
Daniels. The coach was waiting for
him and got to the point quickly.
"What happened before is over with,
Eberly. Do your best and you'll
get along here. But you've got to re-
member that we play a team game," he
said firmly. "It won't be any bowl
of cherries."

Glen nodded. He didn't have to be
told that.

The coach looked straight into his
eyes "That's all Eberly."

As Glen walked across the deserted
grounds surrounding the football
stadium, his mind drifted back one
year ago...

It had been a foregone conclusion,
almost from the time of this birth,
that he would go to Tilton. And Doc
Eberly had eagerly waited for the day
when his son would play on his team.

BUT BEING the coach's son had
more disadvantages than advan-
tages. Glen had done well on the frosh
squad and had been given the number
one running spot on the varsity in his soph year at Tilton. But there
was another fellow on the team who
thought he was better than Glen. He
was Billy Nelson. They had disliked
each other from the first time they'd
met. Nelson, angry over not getting
the spot he wanted, began a whisper-
ing campaign that Glen was getting
all the breaks because he was Coach
Eberly's son. Dissension arose on the
squad. Nelson also claimed that Glen
was a glory seeker and didn't give a
hoot for the team.

The situation had finally come to a
head and Glen thrashed Nelson in a
wild brawl. When Doc Eberly heard
about it, he called Glen on the carpet.
He was enraged and told Glen off.
Glen lost his head and walked out on
the team. Doc Eberly didn't speak
to his son after that. He considered
him a quitter.

That was a long year ago and now
Glen was on the other side of the
grounds playing for Tilton's arch foe,
Wesley. But he still had the task of
winning over his teammates. He had
decided one thing. He'd curb his tem-
per even if it killed him.

As Glen reached the front of his
dorm he saw a vaguely familiar fig-
ure. It was Tiny Russell, the beefy
center who had nearly crushed him.

Tiny grinned amiably as he noticed
Glen. "Glad I didn't wreck you. You
okay now?"

"Yeah," Glen answered. "Thanks
for talking to me," he added.

Tiny was embarrassed. "Oh, the
others..." he waved his arm despair-
ingly. Suddenly his face broke into
a warm grin. "Say, my roomie just
left school. How about moving in
with me?"

"Sure thing," Glen answered hast-
ily.

The next two weeks passed quickly.
Glen moved in with Tiny Russell at
the two became great pals. The mam-
omouth, fun-loving center was the kind
of swell guy that everyone likes to
have as a friend and in those weeks
Glen needed all the comforting he
could get. He had lost time to make
up and in those weeks he worked
harder on the football field than he
ever had in his life. But even though
he kept on friendly terms and minded
his own business, the team was still
hostile to him.

And then it was the Saturday of the
opening game with little Rockford.
Wesley was a big favorite but the
Stadium was jammed with students,
alumni and fans. The Purple Tide
was beginning another season.

Glen fidgeted on the bench as the
game got under way. His hard work
had paid dividends and he was now
chief understudy to Buzzy Lewis. He
knew with any luck at all he would
get into the game. Then he would show them what he could do.

ROCKFORD WAS surprisingly tough and it wasn't until near the end of the first period that Wesley was able to push over their first counter. But that opened the door and three more scores followed swiftly. With three minutes to play in the half, Glen replaced Buzzy Lewis. That star had already personally scored two touchdowns.

It was Wesley's ball on their own thirty, first and ten. Al Hosker made four through the center of the line and then Ring drove to the thirty-eight. Glen got his hands on the II for the first time on the next play and whirled for a first down. Wesley began to march.

At mid-field Glen took a tricky lateral from Herb Ring and danced into the clear. The Rockford safety man smacked him down at the twenty-five. He was hit hard and fumbled, Rockford recovering. Glen was crestfallen as he walked from the field a moment later.

He didn't get into the game again until the start of the last quarter. Rockford had just kicked out on the Wesley eight yard line. Glen followed Tiny Russell through center for seven. Hosker cracked off guard for eight and the well-oiled Wesley machine began to roll. With Al Hosker and Glen doing the heavy work they roared to the Rockford forty-five. Glen made one first down by carrying two tacklers on his back for three yards. Only a bad break stopped them. A poor pass from center sailed over Hosker's head and Rockford recovered.

A few minutes later Wesley began to move again. Glen got off a dazzling twenty yard sprint. Eleven yards around end. Then Ring called tricky play involving a fake reverse and a backward lateral. Glen was to be on the receiving end of the lateral. He got it all right but somebody missed an assignment and two Rockford linemen were closing in on him as he took the pass ten yards in back of the scrimmage line. Glen ducked back trying to break away but he was hemmed in. An instant before he was knocked down he let go of a high, wobbly pass. He knew he had made a bad play as soon as he'd let go of it. One of the Rockford backs plucked the ball out of the air and raced to an easy score. A substitute quickly came in for him. Glen didn't have to look at Coach Daniels to know that he had undone all his previous good work with that one stupid play.

Glen drove himself with a vengeance during practice the following week. He hoped somehow to make up for his boner with extra hard work.

But fate seemed to be against him. Grant was the next opponent and they were no soft touch like Rockford. They fought the mighty Purple to a standstill and only a great run by Buzzy Lewis put Wesley out in front 6-0 at the half.

The Purple failed to score in the third period and the game went into its waning moments with Wesley on the long end of a one touchdown lead. Then Lewis was shaken up and Glen went in to take his place. He was eager with the desire to make good.

Too eager. Twice in succession he fumbled. Luckily Wesley recovered both times. He couldn't seem to do anything right.

THIS WAS the turning point for Glen. Coach Daniels lost confidence in him. He was now tabbed a star in practice and a bum on the field. His teammates, and Buzzy Lewis especially, wore an "I told you so" look every time his name was mentioned. Glen doubted if anything short of personally accounting for Wesley's next fifty touchdowns could win their respect now.

So the next weeks were tough ones for Glen Eberly. If it hadn't been for Tiny's encouragement he would have quit several times. But Tiny and something else deep inside kept him going.

He played in most of the games as Wesley swept all before them, but only for brief intervals, and never when anything was at stake. Glen was now a mopper-upper. In the excitement of an undefeated season and the
spectacular play of Buzzy Lewis and the rest he was all but forgotten.

Wesley came up to the Tilton fray without a loss marring its record. The Purple Tide had been invincible. But Tilton too had a powerful squad. And it was led by that new All-America Billy Nelson. A Bowl bid hung in the balance. Though Tilton had lost one contest, a victory over Wesley would make them the number one team in the east.

It was Tiny Russell who came up with the idea of having Glen brief the squad on everything he knew about Tilton tactics. Herb Ring and Buzzy Lewis didn’t think much of the final say.

So the day before the big game Glen spent an hour lecturing the team. He hoped that now at least some of the men would look a little more favorably on him.

Saturday was a crisp, clear, late autumn day, and this year the game was at the Purple’s huge stadium. An enormous crowd jammed the stands to overflowing. The very rafters shook from the cheers of the respective student bodies as their teams trotted onto the field.

There was only one thing on Glen Eberly’s mind: he prayed that somehow, some way, he might get a chance to get into this game today. It was a thing he had to do for himself and even more for his father.

During the warm-up Billy Nelson drifted over. “Ready for your beating, quitter?” he called out.

When Glen failed to answer, he yelled, “What’s the matter, star? Lose your guts already?”

Tiny Russell looked at Glen quivering with anger, and quickly walked over to Nelson. The two-hundred-fifty-pounder glared at the Tilton back and bit out, “Shut up or I’ll push your face in.”

Nelson shut up—fast.

And then the big moment had arrived. Tilton won the toss and elected to kick off with the wind at their backs. The referee’s whistle blew and a long, low boot traveled to the Wesley goal line. Buzzy Lewis took it there and came all the way back to the twenty-five.

Three thrusts at the line gained only seven yards and Hosker had to kick. Billy Nelson caught the punt and was downed in his tracks. Nelson ripped for twelve yards on the first Tilton offensive try and then a moment later spun through the line for fifteen. Wesley dug in. Nelson made six before Tiny Russell stopped him cold twice in a row and Tilton punted.

Buzzy Lewis made a beautiful thirty-yard runback to field and the Purple cheer leaders began screaming for a touchdown. Two plays later Lewis took a hand-off from Herb Ring and followed Ray Zack around right end. All over the field Tilton men... or going down like ten pins. Lewis reversed his field at the Tilton thirty as Zack took out two men with a crushing block and went all the rest of the way to pay dirt. Hosker kicked the point and Wesley led 7-0 after five minutes of play.

But Tilton roared back. Nelson was a one-man-team picking up one first down after another. He couldn’t be stopped. On one forty-yard run, three different purple clad warriors had their hands on him but couldn’t bring him to earth. He went over on a ten yard buck right through center and the contest was tied up seconds later as the placement sailed straight and true over the crossbars.

The game settled down after that. Both teams were afraid to open too much and neither club could keep a sustained attack going. Suddenly, late in the second quarter, Nelson broke into the clear again and only Buzzy Lewis stood in his path to glory. Nelson tried to run over Lewis and they smacked together with both men going down hard. Lewis didn’t get up. The Wesley trainer and then the doctor dashed out on the field and Lewis was finally carried off. It looked like he had a broken leg.

Coach Daniels glanced at Glen. “Go ahead in and show us what you can do,” he barked.

An instant later Glen was racing onto the field. The team lined-up sadly. They were a dejected lot. Two
plays later Billy Nelson crashed over with the touchdown that put Tilton in front.

Glen looked at the long faces of his mates and snarled. "Are you lousy bunch of quitters giving up already? Do I have to play this game by myself without any help from you bums?"

The team glared at him for a moment and then broke for their positions.

An angry Purple forward wall cracked through to block the try for point. Tilton led 13-7.

The rest of the half was a nightmare to Glen Eberly. He was all over the field, throwing himself into almost every play and stopping the Tilton attack. Gradually the rest of the squad recovered their spirit and played Tilton to a standstill.

In the second half, leading by a touchdown, Tilton switched to a defensive game. They were content just to hold Wesley off. And they concentrated on battering Glen in the hope of knocking him out of the fray.

He got up from one tackle after a five yard run with fire in his eyes. He had been smacked down brutally by Billy Nelson and three others and had felt an elbow dig into his ribs in the pile-up. But Tiny Russell jumped in front of him and held him back. It would have been disastrous for the Purple to lose Glen at that point of the game.

The contest went into its dying moments and things looked black. Suddenly Glen had an idea. He explained it in the huddle and on the next play, much to Tilton's surprise, Ray Zack bulled his way through the line for a first down.

AND THEN it was Zack again and again smashing for yardage as Glen and Tiny led the way, blasting gaping holes. The team rolled to the Tilton thirty-three with two minutes to play, and Tilton called for time out. There was no question anymore about Glen making good. That was settled. But there was still a game to win.

The teams went back into action and Zack carried twice but the Tilton line rose up and shoved him back. Herb Ring nervously called Glen's number. The clock was ticking away swiftly. Ring took the pass and gave off to Glen who cut for the sidelines. Tiny Russell pulled out of the line to lead the way. A tackle grabbed him on the thirty but Glen savagely tore himself free. All over the gridiron, the Wesley men were going all out in a last show of strength. Tiny pounded two would-be tacklers to earth on the twenty and went down with another at the thirteen. And then only Billy Nelson was in front of Glen. Nelson hit him at the six yard line but Glen kept digging and flung himself across the last stripe with Nelson hanging on. The crowd went crazy.

Seconds later Al Hosker calmly stepped back and kicked the point and Wesley was ahead 14-13.

The Purple kicked off and Billy Nelson threw three desperation passes in a row but it was no use. The gun went off and Wesley danced off the field the victors.

Glen was stretched out on a rubbing table with his joyous teammates around him a few moments later, when the door to the dressing room opened and Doc Eberly entered. There were tears in his eyes. Glen jumped up and then the two shook hands. Doc Eberly stepped back and with a twinkle in his eye, he said, "Son, for a quitter, you sure did okay. I'm proud of you."

Glen grinned proudly as he looked at his father's beaming face. Everything was all right now.

ANSWERS TO THE QUIZ

1. FOOTBALL .................. RED GRANGE
2. FOOTBALL .................. JIM THORPE
3. BASEBALL .................. JIM MCLARNIN

No. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

A B C D E F G H I J

4. HORSERACING ................ CITATION
5. HORSERACING ................ WHIRLAWAY
6. HORSERACING ................ RAY McWHORTON
7. FIGHT ...................... ROCKY GRAZIANO
8. FIGHT ...................... JIM MCLARNIN
9. BASKETBALL ............... 2-0
10. BASKETBALL ............... Penalty for travelling

(The other team wins)
GRUDGE FIGHT
by DAVID C. COOKE

THE ANCIENT Ford roadster chugged over the country road, swirling behind it. The blond-haired young man on the right of the seat, staring straight ahead, face set in The force of the blows hurt his arms all the way to his shoulders!

Randy was fast on his feet and he could throw a good punch. But a champion, they told him, had to be a killer, he had to carry atom bombs in both fists...

hard lines, was Randy Wilson. On the left, behind the bouncing wheel, was Pop Schreiber, a pleasant faced man with hair that was almost white. Neither of them had spoken since turning off the highway more than two miles to the rear. Randy didn't like this thing Pop
was doing, even though the older man insisted that it was for his own good.

"With me managing you," he had said, "it will be just one little smoke-filled arena after another. You don't want that, Randy. You want to make your pile and get out of the game before your brains are scrambled. That's the reason you need somebody like Steve Ross to front for you. He's got connections, and without connections you can't get ahead in the ring. Take it from me, I know."

Of that last, Randy had no doubts. Pop Schreiber had handled some of the best light-heavyweights, years past, when fighting was a sport and not a racket. But now the promoters just laughed at him when he tried to crash the big time. Too many years had gone by and too many elbows had been bent, and they figured that now he didn't know from sour grapes.

"We're almost there, son," Pop said quietly, breaking the silence. "Just another mile or so."

Randy sighed and shook his head. "Let's turn back," he said. "We'll be all right, you and me, without ringing in this Ross."

Pop smiled faintly. "I thought we'd had that all out. It's Ross or I drop my contract and leave you. You could do just as well without me anyway. I'm an anchor around your neck, holding you to penny-ante affairs."

Randy sank lower in the seat, hands deep in his pockets. If Pop was an anchor, he thought, there should be more anchors in the fight game. He had gone to Pop in the first place in an effort to build himself up after being torn down, physically and mentally, by ravaging malaria contracted on Saipan. And Pop had worked wonders on his disease-ridden body, to the point where he had suggested that Randy might like to take a crack at the ring.

BUT RANDY had taken more than a crack. Under Pop's able guidance, he had bowled over everyone he'd been matched against. And then Pop had made his decision to sell Randy to Steve Ross, so that Randy could get the kind of breaks he needed to reach the top.

"Well, here's Ross's place," Pop said, as the roadster approached a fenced-in area grown with shade trees. "Not much like the hole we use in New York, eh, boy?"

Randy looked at the camp site and had to admit that it was really something. By comparison with the empty store he and Pop called their gym, this was strictly silk hat. It would make a guy feel like a champ even to train in such a place.

Pop took his foot off the gas and slowed down. Then Randy saw a large banner over the entrance to the camp. It read in big letters:

**SEE LEFTY THOMAS**
**IN ACTION**
**Admission $1.00**

"Hey, what's this?" Randy said, frowning. "I thought you said Ross wasn't handling anybody now."

Pop shook his head. "He's not. But somebody has to pay the bills. Ross doesn't run this place just for fun."

"But the papers say this Lefty Thomas is going to be the next champ," Randy argued. "It's a cinch Ross won't want any part of me, after seeing this guy in action."

Pop said: "Forget it, son, and let me do the talking. I broke Ross in on the fight game when he was just a young punk, and if I tell him you're good, he'll believe me."

And then they were stopped at the gate and a wizened little man came out to the car. "Two people," he said. "That's two bucks."

"We came to see Ross," Pop said and introduced himself. "We're expected."

The gate man squinted at them suspiciously then shrugged thin shoulders. "Ross is in the big white building, first one you come to."

They drove up the graded road bordered by towering poplars and, making a curve, abruptly came to a large clearing dotted with wooden buildings. Pop switched off, and as the engine died Randy could hear the slap-slap-bang of a punching bag.
That would be Lefty Thomas working out, for the benefit of the press and ogle-eyed spectators.

"You won't like Ross's looks," Pop said as they left the car. "But don't let that bother you; he could get a stumblebum the final go at the Garden if he wanted to."

INSIDE, THE sprawling building was decorated ranch-style. The walls were knotty pine, stained, and the chandeliers were wagon wheels hung from the beamed ceiling with rustic chains. Oil paintings of Dempsey, Carpentier, Baer, and other ring greats, dotted the walls, and to the right was a bar stocked with everything to tempt a thirsty palate. Seated at the bar drinking beer was a giant of a man, ivory bald and dressed in the best Hollywood fashion.

"A bar in a training camp?" Randy said incredulously. "This is a new twist."

"Ross lives here, too," Pop supplied and nodded toward the man at the bar. "That's him there."

They walked over to Ross. He had a twisted nose from a punch he'd forgotten to duck, and was wearing spectacles so thick they could have been lenses from a flashlight. He looked like the bookie type, Randy thought, and his presence in such surroundings was incongruous.

"This is the fighter I was telling you about, Steve," Pop said. "How you like?"

Ross took a sip of his beer and studied Randy closely with his little pig eyes.

"So you're Wilson, huh?" he grunted. "Pop says you're good; what d'you think?"

Randy's ears suddenly felt warm in embarrassment. He said, "I guess I can fight a little."

"He'll be champ, with the right handling," Pop said. "All he needs is a few good bouts."

Ross again looked Randy up and down, then sniffed. "Not very tall for a light-heavy," he observed. "I like 'em big, and with long arms."

"But Randy can box like Corbett," Pop said quickly. "He's fast on his feet and knows how to throw a good punch."

Ross took another sip of beer and belched offensively. "Not much cut up for a fighter," he said. "Never met no top-notchers, huh?"

Randy's anger was spreading rapidly. He didn't like this Ross character and knew he would never be able to work with him. Despite his ugly appearance, the man was an egotist and could do nothing, it seemed, except find fault.

"Look, Mr. Ross," he said hotly. "I fight with my hands, not with my face. I fight the way Pop tells me. If that's not good enough for you, okay; go get yourself some guy with a bunch of scar tissue."

Ross grinned. "What d'you know?" he said, speaking to Pop for the first time. "The kid's got spirit. Won't take no guff."

Pop's eyes seemed to light up. "Then you're interested? You want Randy's contract?"

Ross took another drink of beer and licked his lips. "Good stuff, this brew," he said, exhalin sharply. "It's brought in special from Mexico. By air. No, I don't want him, Pop. Not even a piece."

That made Randy feel good. Ross didn't want him, he didn't want Ross. They were even. But it was different with Pop Schreiber. He looked puzzled, surprised, and disappointed all at the same time.

"But you're making a mistake," he tried to argue. "I tell you, Randy's—"

"I just bought Lefty Thomas last night," Ross interrupted. "Fifty G's, he cost me. He's a bum I don't have to build up. He's there already, and he's gonna be the next champ. Stick around Pop," he said casually. "Lefty'll be comin' in here before boxin' for the yokel mob."

Randy could tell that the wind had been knocked out of Pop's sails. The old man had been counting too much on this deal, and made it all the harder. He's had visions of seeing one more of his boys go on to the championship. But now that was all over. There was nothing ahead for Pop except more fights in
cheap clubs for peanut purses, all the while hoping that things would break.

Suddenly the back door to the building slammed open and a big, black-haired man stalked in. He was wearing white trunks and had a towel draped around his neck. Lefty Thomas. But as the fighter came closer Randy's heart started beating faster. He had known Thomas before only then his name had been Thomas and he hadn't been a fighter. He had known him from about the age of eight, when they were both in knee britches. And they had always been bitter enemies.

Randy couldn't remember how it had all started, but Lefty had always ridden his shoulders, beating him up whenever he had a chance. It was the same when they went out for football; Lefty made first-string halfback and Randy was in the scrubs. Then, in the army, they'd given Lefty a commission and Randy a gun and a pat on the back.

And now Lefty had beaten him again. This time with Steve Ross.

The fighter spotted Randy immediately and recognition jumped into his bloodshot eyes. "Well, what d'you know?" he said with heavy sarcasm. "If it ain't the golden-haired boy in person!"

Steve Ross looked at them quickly. "You two guys know each other?"

"Hell, yes," Lefty said, grinning. "Whitney and I have been pals for a long time. That's right, ain't it?"

Randy felt his stomach go hollow. "A long time," he echoed, and his voice sounded strange.

Lefty studied Randy closely, his eyes calculating. "So you're a fighter now, huh?" he said. "Light-heavy, is my guess. We'll have to meet in the ring some time, pally. It'd be fun, don't you think?"

Anger welled up within Randy. It was clear that Lefty wanted to continue the old feud, to tear him apart in the ring the way he'd done with bare fists when they were kids. The man was an insatiable sadist.

Ross broke it up. He said: "Cut the palaver, Lefty, and get goin' Take a coupla rounds with Skinner and work up a sweat. I'll be right down."

Lefty grinned again. "Come see how it's done," he told Randy. "Maybe you'll learn enough to pick up a semi-final in some jerk joint."

Ross pointed a thick thumb toward the back door, scowling behind his glasses. "Get goin', bum. Give the yokels a show."

Still grinning, Lefty jerked the towel from his shoulders and the snapping end just missed Randy's face. He laughed and turned from the bar, the towel dragging across the floor behind him.

The blood drained from Randy's face and his arms and he felt cold inside. "Nice guy," he said bitterly. "About as subtle as a bulldozer."

Ross said, "You guys don't like each other, huh?"

Randy grunted. "What do you think?" It was a flat statement, not a question.

Ross shrugged beefy shoulders. "He's a louse, but there ain't nobody in the ring that can beat him. He'll kayo Gomez next week and be the champ for a long time. That's all I care about."

Pop Schreiber had been taking it all in without speaking, but now he said, "Randy can beat him. I've never seen a heel yet who could fight."

Ross shrugged again, finished his beer. "I still don't want your boy," he declared. "But if he's as good as you say, I'll see that he never fights in a decent joint. Gotta protect my champ, y'know."

It was the quick freeze, and Randy could see that connections can work two ways: to push a fighter to the top, or to keep him at the bottom. Pop was getting just the reverse of what he had expected!

But the old man wasn't taking it lying down. "I'll be damned if you will," he grated. "By God, I'll see the Commissioner if you try anything like that. I swear I will!"

Ross chuckled lightly, trying to pass it off. "What's the matter, you can't take a joke, Pop? I was only pullin' your leg." He sighed and
pushed from the stool. "C'mon, let's watch Lefty work out."

The pavilion was mobbed with fight fans and newspaper photographers, and Lefty was putting on a good show for them. He was a butcher with a meat cleaver in each hand, and he chopped through Skinner's guard and cut him up despite the protection of the headguard.

He was liquid dynamite, Randy saw, snapping his gloves out too rapidly to be blocked, dancing away before he could be hit in return. His style was savage and brutal, and the fans sopped it up. The newsmen kept their cameras clicking; they were getting the kind of stuff they had hoped for, not just mild exhibition boxing.

The gong clanged, ending the two-rounder, and the fans applauded. Lefty hopped around the ring, shadow boxing, and then a stringbean of a man climbed through the ropes and grinned at the crowd.

"Anybody else what would like to box wit' the comin' champ?" he asked in a nasal twang. "How's about it, fellers, just for gags."

IT WAS THE usual hokum, Randy knew, to bring laughs from the spectators. It had been pulled at every training camp he'd ever visited, but there were never any takers.

The thin man talked it up. "C'mon, boys," he pleaded, "the champ won't hurt you none. What say?"

Lefty stopped throwing punches and stared at Randy, his eyes hard. "How about you, punk?" he said in a loud voice. "Think you've got enough guts?"

The empty feeling came back to Randy's stomach. It was something he couldn't control. He was afraid of Lefty, remembering all the beatings he'd taken from him in the past.

"Or maybe your hair ain't the only thing that's yellow," Lefty taunted. "Turn around and let's see your back."

A ball of fire filled the emptiness of Randy's stomach. Teeth clenched, he said to Ross: "Where do I find trunks and shoes?"

Ross laughed. "Don't pay no at-
tention to Lefty. The boy's a great kidder, that's all."

But Randy persisted. "I don't like his brand of humor. The bum can't talk to me like that."

Ross grunted, shrugging his shoulders. "It's your funeral, bud. See Skinner, he'll fix you up with ring togs."

Pop was at Randy's heels going back to the dressing room. He said anxiously: "You don't have to do this, son. Calm down and take it easy. That guy is going to be the next champ!"

Randy frowned at his manager. "I thought you said I could beat him."

"Sure you can," Pop said. "You can lick him, but not yet. You need more training. You've never boxed anybody as good as Lefty."

Randy took his clothes off and pulled the trunks on. "Well, I'll have to start some time."

He had a lump in his throat when he went back to the ring. The first wave of anger had passed, and now his mind was crowded with doubts. He thought that maybe he had been too fast in accepting the challenger, that he should have absorbed the insults without acting like a fool. But he had played right into Lefty's hands, doing exactly what the slugger had hoped. And now it was too late to back out. One way or the other, the reporters would splash the story across their sport pages, and Randy would be painted as a two-bit punk.

"Stay away from him," Pop cautioned as he climbed through the ropes. "Box all the way, up on your toes."

Randy rubbed his feet in the rosin box and put his arms on the ropes. He was trembling from nervous tension and Lefty, on the other side of the ring, spat and said: "What's the matter, golden-hair, you scared? It's only two rounds—maybe."

Pop gave Randy a mouthpiece, and then he straightened his headguard. Someone rang the bell, and the photographers around the ring cocked the shutters on their cameras.

Randy moved steadily away from
his corner. He was calm now, the fear put behind him. He tried to think that this was just another fight, that Lefty wasn't the guy who had always beaten him in everything. He held his guard high and went out on his toes.

They met in the center of the ring and Lefty grinned at him. He threw a wild right and Randy ducked out of the way. A left followed the right and he caught it on his glove, tapping out with a left of his own that was short.

Lefty danced away and then darted back in again, throwing leather. Randy got under the one aimed for his head, but a hook caught him under the heart and jolted him. The punch had carried a lot of power and he was glad it missed his chin.

The fight moved on and Randy gave just about as much as he took. Lefty clinched after taking a hard on his headguard, and Randy pushed him away disdainfully, flicking a left jab to the nose.

The grinn was gone from Lefty's face and a snarl was in its place. He hadn't been able to get in a really good one, and he stepped up the pace of the battle, forcing all the time.

Randy never saw the one that floored him. There was a hard jolt on his jaw and suddenly his gloves were on the mat and his head was on the gloves. A haymaker had sneaked through his guard and landed perfectly. He shook his head and raised to one knee. The fans were yelling at this extra attraction and flashbulbs were popping, and Lefty was in the opposite corner, the grin back on his face.

"Maybe two rounds are too much huh, punk?" he said. "Get up and I'll slice you down again."

Randy wasn't hurt, just momentarily stunned. He jumped up and went back after his old enemy. He had never lasted this long in a fight with Lefty, and that alone gave him new confidence.

Another right caught him under the heart. Lefty was trying to bring his guard down, and he obliged. He put his gloves in Lefty's face in a neat one-two, and the fighter staggered back, surprise in his eyes. He had expected Randy to be a cold dish after the knockdown.

The fans whooped it up and Randy followed up his attack. He and Lefty were battling it out in a corner, slugging toe to toe when the bell clanged. Randy dropped his guard and turned, and a wicked punch caught him in the back of the neck and knocked him across the ring.

He got to his feet, enraged, and Lefty was throwing off his headguard. "Come on, you lousy bum," he yelled. "Let's finish it!"

"The bell, you dope," Steve Ross called from ringside. "Get back to your corner."

"Yeah, yeah, I heard it," Lefty growled. "But I'm gonna give a lesson to a lug whose old man couldn't mind his own business."

Abruptly the long-standing hatred was clear to Randy. Lefty's father had been a lazy, shiftless saloon hanger on, and always making it tough for his wife. One night Mrs. Thomason had come to the Wilson apartment, her face bruised and swollen, when Lefty's father came in drunk and had begged Randy's dad to phone for the police. It was right after that when Lefty had started beating him up whenever he had a chance.

Randy flipped off his headguard and tossed it between the ropes. He waded in again, and behind him he heard Pop's anxious voice cautioning: "Careful, son, careful!"

But he was through being careful. He met Lefty's lunge and blocked it with leather. It was a street brawl all over again, only this time there could be no clawing or kicking. Lefty was out to murder him with his gloves, but now that Randy knew the reason he fought back savagely with all the strength he had in him.

He didn't know how long it went on, but he continued throwing leather. His gloves became soggy with sweat and his arms were tired from pumping too many punches without a rest. But he knew that
Lefty was tired too. He had stopped trying to be the clever boxer and was slugging, hitting any part of Randy he could lay his gloves on.

The fans were eating it up, and every few seconds there was the blinding glare of a flashbulb. This was something no one had expected: a grudge fight to the finish without benefit of referee.

Lefty backed him to the ropes, measured him, and lit the fuse on a right. Randy saw it coming but it was too much effort to duck. He had taken them before without willing, and knew that it would take more than just another one to flatten him. He rolled with it and slipped away from the ropes before Lefty could follow through.

Randy's mouthpiece had been chewed in two, and he spat it out. A lot of blood came out with it too, making a crimson splash on the mat. But Lefty was also bleeding, and it would take plenty of work to get his nose in shape for the go with Gomez.

He felt better with the mouthpiece gone, and grinned at Lefty. He said: "Just like old times, eh, pally? Only with a twist. How do you like it now?"

His answer was a right in the mouth that hurt. He knew he'd have to watch out and keep his guard up; it wouldn't take many more like that.

The fans were hoarse from shouting, but where in the beginning they had all been for Lefty, some were now coming for Randy.

"C'mon Wilson," he heard someone yell, "finish the bum. On the button!"

But it wasn't that easy. His legs were turning to rubber and every breath was like a knife in his lungs. And Lefty's cutting blows still carried plenty of power, thumping into him like baseball bats.

Randy knew that he couldn't take more, that he would have to get Lefty now or fold up. He got up on his toes but it was an effort to stay there, and tried to breathe through his nose.

He let Lefty come in again, bobbed away, and then abruptly pressed the attack, whipping his arms as fast as he could. He got the southpaw against the ropes and smashed a left and a right to his face, a right to his stomach, and then two more rights to the face. The force of the blows hurt his arms all the way to the shoulder.

Lefty's eyes suddenly glazed and Randy brought a right up from his shoelaces. There was a satisfying thump as it caught Lefty full on the chin and snapped his head back. Randy stepped away and let him slip to the canvas.

He staggered back to a neutral corner and stood there, panting for breath, waiting for Lefty to get up. But he was out for good. A fighter doesn't fold up like that on his face and climb to his feet again without help.

Suddenly the ring was full of shouting people, and the photographers were screaming for them to get out of the way while they took pictures. The training camp was a bedlam. The unheard of had happened: a nobody had knocked out the fighter who was going to be the next light heavyweight champ!

Pop Schreiber was the most hysterical of all. He danced up and down like a kid, crying: "You did it, Randy, you did it! What a fight! What a fight!"

And then Steve Ross was at his side and he wasn't happy. "Get out of here and change," he growled. "Then meet me at the bar. Get goin'!"

Randy showered and changed, and all the while Pop kept jabbering away at him. "You know what this means, son?" he said.

His young charge nodded. "It means I settled something older than you know, Pop. I licked the only guy I've ever been afraid of in my life."

"But beating him wasn't important," Pop said. "The important thing is, you did it with the best witnesses in the world—news cameras. It's a story that will be headlined across the country, and all of Ross's money and connections won't be able to stop the presses. It's sensational!

"And it means a lot more, too," he
GRUDGE FIGHT

raced on. “It means you won’t have to fight in cheap joints anymore. The promoters will be coming after you, begging you to fight. You’re made son, you’re made!”

Randy adjusted his necktie with fingers that were still not quite steady. “What about Lefty?” It was strange to be thinking about Lefty at a time like this, he thought, but he couldn’t help but feel a little sorry for him. He had lived a twisted life for too many years, holding a grudge for something that should have been forgotten long ago.

Pop shrugged. “He’ll probably still be champ. He’s good enough to lick Gomez, anyway. But—and here’s the kicker—he’ll have to give you a crack at the title. The fans will scream murder if he doesn’t, after this show today.”

Randy nodded slowly. “You think that’s what Steve Ross wants to talk to us about—to try to buy us out, so we won’t meet Lefty?”

“Hell, no!” Pop exclaimed. “Ross saw fifty thousand dollars fly out the window when Lefty went down. All that character is interested in is money, and right now you’re dollar signs in his eyes. He’ll want to buy your contract, and at a healthy price.”

Randy slipped into his coat and buttoned it. “What are you going to tell him?”

A smile stole across Pop’s face and his eyes twinkled with a light Randy had not seen for a long time. He said softly, “What do you think?”

Randy returned the smile, though his battered lips made it a bit twisted. “I think we should tell him to soak it—in a beer glass.”

Pop laughed and slapped him on the back. “They’re exactly my sentiments, boy. Let’s get it over with and hop back to our gym in New York where we belong!”
HOME RUNS WILL BE MY REVENGE!

By Robert Turner

The Florida sun came down bright and hot onto the small town ball park. It put sweat upon the brow of Doke Williams, deep in left field, and it put streaks of gold into his touseled yellow hair as he swept off his cap for a moment and nervously scratched at his head. He fidgeted out there and jittered and wondered when the time would come and wished it would hurry up. Here it was the top of the third already, and still a ball hadn’t been hit to his part of the grass.

After he’d snared his first fly, he figured, it would be all right. He’d loosen up and this would be just another ball game. It was only the first

He lost balance and went to the ground on his shoulders, rolling over and up on his feet again.

Hate waited at the home plate every time Doke Williams came to bat — and the longer the rookie’s hits, the less it pleased his player-manager!
one that would be bad. He could hardly wait for it. And he dreaded it.

It had been the same way when he went to the plate to bat the first time this afternoon. That had been a bad time, too. He knew that every fan in the stands at this Florida training camp ball park had had his eye on him. They'd gone silent. They were waiting to be shown. They'd heard a lot about this rookie outfielder wonder-boy the Panthers had picked up, but they'd seen flash-in-the-pan players before. They'd read front office publicity puffs before. Performance was the only thing that counted with them.

Because of this, he'd tried too hard at first. He'd stood there, a big, rangy-shouldered guy, his kid's face, still showing some of the softness of immaturity, screwed up in a frown of concentration. He'd almost broken his shoulders lunging at the first pitch that came streaming toward the plate. But the toss broke sharply just before it reached the platter. Williams missed it clean and a murmur rose from the stands.

The Blues' backstop, Pete Sanders, pulled the pill out of his mitt and snapped it back to his pitcher, laughing. "That's suckin' him in, Walt, boy," he told Walter Oaks, the Blues' pitcher. "Give 'im the old baptism of fire. Show him this isn't that hillbilly he's been playing with!"

Doke Williams' face burned. He steadied himself, dug his spikes into the batters' box, twisting them. He swung the bat from his shoulder, wagged it over the rubber. He told himself that there were still two to go. He had plenty of time. And what the devil, this was only a pre-season game with the Blues. If he did strike out it wouldn't be the end of the world.

But it didn't work. He still had the shakes and his judgment was off. Oaks, the Blues' pitcher, was an old timer and he'd outgunned a veteran hurler and slammed one for a two-bagger. It was a good beginning. And when you started off right, the old man used to tell him when he was a kid, you usually wound up okay. Doke knew there was a lot of truth in that, even though it didn't always work out exactly that way. It hadn't worked out for the old man, that way.

Doke had scored a few minutes later, on a triple by Dubois, their second baseman and the crowd had let him know they'd liked that. His teammates had congratulated him, and he'd felt fine. But only for a moment. There was one Panther player in the dugout who hadn't had anything good to say.
Jeff Wilcox, the Panthers’ playing manager, was an oldtimer. He was a big, rawboned, grizzled old guy, with iron gray hair at the temples and a ratcheted face seamed and scored from exposure to all kinds of weather. His ice-blue eyes had stared at Doke Williams coldly. He didn’t speak to Doke direct. He growled to the man next to him:

"I knew another guy once, who set the world on fire his first year in the majors. I wonder what happened to him?"

Doke felt his wrists throb and the hot blood rush to his head. He felt his fists ball against his side. He knew who Wilcox was referring to. And Wilcox knew that he knew. He started to say something to Wilcox that would drive those jeering words back down the old guy’s throat. He’d been putting up with it in silence for a long time now. Maybe it would cost him a fine but he couldn’t help it. He couldn’t take it any longer. He couldn’t take this, especially, letting Wilcox spoil his first moment of triumph in the bigtime.

But then Bill Wheating, the Panther’s moon-faced, happy-go-lucky First Sacker, grabbed his arm and started clowning around the dugout. Wheating’s monkeyshines antics distracted his attention and some of the anger flowed out of him and he relaxed. The hot flood of temper subsided and once again he ignored Wilcox’s remarks.

But now, as he stood out there in his left field spot, jittery and nervous, waiting for the first hit to come his way, Doke Williams stared at the broad back of Wilcox, the Panthers’ shortstop and playing manager, up there in front of him and the biting words came back. He knew that a showdown between himself and Wilcox was coming up fast. Neither one of them could postpone it much longer. Not that Wilcox wanted to. He was doing everything in his power to push it.

It had started many years ago, when both Mark Williams, Doke’s father, and Jeff Wilcox had signed on to the same major league team as rookies, about the same age as Doke was now. They had clashed almost at once. Mark William was a flash player, loved by the fans and sports writers. He was wild and cocky and self confident. Wilcox was a quiet, steady player, who never showed anything fancy but was always in there and dependable.

That first year, Mark Williams had been the sensation of the big leagues. He caused so much attention that Jeff Wilcox was lost sight of in the blinding glare of Williams’ brilliant performance. At the end of the season, Wilcox was traded to a cellar league team. Bitter, he’d blamed the transfer on Mark Williams. At the same time, they had both been rivals for the same girl and once again Williams had won out. Just before Wilcox left, the big blowup had come and the bitter enmity between the two men had exploded into physical combat. The fight had been short but furious and Mark Williams had walked away, leaving his enemy sprawled out, bruised and battered and unconscious.

Jeff Wilcox had never forgotten that, and his hatred for anybody bearing the name Williams boiled again to a white heat when Doke was bought by the Panthers. Wilcox had tried to fight the sale but had lost out. And now, once again, his first year as a playing manager, Jeff Wilcox was about to be eclipsed by a man named Williams, whose fielding and batting power was supposed to make him one of the alltime greats of the game.

When he’d first landed with the Panthers, Doke had figured that the old feud between Wilcox and his father had been forgotten by Wilcox. He’d thought that the fact that Doke’s dad and mother had been killed in an auto accident, ten years after Doke was born, and that Wilcox had pushed on steadily and doggedly to become a success, if not a blazing comet in baseball history, would have softened the oldtimer’s hatred. He’d found that wasn’t so. When Doke Williams struck out his hand at their first meeting, Wilcox had slapped it away and snarled something about balloon-headed young
HOME RUNS WILL BE MY REVENGE!

BUT THE game went on. The Panther's hurler tightened up, struck out the next two batters and Telefair died on Third and the Panthers held onto their 2 to 0 lead. Coming in off the field for their turn at bat, several of Williams' teammates came over to tell him not to worry about missing that fly. It was a tough break, they told him and it might have happened to anybody, with the wind suddenly swerving the ball the way it did. Back in the dugout, Doke looked toward Jeff Wilcox and the old-timer's face was creased in a nasty knowing grin. Doke dug his fingernails into his palms and took his place on the bench, silently.

In the next inning, he made up for the muffed with a beautiful shoestring catch in short left field and by wallowing out a couple of solid bingles in his next two times at bat, one of which brought in another run. His confidence came back for the rest the game, he played solid, bang-up ball. The Panthers took an easy game, six to two. There was jubilation in the locker room, after it was over. Everybody was pleased with the showing the team had made.

Everybody except Jeff Wilcox. Whitey Harris, the Panthers' First sacker said: "How about it, Jeff? Doesn't it look like we really got an outfit this year? If we click all season the way we did today, we ought to top the old bunting without any trouble."

Jeff Wilcox took a long time answering. He stood in front of his locker, stripped to the waist, and there was no sign of age in his big-boned, lean and muscular torso. He looked around at them all and finally brought his gaze right to rest on Doke Williams. Then he spat deliberately into the gaboon a few feet away.

"Yeah," he said, slowly. "Mebbe. If we don't get loaded down with any more hotshot rookies."

Nobody said anything. A silence fell over the locker room for a fraction of an instant. Doke Williams felt the color draining out of his face. Hot words of rebellion jammed in his throat and he somehow kept them there. He was bursting with his urge
to smash back at Wilcox’s unfair attack. But somehow, he restrained himself. He knew too well that open animosity between two players could very well bust a team wide open. The others always took sides. We went on dressing and listened to the sudden self conscious horse play that started up to cover the embarrassing silence following Wilcox’s obviously poisonous remark.

That night, Doke Williams did a lot of thinking about the situation. It struck him as pretty ridiculous. After all, he, personally, had never done anything to Jeff Wilcox. He didn’t understand why a grudge against his father should be carried over to him. He finally decided to have it out with Wilcox, quietly and in private, rather than wait for the thing to bust open on the playing field or in the locker room where it could do a lot of damage.

After dinner, he went up to Jeff Wilcox’s hotel room. Before he could open his mouth, the older man snarled: “You’re wastin’ your time, hotrocker. I’ve got nothing to say to you. Beat it.”

Doke Williams flushed but held his ground. “Sure,” he said. “Only give me a break, will you. Let me have my say, first. I think I’m entitled to it.”

Wilcox didn’t say anything, but glanced toward him, curiously for a moment, from under his wiry gray and black brows. Doke Williams said: “I know all about—well—the trouble between you and my dad, Jeff. That was your business. That was between the two of you. I don’t know—and don’t care—who was to blame. But I don’t think it’s fair for you to take out your enmity toward my father on me. It—well—if nothing else—it’s bad for the team. If you don’t like me, that’s okay with me. I’ll stay out of your way. I’ll have nothing to do with you. If that’s the way you want it. Only one thing—do me a favor. Stop baiting me. If I make any bonehead plays, I’m willing to catch hell for it the same as any other player. But I don’t like being picked on for no reason at all.”

JEFF WILCOX sat down hard on his bed. He slowly stuck a cigarette into his mouth and lit it, without ever taking his eyes off of Doke. On a cloud of blue smoke, he said: “All right, kid. You had your say, now I’ll have mine. I hated your old man’s guts. I always will. In addition to a lot of other things, he stole from me the one thing that meant more than anything else in my life. It was a girl named—well, you know who it was, kid. She was your mother. She—”

He stopped talking and his voice broke and he stared helplessly down at his huge, big-knuckled hands for a moment, trying to regain control of his emotions. In that instant, Doke Williams felt sorry for Wilcox. He had some slight idea what it must have been like down through the long years, to remain in love with a woman who had married the man he hated. When Wilcox looked up again, his face and his voice were once more cold.

“I never had a chance to get even with your old man,” he said. “Fate even robbed me of that. If he’d lived, some day we’d have met on the ball field and I would have shown him up. Well, I never got that chance with him, but I’ve got it with you. I didn’t want you on the Panthers, kid. I fought against it. But now you’re here, I’m goin’ to take advantage of that fact. Through you I’m goin’ to get revenge on your old man, finally. Mehbe that’s tough on you. I can’t help it. That’s the way it is. Somehow, some way, I’m going to send you back to the minors. Now get to hell out of here!”

Through his teeth, Doke Williams said: “Okay. At least it’s out in the open now, anyhow. But you’ll never do it. You won’t break me, Wilcox. You couldn’t do it to my dad and you won’t with me.” He turned then and slammed out of the room.

The rest of the training period went off smoothly. The Panthers won all of their exhibition games. And Doke Williams starred in most of them. His fielding was even more sensational than it had been in the minors. His hitting was sharp and deadly. All the papers gave him a big play and were
already predicting that he’d win the Most Valuable Player award, that season. During this time, Doke stayed out of Jeff Wilcox’s way as much as possible. For some reason, Wilcox had stopped picking on Doke, verbally, but every time their glances caught, Doke saw that Wilcox’s eyes were full of hatred.

It worked out strangely, because instead of Doke Williams’ playing being affected by the silent feud between the two men, it was the other way around. It was Wilcox’s play that began to go sour. When they went North and opened the season, during the first few games, Wilcox’s timing was bad. He was weak at bat and his batting average dropped in the first half dozen games.

And then one night in Philadelphia, in the lobby of the hotel where the team was staying, the whole thing burst wide open. Doke Williams, stopping downstairs for a late paper, bumped into Wilcox, heading for the elevator. The older man was tight. Not staggering drunk, but keyed up to an ugly, angry pitch. Dr. DeBakey had ordered him to ignore him, but Wilcox wasn’t having any of that. He grabbed Doke by the sleeve, swung him around, called him a rotten name and slammed his fist toward Doke’s face.

Doke was caught by surprise but he managed to twist his head a little and Wilcox’s blow was only a glancing one. Instinctively, though, and in self defense, Doke Williams swung back. His fist caught Wilcox flush on the jaw, sent him reeling back against a potted palm in the lobby. Then Wilcox slumped to the floor.

That affair came to the attention of the front office. Both men were called onto the carpet about it. But several other players had witnessed the fight and testified that Wilcox, drunk, had started the trouble. Doke was exonerated. Jeff Wilcox was fined, heavily and suspended for a month.

It was three days later that Wilcox stepped into the open shaft of a hotel elevator, when the door had been accidently left open while the lift was at another floor. He fell two stories and was taken to the hospital in serious condition. That night, Jeff Wilcox’s life hung by a thread. He needed a blood transfusion to save his life. One by one, all the members of the team were tested. But Wilcox had an unusual blood type and none of the other players matched it.

Doke Williams hadn’t gone up with the others. He’d told them that somebody else had better do the honors. He didn’t think Jeff Wilcox would want the blood of a Williams mixed in with his own. But when they called him down to the hospital and told him that none of the other players had the right type of blood, he consented to having his own tested. And his was the type. There wasn’t much choice, then. When it came to saving a man’s life, to Doke, it didn’t mean anything that the man had tried to make his life miserable for him. The transfusion was made and a few hours later, Wilcox passed the crisis.

After it was over, Doke Williams made the other members of the team promise that they wouldn’t tell Wilcox the truth about the transfusion. Doke figured that the oldtimer had suffered enough without adding the humility of knowing that the man he hated had saved his life.

The season went on and the Panthers climbed slowly to first place in the league. Only one other team was running them any competition and if they could get by that outfit, they were practically assured of winning the pennant. And all that summer, the Diamonds held doggedly on to second place, always threatening the Panthers’ lead. During this time, Jeff Wilcox had been sent to a rest home in the mountains to recover from his accident. It was ten days before the scheduled game with the Diamonds that he returned to the team, fit and ready to play ball again.

Jeff Wilcox came back canned and healthy-looking from his long convalescence and with no seeming after-effects. But Doke Williams noticed right away that the older man hadn’t forgotten his feud. The first thing he said in the locker room, was: “I see by the records that our wonder boy, the star slugger, is in a slump. I wonder if that’s true. Or if it’s just
that the old flash in the pan has finally burned itself out.

It was true that Doke's batting average had dropped. But none of the team had even dared to suggest that he was going into a batting slump. It had only been Doke's fine hitting that had held the team at the top of the league this far. With the all-important game against the Diamonds coming up, they needed the power of Doke's big bat, more than ever.

It was Doke, himself, now, who answered Wilcox. He said: "I'm glad it gives you a kick, Wilcox, to see that I've been slowing up at the plate. That's all I need to make me pep it up again. If my going into a slump will make you happy, that's the one thing I won't do."

He tried hard, too. But it didn't work. His timing at the plate was all off that week. Gloom spread among the Panthers as they lost a game and became tied for first place with the Diamonds, who also won one, the same week.

By Saturday, the day of the game scheduled with the Diamonds, the sports writers made the Panthers the underdog. They said that unless a miracle brought Doke out of his batting slump, the Panthers didn't have a chance.

It really looked that way, too, as the game got under way. It was one of those sparkling clear, late summer days, with a cool breeze blowing and not a cloud in the sky. The Diamonds went to the bat, first and went on a wild spree of base hits that piled in three runs. It was only the Panthers' tight fielding that prevented the inning from becoming a complete slaughter. There was nothing but gloomy silence in the dugout, as they watched the first two men go up to the batter's box and get nowhere fast. Norm Watson, the Panthers' right fielder, came up then. He waited out the Diamonds' pitcher until the count was three and two against him, then caught a curve and lambed it into deep right for a double.

Doke Williams came out in the cleanup spot. He was nervous and jittery. He knocked clods of dirt from his spikes and stepped into the box, facing Al Ramsey, the Diamonds' great southpaw pitcher. Doke let the first pitch go by for a called strike. He tore into the next one and connected hard but he'd swung too soon. Racing toward first, he saw the ball curve out over the foul line in back of third and he had to turn and trot back to the plate.

With two strikes against him, he waited out the next two pitches, one high and wide, the other too close on the inside. The count was even, then. He watched the Diamonds' catcher trot halfway out to the mound for a conference with Ramsey. He went into his windup and the ball zoomed toward Doke. He said a little prayer and swung. There was a ticking sound as the bat just grazed the ball and then a solid thwack as the Ramsey back-stop caught the third strike foul tip clean.

The Panthers trotted back out onto the field for the second inning, still three runs behind. The second was a bad inning, too and the Diamonds rolled in two more runs and the game began to look hopeless. Especially when the Panthers went through their turn at the plate again, without bringing in a run. But in the third inning, Dugan, the Panthers' pitching ace, tightened up and retired the other side on three straight whiffs.

It was while they were in the dugout for their half of the third That Jeff Wilcox came in. He had called before the game, not having scheduled himself for the starting lineup, to say that he had an important personal matter to take care of and would be a little late. For once, he looked unusually cheerful. His weather-beaten and tanned face was wreathed in smiles and he greeted some of the players with unusual gaiety.

Dugan growled: "What's the matter, Jeff? You happy to see us on the sad end of a five to nothing score?"

"He heard that Doke struck out," Norm Watson put in softly. "That's
what he’s all grins about. The guy should have been a professional pall bearer, instead of a ball player."

Jeff Wilcox waved his hand airily and gestured toward the scoreboard. "Don’t let a little thing like that worry you," he said, laughing. "Old Doke and I will take care of that, won’t we, boy?" He went over and stopped Doke Williams on the back. "How about it, kid?" he said. "Let’s get in there this inning and break up old man Slump, with a nice double or maybe a triple. What do you say?"

Doke didn’t say anything. Neither did anybody else. They stood there staring at Jeff Wilcox, goggle-eyed.

Shaking his head, groggily, Doke said, finally: "What is this, Jeff a gag of some kind?"

"No gag," Wilcox stopped him. The smile suddenly slipped from his face and he became dead serious. His level gaze held Doke’s. He said: "The gimmick is this, Doke. Last night, one of the boys, over a few beers, inadvertently let slip the fact that it was you who gave me a transfusion when I was in the hospital. Well, at first I was dumbfounded. Today, I checked with the hospital to make sure. That’s why I was late getting here. And I found out that it was true."

He paused and the smile came back over his bony, tough looking features, softening them some. He went on: "After awhile, the irony of the thing began to tickle my funnybone. I—"

"Never knew you had one, Jeff," one cut in, drily.

Wilcox ignored the remark, continued. "At the same time, I wondered what I’d done, if I’d been in the same position as you. I had a hunch that I might have just been mean and ornery enough to have let you die, to say to hell with you, you weren’t getting any of my blood. But you— you, Doke, were too big a guy for that."

Everybody listened, stunned. And then they watched Jeff Wilcox stick out his hand. "‘Tts all over, Doke. I’ve been doing a lot of thinking. I’ve been living with a ghost— an unhealthy ghost of hatred and ill feeling, all these years. Now I’ve kicked him out.

I’d like things to change between us, if that—if it’s all right with you."

Slowly, a grin broke over Doke Williams’ boyish face. He stuck out his own hand and grabbed the manager’s large, bony fingers. Then Jeff Wilcox turned away and scanned the batting order list. He said: "Morarty’s up, now. Wiseman is next and then I go out there." He turned to Doke. "Kid," he said, "now I can admit it. You’re dad was a fine ball player—one of the greatest. And you’re a better one. With blood like that running into my veins, I don’t see how I can do anything but go out there and grab off a hit."

Just then, they heard the holler of the crowd and looked out and saw Morarty sprinting for first. They saw him draw up safely on the sack. Wiseman went to it then. Morarty stole second and Wiseman sacrificed him to third. Jeff Wilcox stepped into the batter’s box, and there was a strange cockiness to his walk and his stance. It even seemed to some of the players that he stood there, facing the pitcher, almost in the same way that Doke Williams stood. He didn’t give Ramsey, the Diamonds’ hurler a chance, either. He stepped into the first pitch and banged it into short left field in a perfect Texas leaguer. Morarty scored.

From that moment on, the Panthers seemed a changed team. They ran wild. They picked up four runs that inning, before someone hit into a double play and retired them. The next inning, Doke Williams came to the plate, with two men on and Jeff Wilcox said: "Watch, you guys. Here goes Williams’ slump!" The prediction came through and Doke broke the slump with a vengeance. He whacked out a three master that brought in the two runners and put the Panthers ahead of the ball game for the first time. They stayed there, too and when it was all over, it was a 9 to 5 upset for the Panthers.

They went on from there to take the pennant and then the series. That was Jeff Wilcox’s last season. But he still follows baseball. He’s the guy up in the box seats who shouts the loudest every time young Doke Williams wallops a homer.
CONDUCTED BY

THE REEL ANGLE

E. C. JANES

This will undoubtedly be the biggest fishing season in history. Each year since the war, the number of fishing licenses issued has climbed until last year it reached the astronomical figure of 12,000,000. And that doesn't include children under 16 and, in some states, women, nor does it include the estimated 6,000,000 salt water anglers who are not required to buy licenses. In a poll taken recently, fishing won hands down as the most popular sport in the country. Hunting came next, golf third, baseball fourth. One state, Massachusetts, has figured its revenues from sport fishing in fresh and salt water at $16,000,000 a year. Fishing is big business today.

With all these people wielding rods, we've had to change our thinking regarding fishing and its aims. When Gramp cut an alder pole and waded barefoot down the pasture brook, he was out for meat. He got it, too. The old boys used to think nothing of catching fifty or sixty fish in a day and they didn't bother much about the size of the individual fish, either. Anything large enough to stay on the hook went onto the stringer and into the skillet.

Today things are different. You'll find twenty anglers today on that pasture brook that Gramp had all to himself. And these twenty fishermen will be lucky to catch two or three trout apiece. In order to counteract this growing scarcity of fish, a lot of smart anglers are releasing most of the fish they catch today, giving themselves and other fishermen a chance to have the sport of catching them again another day. We've got to realize that fishing today is a sport like tennis or golf. We can have the benefits of being in the outdoors and we can enjoy the fun of fishing and playing a fighting trout or bass—all the sport except the least important part, eating the catch. Otherwise, one of these days we'll all be hanging up our rods for the last time!

A lot more people today are turning to salt water for their fishing. People are just beginning to discover the amazing variety of game fish to be found in the ocean and the wide choice of tackle you can use to catch them. In the old days, salt water fishing was a rich man's game with hundred dollar reels and two hundred dollar rods. Now mass production methods have brought prices down so that anyone with the urge to angle can afford an outfit—thirty five bucks gets you a good one complete with rod, reel and line. Not for tuna and swordfish, of course. We're talking now about striped bass, bluefish, wahoo, bonita and mackerel, fish you can find in the surf or a skiff ride out to sea.

As a matter of fact, you can have a picnic with these fish using your regular fresh water fly rod or bait casting rod. We'll have more to say about this kind of fishing in the next issue.

Next time you catch a perch, pickerel or a bass, try skinning 'em instead of scaling. These fish, particularly if they come from a mud-bottomed pond are apt to have a rather strong flavor to which many people object. Skinning them seems to take away this strong taste. It's easy to do, too.

Just make slits along the back and belly from head to tail and pull out the fins. Then cut diagonally across the flanks just behind the gills. Grip the flap of loose skin on either side and pull toward the tail. Cut off the head and the viscera will come away, too.
EVERY ONCE in a while somebody asks: What is the best all-round rod for me to buy? The answer is there ain’t no such rod. However, if a person wants one rod to use on trout, bass, panfish and pike on small streams, large rivers and lakes he can come pretty close to satisfaction with 8¼-foot, 5½-ounce stick.

★★★★

GUNS AND GUNSMOKE

A FEW YEARS back, the hunting fraternity used to put away the shooting irons after the bunny season closed in February and leave them there till the fall. Now, though, a lot of the boys keep right on shooting the year round. Besides targets and clay pigeons, for the characters who require a little more realism in their gunning there are two critters ready to oblige—the crow and the woodchuck.

Along in the early spring you begin to see flocks of crows straggling across the sky and by mid-April the mating season is well under way. The young birds hatch in May and from then on a man with a scattergun, a crow call and a few boxes of chilled No. 6 shells can have himself some fun. He can feel conveniently righteous, too, for every crow he blasts means many more song and game birds. Crows do a terrific job on the eggs and nestlings of other species. In fact, Ducks Unlimited claims that crows destroy millions of duck eggs and young ducks each year, more than all the hunters in the country.

Then there’s the farmer angle. Most farmers are more than grateful to anyone who helps control these black marauders and keeps them out of the corn fields. Just hide yourself in the woods and start tooting on a crow call. You’ll get all the practice you need to put you in shape for the gunning season come fall.

The woodchuck boys are in a class by themselves. They’re the lads who go about muttering about ‘scope sights, zeros and X’s. It makes sense when you get to know them. They use high-power .22 rifles with telescope sights zeroed or sighted in at a hundred yards, which rifles will group five shots in the X or bullseye at two hundred yards.

They cruise the back roads with a pair of binoculars, looking for a fat chuck in a clover patch. When they see him they unlimber their rifles, wriggle into the sling and let Mr. Chuck have it in the teeth at two or three hundred yards. It’s a rather expensive game but once you get into it you never notice the cost. Which is just as well.

WHAT’S THE best deer gun? That one’s never going to be settled till the last buck’s shot but here’s the interesting results of a test made as to the effect of bullets on flesh. A .30-06 (the army caliber), a .30-30 and a rifle slug were fired into three chunks of gelatin and at short range the rifled slug showed by far the greatest shocking power, despite its slower speed. Close up, the Armed Services discovered, a shotgun is the deadliest small arm known to man.

YOU HEAR MORE talk these days than ever before about some sort of examination which applicants for hunting licenses must pass before their license is granted. With more and crazier people roaming the woods these days armed with all sorts of liberated weapons, it seems like a good idea. Our auto accident rate shows that you can’t legislate against carelessness but maybe the situation would be worse without examinations.

SINCE THE war arms manufacturers have been devoting a great deal of their time and attention to .22 rimfire rifles. As a result, there are on the market today at reasonable prices a line of these efficient little rifles such as has never been seen before. Nearly all of the big companies have their streamlined newcomers to this field furnished in bolt action, lever action, auto-loader or single shot. They’re beautifully balanced, rugged and handsome weapons, a far cry from the .22’s of pre-war days. The .22 rimfire is the gun to start a boy off with. If your kid is getting to the age where he’s clamoring for a gun, go in and take a look at the new .22’s.

PEAKING OF boys and of shooting accidents, the two subjects have something in common. A lot of the fatalities today are caused by men who don’t know how to handle firearms. Gunners who started out as boys using .22’s under the tutelage of their father or some other adult seldom grow up to shoot at “a rustle in the bushes” or to offer the threadbare alibi: “I didn’t know it was loaded.”

Follow the Rifle & Reel Club in the next issue.
ANGER AND frustration distorted Danny Conklin’s face. Three laps in a row he’d tried to pass the black Number 92 on the outside. And each time, just as he’d thought he would finally open up a space large enough to cut down to the rail, a turn rushed up to meet him and he’d had to grab the hook.

I can outdrive that feather foot, Danny thought, and swore to himself. His right foot jammed savagely to the floor as though he were trying to kick the V-8 into faster pick-up. The

IT TAKES GUTS TO WIN — OR TO LOSE — WHEN LIFE OR DEATH HANGS ON THE SPIN OF WHEEL! GREAT FAST-MOVING MIDGET-AUTO NOVELET!

blue and white Number 76, howling with speed, closed the gap between its front bumper and the tail of the black-painted midget ahead.

The knob of the handbrake was cupped lightly in Danny’s left hand, but he waited for the faint tremor to carry along the channel frame before he pulled back. Number 76 stretched against its springs and lifted a trifle as the brakes grabbed.

Into the backstretch Danny fed it all the gas it would take and nudged his bumper against the tail bracket of the black car a half dozen times before the tiny speedsters swung into the next turn.

“Now I got the jerk worried,” Dan-

Were these men pitting nerve and skill against the speed of those roaring midgets — or mere pawns in a game of chance that paid off in victory — or death?

120
ny shouted with speed-maddened ex-hultation as the car spurred into the stretch.

Slowly the radiator of Danny's midget crept up beside the black car. Halfway down the backstretch Number 76 rolled hub to hub with the leader. Gradually 76 inched ahead. But Danny's mount still lacked a yard of being far enough in front for the swift dive across the black car's nose into first position.

Danny knew he should let up as the straightaway ran out from under him, but he gave a final try, then failing to get passing distance he snatched at the brake and started to drift in behind the black car.

"Okay, you held me off, louse," he muttered in a rage-choked voice. "So I'll fix you proper in the feature." He eased off the gas, but as he moved toward the inside rail a yellow-painted louvered hood slid past him to his left and took over second spot.

A fresh wave of indignation possessed Danny like a physical pain. Only the first two finishers in the consolation would make the feature event. Suddenly all of the antagonism that he'd vented on the first place black car was shifted to the yellow racer. He had to take second—it didn't matter how—but he had to beat that yellow car.

"No one pushes Danny Conklin out of the feature," he grunted through tightly clenched teeth. "I'll show Dutch Bowers he can't play cute with me."

For a split second the stocky figure in the yellow car gave way to Danny's crowding tactics. The driver eyed Danny and jerked his head violently in a signal for Danny to pull away from him.

"So—the great Dutchman doesn't want me to get rough, eh!" Danny's lips curled into a grin that was half sneer. He continued to edge down toward the yellow cycle.

Dutch Bowers shrugged his broad expanse of shoulder and again gave way slightly. At the same time he accelerated his Drake cycle and tried to pull ahead of Danny. Danny matched his speed and the two cars whirled into the turn at better than sixty.

"It's either you or me, Bowers. One of us will have to back off and I'm going to take second or else," Danny muttered. He cut his wheels in sharply as the two cars slid through the corner.

Bowers looked surprised. He jerked frantically on his handbrake to avoid a crash and fought the wheel with one hand as his Drake spun off the macadam and careened wildly into the infield.

Danny smirked as he took the checker in second spot, killed his engine and coasted around to the ramp leading from the track. Tommy Flemming, the Conklin mechanic, and a couple of stooges pushed Number 76 into the pit enclosure.

Danny unstrapped his crash helmet and ran gloved fingers through his unruly blond hair. "Guess Dutch Bowers won't play cozy again with me." He grinned at Tommy Flemming.

Flemming's raw-boned features were void of congratulations. He didn't answer Danny.

A tall, full-chested man dressed in a pale blue shirt and black whipcord trousers picked up a shammy and started to wipe an oil smear from a Number 3 Offenhauser as Danny swung in beside the Offy and vaulted lightly from the seat.

The man folded the shammy, methodically placed it on top of a tool box, then turned slowly to face Danny. The corners of his eyes were puckered in a worried frown. Aside from the different emotion expressed at the moment, his features were an older version of Danny's.

"Kinda showed Bowers a trick or two, Dad. You saw the consy, didn't you?"

Before Rip Conklin had a chance to answer, a barrel-chested man in a brilliant yellow shirt stalked purposefully down between the two blue and white midget racers. His mouth was a taut line, fists balled into two huge tanned knots, his shoulders hunched forward. The man's voice was controlled, but his words, even though quietly spoken, held an edge.

"Rip," he said softly. "We've raced on practically every track in the country during the last twenty years."
Sometimes you pinned my ears back and once in a while I fed exhaust in your face. But we've always been friendly. What I'm going to say now has nothing to do with us—at least so far as I'm concerned—and I hope you'll feel the same way."

"Sure, Dutch. Can't say I blame you for blowing a gasket. I was going to do a bit of talking myself. Maybe this way is better."

"What gives, Bowers?" Danny asked. "Why the grim look. It was either you or me getting in the feature. I figured it would be me—and it was."

Dutch Bowers looked up at Danny Conklin towering a full head above him. "Listen, youngster. If you hadn't been Rip Conklin's son out there in the consolation tonight, I'd have run you up into the grandstand. Just this once I let you get away with it, but don't ever try cuttin' down in front of me again, 'cause if you do, I'll stick a wheel under your tail and roll you around the track like an eight ball."

"Maybe it would take guts to do that, Bowers. If you haven't got the nerve to stay out in front you ought to quit racing," Danny sneered. "Go on, blow, Bowers. Take a walk back to your yellow car and pack it on the trailer. You're through for the night. I got work to do. Remember me? I made the feature."

"Sonny, maybe the color of my shirt and car fools you. I'm telling you for your own good, don't try rough driving on me again. I learned how to play rough twenty years ago and I ain't forgot how."

Danny bristled at being called sonny. The three years he'd put in as a fighter pilot in the Navy seemed proof enough that he was a man.

"Now hear this, Bowers. For my money you're just as yellow as your car. Don't figure I'm a kid because I'm only twenty-two. I was learning how to be a man the tough way during the war when you were camping back here in the States without a thing to worry about except an increased income tax. Don't come bustin' in on me floppin' your chops about rough driving. I saw plenty of guys get theirs in the service. Guess the service would've been too rugged for you, Bowers, and from now on maybe you'll learn that some of us guys with guts are going to drive for keeps. And maybe some of you has-beens better quit if the going is too tough."


Tommy Flemming closed his eyes and murmured "uh-oh," softly.

Bowers shot out a light left to Danny's chin, just a tap to put the younger man on guard.

"So I have to lick you in the pits, too," Danny shouted confidentially and rushed at Bowers swinging wild right.

The mix-up lasted less than a minute. Bowers ducked Danny's punch, jabbed three lightning fast lefts, crossed with a right of his own, then followed up with another right and left.

Tommy Flemming groaned, walked over and picked up the dry shammy, turned the pet-cock on the V-8's catch tank and thoroughly soaked the piece of soft leather.

"Sorry Rip," Bowers said. "But it's for the kid's own good. Someone else might rough him on the track unless he's cured in a hurry." He turned abruptly and started to walk away.

"Dutch," Rip Conklin called. Bowers stopped and turned. "The kid qualified the V-8. Don't think I better let him drive until he calms down a bit. Want to tool it for me in the feature?"

Bowers hesitated a moment. Aside from the five dollars appearance money, the night was going to be a blank for him.

"I've been thinking of making a change for the last two weeks, Dutch. The kid just isn't ready for competition. Be like old times to have you as a teammate."

Rip Conklin knew Dutch Bowers was short of money. And he could have told Danny a lot of things about Dutch if Danny hadn't blown his top. All Danny knew of Dutch Bowers was
that in the books he had been rated as one of the big car drivers in the game. Danny knew that the record books listed Dutch Bowers as having driven more than 3,000 miles in competition on the Indianapolis bricks alone. But the record books only contained cold statistics...they didn't report that Dutch Bowers had been riding in first place in the “500” with only twelve laps to go when he purposely cracked-up his Maserati rather than crash into Rip Conklin whose Miller had flipped and left Rip sprawled out on the track unconscious right in Bower’s path. The records didn’t say what Bowers had done during the first World War; they didn’t mention the fifteen-year-old kid who was rejected by the Army because he was too young and how that same kid stoked coal on a freighter and jumped a ship in England in order to join the British Air Force. The records didn’t relate that Dutch’s son had been killed at Guadalcanal, that Dutch had tried to enlist in the Marines, was rejected and served in the Merchant Marine as a seaman—or that Dutch’s daughter-in-law died of pneumonia and Dutch had come back to take care of his two grandchildren and was now doing the only thing he knew how to do well—drive a race car.

“Well, what do you say, Dutch? The V-8’s in good shape. It’s got more punch than that beat-up cycle of yours. I need a steady driver who’ll bring Number 76 into the money without cracking it up.” As Rip waited for an answer, he glanced momentarily at Tommy Flemming who had applied the moist pad to Danny’s forehead. He smiled. “He’ll learn, Dutch.”

“Sure he will, Rip. The kid’s got plenty of spirit, I’m sorry I had to do it.” He thought for a moment, then turned back to Rip. “You got yourself a driver, Conklin. But soon’s I get a few dollars stashed by I’m going to get a quick change gear box in that Drake of mine so’s she’s set up proper for macadam.”

“Okay, Dutch. Maybe we’ll have the kid cooled off by then. As soon as he learns that he’s not out there to kill himself or someone else, and that a sure spot in money’s worth more than folding into the fence trying to grab off first, I’ll put him back in.”

THREE WEEKS later Tommy Flemming swung the battered sedan into through the pit gate entrance to Grover Midgetdrome. Dutch Bowers was waiting at the gate. He walked over to the open car window and looked in at Rip Conklin who had been catching a nap on the rear seat and was rubbing the corners of his eyes with the knuckles of his fist.

Rip wore the worried look that had become his permanent expression ever since Danny’s disappearance the night Danny had tangled with Dutch.

“Still no word from him, Dutch. No answer to the ads I’ve put in the personal columns and I’ve telephoned everyone I can think of…”

“Hold it, Rip. The kid blew in about ten minutes ago. Seems he’s picked up a job as jockey for McCormick. He’s going to drive that new torsion-bar Offy.”

“How’s he seem? The kid, I mean. Is he nervous or anything?” Tommy asked Dutch.

“Nervous? Hah! About as nervous as Joe Louis. The kid is over there telling anyone who’ll listen how he’s going to polish off his old man and shove me right back into the pits. Geez, it’s really a shame, Tommy. Here Rip’s been eatin’ his heart out about the kid for three weeks, worrying about him every minute, and now the kid blathers around about what a stinker his old man is. Believe me, Tommy, someone oughta straighten out that kid before he gets into real trouble.”

“If it’s like you say, Dutch, Rip is sure in for a disappointment. He rushed off to welcome the kid back in the fold. He was saying on the way up here he was going to take a couple of weeks and practice afternoons with Danny at the Fairgrounds. He was so damned proud when Danny came back from overseas and now it’s just killing him to have Danny mad at him.”

“Here he comes now, Tommy. Don’t say anything unless he talks about it first.”

“Let’s go, Tommy. Dutch. Get the
car parked somewhere and give me a hand at unloading the irons.” He didn’t mention Danny and neither Tommy nor Dutch asked any questions, but from Rip’s grim appearance it was obvious that Danny had given his father the quick brush off.

In the first qualifying heat, Danny minded his own business, started in seventh spot of a ten-car field and finished the ten laps in fifth position. Dutch and Rip were in the second qualifying heat. Rip moved up through the field from last place to finish second. And Dutch, who’d started in third spot, was passed only by Rip and finished fourth.

In the first semi-final, Danny started fifth and wound up third in the fifteen-lap event without extending the new Offy too much.

Rip and Dutch were both in the second semi-final. Rip, who started in ninth was boxed in for the first seven laps and even giving the fans a spectacle of some fast and shifty driving he had to be contented with fifth place. Dutch in seventh starting position found an opening coming out of the second turn and slid through on the inside into third place. Two laps later, the driver of the lead car walked on it a trifle too hard on a turn, slid wide, forced the second spot driver out and Dutch gunned through the hole into first.

Juan Bedoya, a Mexican driver who’d been burning up the Texas circuit, rode for six laps hub to hub with Dutch and finally, with the faster pick-up Offy, turned a tire-screaming lap on the outside, edged past Dutch on the backstretch and beat him to the turn by inches. It was a nice piece of clean hard driving and Dutch waved his congratulations to the little dark-skinned lead-foot artist as the Mexican slowed down on his safety lap, took the checkered flag from the starter and made his slow-speed victor’s circuit.

DURING THE intermission before the feature, Dutch and Rip walked over to inspect Bedoya’s sleek gold and silver Offy.

Bedoya was a small, wiry man with a quick eager smile that gave the impression of the lid being flicked open over the keyboard of a polished mahogany piano. A reporter from a motor speed sport fan magazine was interviewing him. Bedoya’s mechanic, a tall white-haired man with enormous hands was gesticulating and acting as interpreter.

“What d’ya say, Whitie,” Dutch called, “Finally got yourself a good car and driver. Haven’t seen you since 1940 when you were tightening bolts for Clem Acres out on the West Coast.”

“Well, howdy, Dutch. Seen you out there trying to keep my boy Juan from slipping by. We got a real crate here, Juan and me. Pitched in fifty-fifty. Set us back six-thousand, but the way Juan’s handling ‘er we oughta get our bait back inside another month. See you after the feature. You, Rip, Juan and me can get together over a beer and a hamburger at the Cowboys’.”

“Sure thing, Whitie. Tell the Mex he’s okay, but he better watch out for Conklin in the feature, Rip’s got that Offy really screamin’ its head off. See ya.”

“Right, Dutch.” Whitie turned back to the reporter and continued to answer questions and give rapid-fire Spanish translations to his partner.

SIXTEEN cars were rolled out to the starting line for the 50-lap main event. Sim Eflan had turned in the fastest semi-final time and had his maroon Number 4 Offy on the pole. In outside pole positon was Juan Bedoya who received a nice hand from the crowd as Whitie Devon and several stooges wheeled the gold and silver midget into line. Joe Carter in Number 16 sat third with Dutch in the 76 V-8 on the outside. Danny Conklin in the unnumbered gleaming black McCormick Offy was in fifth spot. He stared straight ahead without sharing the light banter of the other drivers. Rip Conklin walked up beside him and said, “Good luck,” then patted the kid on the back. Danny Conklin reached up and brushed his father’s hand aside without speaking.

“Young punk,” Dutch griped. “If
he wasn’t Rip’s kid I swear. I’d stick a wheel under him and flip him right into McCormick’s lap.”

Tony Marjio, a popular newcomer, was in the Number 9 Trent Offy in sixth place. “What’s the matter with Conklin, Dutch? He got the jitters?”

“Shut up, Barber’s Boy, or I’ll put you through the fence on the first turn,” Danny muttered through set lips to Marjio.

“So, it’s ancestors we talk about in the line-up, eh, Conklin? Sure my old man’s a barber, and he’s got a race driver for a son. What’s your old man got? The makings of a corpse, maybe. You’d do better to follow my old man’s profession, what d’ya think, Dutch?” Marjio grinned at Danny. “And don’t get no fancy ideas of playing rough, Conklin, ’cause maybe I wouldn’t be as nice to yuh as Dutch was a couple of weeks ago.”

The tow truck pushed Eflan’s mount into belching action. One at a time the cars got underway and circled slowly around the track, falling into their starting positions.

Eflan brought the cars in slowly for a clean start as Bedoya made no effort to jump the gun. The starters’ green flag flicked in front of the sixteen-car field. The air over the track was redolent with alcohol fuels, castor oil, high-test gas and burned rubber, the special scent of high speed motors.

Eflan in Number 4 slid into the first corner with Bedoya’s Offy broadside beside it, the two cars matching drift angles like finely cut joints in a cabinet.

Carter’s Number 16 was firing roughly and Dutch gunned easily in ahead of it into third spot with Marjio jumping two positions into the four slot. There was a grinding noise behind Dutch, the whine of rubber sliding across the abrasive track surface, then the crashing sound of a pile-up. Dutch lifted his left hand, came off it to let the V-8 idle, and looked back over his shoulder at the half dozen racers scattered in stalls around the first turn.

The four lead cars killed their engines and rolled in to a stop at the line to await a restart.

None of the cars had received more than minor dents in the tangle, but Joe Carter was hot under the collar and told Danny Conklin to keep clear if he valued his health. Carter’s pit crew switched plugs and the cars were off again in their slow-moving line-up circuit of the track. The second time around the starter gave them the green and the sixteen cars made a second lunge into the first corner.

This time Carter’s Offy revved to perfection and Dutch was hard put to keep his V-8 in its original fourth place. For two laps the field raced closely packed with none of the leaders changing position. Eflan and Bedoya were setting a terrific pace. On the third lap Dutch slid wide, unable to keep his conventional spring-suspended mount hugged in as tightly on the turns as the torsion-bar Offy. Marjio was quick to fill in the hole and Dutch found himself riding in sixth spot. He cut down fast to the inside before anyone else could squeeze him out and hung on about twenty yards behind the four leading cars and right behind Danny Conklin who still rode in fifth.

For the next eight laps the six front cars held the same relative places, then Dutch heard the high-pitched scream of an Offy as it moved up beside him to his right. From one corner of his eye he saw the white and blue hood of Rip Conklin’s Number 3. Rip had closed from tenth to seventh and Dutch figured Rip would ride where he was for another ten laps or so before he started to press for a better position.

At the fifteen lap mark it was Eflan and Bedoya, still side by side, followed by Carter and Marjio, then Danny Conklin with Rip Conklin on the outside. It was a murderously fast pace and as Eflan moved into the main stretch his right rear tire blew throwing the maroon colored Offy into a series of erratic spins with Sim fighting hard at the wheel to regain control. Bedoya swung up high close to the outside rail. Marjio followed. Joe Carter lost a position by playing safe and slowed slightly to fall in behind Marjio. The individual con-
testants precipitously became a team as they worked to avoid a serious crack-up.

Both Rip and Dutch moved out toward the center rail as the car whirled down the track in lazy circles—a potential eight-hundred pounds of death dealing metal if it dumped and rolled on its driver.

Danny Corklin studied the spinning car momentarily and then with no regard for his own or Eflan’s safety he tromped down hard on his accelerator. The Offy leaped ahead. It topped seventy as Danny aimed for the slot on the inside of the whirling car, Danny was nearly through the hole when one of Eflan’s rear wheels brushed against the rear left tire on the McCormick Offy. Danny slammed through, grabbed for the hook, broadside slid into the turn and dropped neatly into second position behind Bedoya.

Eflan’s car leaped into the air, rolled once and slid along its side into the infield. The track was clear and the starter, who had the red flag ready, put it back in its rack.

The next ten laps had the fans standing on their seats as Danny Conklin raced nose to nose with Juan Bedoya.

Neither Dutch, nor Rip who’d moved into fourth spot, or any of the fans could sense the hard, cold anger that blanketed Danny Conklin as Bedoya outmanned each bid Danny made for the lead. It was the consy race with the black Number 92 repeated except that this time Danny was even more determined to win. He had to show Rip and Dutch he could trim the best in the game.

As Bedoya swung into the turn past the starting stand to begin the twenty-ninth lap, one of the slower moving cars threw a tire. The car was riding up near the outer rail ready to be lapped when the tire blew. Its driver kept control nicely, but halfway down the backstretch his flapping shoe ripped off and rolled down across the track toward the infield. It passed twenty yards ahead of Danny, wavered and flopped on its side right in Bedoya’s path.

Bedoya veered over toward Danny in an attempt to clear the obstruction on the track. Danny refused to give ground. The two cars rode with hubs touching for a second, then Bedoya’s left front wheel hit the tire and the gold and silver Offy careened wildly into the air clipping Danny’s tail as it flipped and sending Danny’s Offy into a skid that ended against the fence off the backstretch turn with a sickening crunch of aluminum. Bedoya’s car vaulted high against the outer crash fence, slammed upside down onto the track surface, then rolled broadside with the tiny Mexican flopping in the seat like a rag doll, held by the crash-belt drawn snugly against his thighs.

The cars were red flagged. Within a minute an ambulance with siren moaning rolled swiftly across the infield to the tangled remnants of Bedoya’s racer. Both Rip and Dutch circled the track at slow speed and braked to a halt near Bedoya’s mount.

“Chalk up two to the kid’s driving tonight, Dutch,” Rip said sadly as he watched attendants gently lift Bedoya from the crushed cockpit and lower him onto a stretcher.

“We can’t help here, Rip. Better check on Danny and if he’s okay I think you should get him out of here fast before someone really goes to work on him.”

Rip trotted rapidly across the twenty yards of track surface to Danny who sat dazedly in the seat of the smashed McCormick car. “Come on son. Unhook yourself and let’s go.”

Rod McCormick, the car’s owner, rushed up and began to make a hurried inspection of the damaged midget. He didn’t ask how Danny was. There was no question that he blamed Danny for the Bedoya crack-up.

“The guy must be battle-happy,” a fan said to the surrounding crowd as Rip led Danny off toward the parking lot behind the pits.

It was two weeks later that Danny, behind the wheel, Rip beside him and Tommy Flemming and Dutch Bowers in the rear seat of the sedan, were towing the Number 3 Offy and the V-8 Number 76 toward the Yellow Jacket Speedway in Philadelphia.
The car was moving along at a moderate pace. No one had said a word for miles when Danny finally broke the silence.

"What cooks with this rumor I hear about you paying Whittle Devon three G's to get his rig repaired, Dad?"

"Uh-huh, Whittle expects to have his Offy ready to go again tonight if he can locate a driver."

DANNY DROVE on in silence for a few minutes. "Why the devil did you fork out to Whittle? He sticks his iron on the track so he takes his chances, doesn't he?"

Dutch mumbled something that sounded like, "What a stinker."

Tommy Flemming said, "And how."

"And what's eating you, Bowers? I suppose you think it was right Dad should foot Whittle's repair bills. Next thing I'll be hearing how the Conklin's are paying for that Mexican to spend a month at Sun Valley recuperating. Hell, are we in the racing business or running a charity?"

"You been in to the hospital to see Bedoya, son?"

"Or sent him candy?" Dutch added cynically.

"Okay... all three of you... listen a minute! So Sim Eflan climbs my wheel and flips himself into the infield—and Bedoya does a pinwheel over a tire. So Bedoya winds up in the meat wagon with a couple of broken wings. So what? Am I supposed to spend my time looking out for every jerk in the race—or am I in there to win? I ask you, now? I take my chances—so Eflan and Bedoya took theirs. If they happened to land in a hospital that's their tough luck. I'm sorry for 'em, but midget racing is a rugged business and if they're afraid of getting banged up they should get a nice job on a grease rack."

"Listening to Danny talk is the best argument I ever heard for staying single and not raising kids," Tommy muttered.

"Haven't you guys anything to do with your time except to pick on me? I'm showing you how a man with nerve and guts can get out there and win—and now you blame me for everytime some jerk without enough nerve to carry through stubs his toe."

"I know it took nerve to pilot a fighter plane," Rip said quietly. "That was war. Midget racing is a sport. You're not supposed to see how many guys you can knock off."

"Okay, Dad. So I played too rough for the boys, but how about another chance? I'll be a model stooge and move over everytime I hear a car coming. You've been spending every afternoon pushing me around the track at the fairgrounds. You say I drive as smoothly as anyone on the track. How about it, Dad? Dutch probably can drive Whittle Devon's car since Bedoya's laid up."

"Danny, I'll tell you. After hearing you talk I'm frankly sort of ashamed. You've got to learn two things before I give you another try. Midget auto racing isn't the killer game you picture it and the newspapers claim it to be. At least it shouldn't be. It's only as dangerous as the men in the game make it. You've got to learn it's a sport, Danny. You're in there to win, yes, but not to the extent of endangering another man's life unnecessarily in order to do it. Accidents are bound to happen, but with experience and skill you'll learn how to handle them when they occur."

"And how do I get experience if you won't let me drive?"

Rip ignored the question and continued. "And another thing, son, is your tendency to lose your temper. Anger and good driving don't mix. It doesn't pay to get mad on a midget track when you're averaging out close to sixty with four ninety-degree turns to make every thirteen seconds or less. You need a clear mind, son—and an angry mind isn't a clear mind."

"I know, Dad. You're right, but..."

Danny's words were interrupted by a light coupe that sped past them cut them off sharply and then slid to a squealing halt as a highway crossing light switched to red.

Rip looked questioningly as Danny's jaws tightened and his lips clamped into two finely drawn fleshy lines. Danny double-clutched the sedan into second, then several feet from the coupe, he gunned it slightly and crashed into the coupe's rear
bumber. The lighter car bounded halfway across the intersection.

“That’ll teach that yokel not to cut me off like...” Danny muttered angrily. Then at the sound of a groan to his right his words spluttered to a stop and he turned to face Rip who held both hands to his face. A trickle of blood seeped through his fingers and dripped down onto the lapels of his sports coat.

Danny pulled the sedan over to the curb and asked anxiously, “What happened, Dad?”

“Rear view mirror broke when you slammed into that coupe, hot head, that’s what happened.” Dutch Bowers voice was wrathful. “There’s a hospital three blocks down here on the right. Let’s get there in a hurry and try not to blow your stupid top before we arrive. You’re all ready for racing all right. Nuts! You’re ready to have your teeth rammed down your throat and maybe I’m the guy to do it.”

“Let the kid alone, Dutch. He didn’t mean to hurt me,” Rip said, his voice tight with pain.

Danny set tensely at the wheel, his face pale, and with no further word, he drove rapidly in the direction Dutch had indicated, but as he glanced anxiously from time to time at his father, he kept mulling over his father’s words.

THE DOCTOR finally came out of the emergency room, lighted a cigarette and walked toward the three men who were waiting impatiently for some word. “Pretty lucky, I’d say. Nothing to worry about now. No danger of impairment of his eyesight. Cut the upper and lower lid. I put in six stitches and two more on the bridge of his nose. He’ll be able to see just as well as ever in a few weeks. He’s resting now. Said for you to go on ahead to the track without him.”

Danny opened his mouth as though to ask something, then closed it again as he saw the doctor had said everything he intended to.

“Guess we’d better head for the track, Danny. We don’t have much time to waste. Maybe Dutch can pick up a second and cover Rip’s doctor’s bill.” Tommy Flemming turned toward the door marked “Emergency Cases.”

Dutch followed him. Danny trailed along behind them.

AT THE TRACK, after Tommy and Dutch had unloaded the V-8, Danny turned to them and said tentatively, “How about a hand here with the Offy?”

“What for?” Dutch asked.

“I’m going to drive it tonight,” he answered firmly.

“Rip would like that. This afternoon he said you weren’t ready—and boy, you really proved he was right.” Dutch added bitterly.

“I’m ready now,” Danny said in an even tone. “If you won’t help me, I’ll call over some of the stooges.”

“Okay, sonny. This is all your own doings. If you wrap it up you can do the explaining to Rip. And believe me I’ll tell him I was against it.”

Tommy Flemming made no attempt to conceal his unwillingness as grudgingly he helped roll the car down the U-iron ramps. “You can fuel it yourself, hot shot. Now it’s off the trailer, it’s all yours. And if you want my opinion, I...”

“I don’t want it, Tommy,” Danny answered lightly.

Later when the announcer read off the entrants for the first qualifying heat a sprinkling of boos followed the announcement of Danny’s name. “Sounds as though I’m not too popular, Tommy,” Danny said nervously.

Tommy grunted, checked the strap hood fastenings and then nodded to the tow truck driver who rolled slowly in behind Number 3 until the two by twelve pusher-plank touched gently against the tail bar.

Danny drove the first qualifying heat conservatively and finished sixth. In his semi-final he wound up in fifth position.

The wait before the start of the feature seemed like hours to Danny. Finally, after he had lighted and tossed away a series of cigarettes, the tow truck moved in behind the pole car. And within another few minutes all sixteen starters were underway. To Danny’s right as he swung into the first turn was Whitie Devon’s
Offy. Danny glanced at the driver, turned away and then did a slow double take. It didn't seem possible and as the hurrying cluster of cars swung out of the second turn Danny looked again to be sure. The driver of the gold and silver car grinned and nodded. It was Dutch Bowers.

Danny straightened Number 3 into the main stretch and glanced into the infield. There, with Tommy standing beside it was the other Conklin car that Tommy and Dutch had rolled out for the start of the feature. The hood was off and Danny could guess the rest. Some last minute mechanical trouble had forced the V-8 from the race and Whittle Devon's Offy, with Dutch at the wheel, had been substituted.

No time to worry about the V-8 now, Danny thought. "Let's get moving, baby," he shouted as the red nose of another Offy crept up beside him to his right. He gave the blue and white a few more pounds of foot and smiled as the red-painted midget faded.

Danny was tenth moving into the fifth lap. Dutch Bowers in ninth held nearly a car's length advantage over Danny. A lap later Dutch slipped in ahead of an orange job. The orange car's driver gunned his mount into the turn and pulled up alongside Dutch as the two cars entered the main stretch. Danny accelerated so his front bumper was less than a foot behind Dutch's tail and as Dutch slowed for the turn, Danny nudged him slightly. Dutch came off his brake and let the gold and silver car jump ahead. Danny held his foot down and halfway through the turn the orange car started to drift. By the time Danny moved out of the second turn, the orange car had dropped in behind him.

The pressure was on Joe Carter in Number 16 in lead spot. Tony Marjio in second position worried Carter and forced him to drive at peak speed every second. On each turn Marjio stuck his front bumper into Number 16's tail and let Carter know Marjio was waiting for an opening.

On the twelfth lap Marjio got his chance. Carter waited too long before braking going into the first turn and slid wide. Marjio slipped through. The third place car swept wide on the outside of Carter. It was a break and the cars on the rail took advantage of it. Four of them, bumper to bumper accelerated along the inside slot as Carter and the other outside cars looked in vain for a hole to move down into. Danny was now in fifth place. Joe Carter on the outside refused to give an inch. Marjio started to open a gap between his car and the second place driver. A lap later, the second place car blew a tire and cut over to the outer rail where it reduced speed and waited for an opportunity to cut across the track to the safety of the infield.

Dutch Bowers shifted out, tore into the turn high on the outside and rolled into the backstretch in second place. Joe Carter in 16 moved into third on the next lap and Danny shifted out to make his bid for fourth. Dutch, with Carter on his tail, crept up on Marjio.

Danny passed the fourth place car on the next turn, but winced as he heard his tires wailing and knew that in taking over fourth position he had burned off a lot of rubber and had built up plenty of heat sliding through the turn. If he kept up his present howling pace he knew he could expect a blowout at any time.

Danny picked up ten yards on Dutch and Carter on the straightaway. In the turn his front left wheel bobbed lightly over the track surface, then gripped tar again as he rushed off the turn.

Carter moved by Dutch like mad on the main stretch and suddenly Danny saw a dark trail gleaming wetly on the macadam surface. Either Dutch had blown a water hose connection or his fuel line's sprung a leak, Danny thought. And judging by the way Carter went by Dutch, Danny was sure it must be a fuel line.

He expected Dutch to veer off into the pits, then realized that of course Dutch couldn't see the trail of liquid pouring from under his car. Halfway down the straightaway, Dutch reached out with his left hand and
frantically jerked in and out on the fuel pressure pump handle.
"It isn't tank pressure," Danny yelled involuntarily. "You've got a broken fuel line, Dutch."

AND THEN as the gold and white Offy streaked across the starting line flames burst from under the hood and the car became a scorching four-wheeled torch. Danny watched appalled as the flames enveloped the cockpit and Dutch's helmet-covered head disappeared from sight in an inferno of blazing alcohol. Danny gasped as he noted Dutch's failure to slow down.

Several thoughts flashed through Danny's mind. With Dutch out of the running, Danny would have third place in the bag. All he had to do was tag after Carter. It was easy. He might even take Carter and finish second. But then he heard Rip's words again. "You're in there to win, son, but not to the extent of endangering..." But he wasn't endangering, Dutch thought. He'd had nothing to do with Dutch getting in trouble. "It's a sport, son..." he remembered that too.

As the fans rose to their feet, horrified at the spectacle of the madly flaming car carrying its driver to certain death, Danny shoved his foot to the floor and felt Number 3 leap ahead.

He prayed he would make it in time. A split second later he felt the hot lick of flames to his left. At close to seventy miles-an-hour Danny swept up alongside the blazing Offy as it moved up the twenty-degree bank less than a hundred feet from the outer fence. He swung hard left and at the same time grabbed his hand-brake and pressed the emergency cut-off button. His left front wheel hooked into the Devon Offy. The two cars went into a sickening spin that flung Danny's head back hard against the head rest. He heard the tail of Number 3 crunch into the fence and ducked his head instinctively. Suddenly Number 3 sprang from the track with the breath-sucking swiftness of a fast-moving express elevator. Blood rushed to Danny's head as he hung upside down. The safety belt cut hard into his thighs. The surface of the track swam blackly under him, then rushed up to meet him at terrifying speed. Somewhere in the distance he heard a crunching of metal and then he was overtaken by a great dizziness. Faster and faster his head spun, then gradually it slowed and he made out the vague outline of faces staring down at him.

Gradually the faces became clearer. One of them seemed to wear a mask—and then as his head cleared he saw that the man with the mask wasn't actually wearing a mask at all, but bandages over one eye and a large gauze patch plastered across the bridge of his nose and forehead.

"Hello, Dad," Danny said weakly. "Guess I wasn't ready yet, after all."

"Take it easy, son. You were ready all right—you were terrific, wasn't he, Dutch?"

Danny turned his head painfully and saw a gauze-swathed figure stretched on a hospital bed beside him. Dutch Bowers waved one bandaged hand slightly. "Terrific, Rip. And thanks, kid. I sure was trying for the fence when you hooked me. Flames expanded my throttle controls and jammed 'em wide open. You gave me a boat of a spin, didn't even put a crease in Whitie's Offy, but you sure made a mess of iron out of Rip's Number 3."

"Yeah," Danny said sadly. "Guess the old man won't give me another try."

"Guess again, son. Right along you've had enough skill to run with the best in the game, but you kept playing Danny Conklin's heart against the field. Tonight you showed you could lend it for a few minutes to help another guy who really needed help."

Danny pleaded the sheet nervously, a faint embarrassed smile on his face.

"But of course I don't think you're quite ready yet." Rip went on, turning his face to hide his amusement as Danny's face clouded. "That is, not until the doctors give their okay."

Danny looked up quickly and the grin on his face exactly matched his father's.
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