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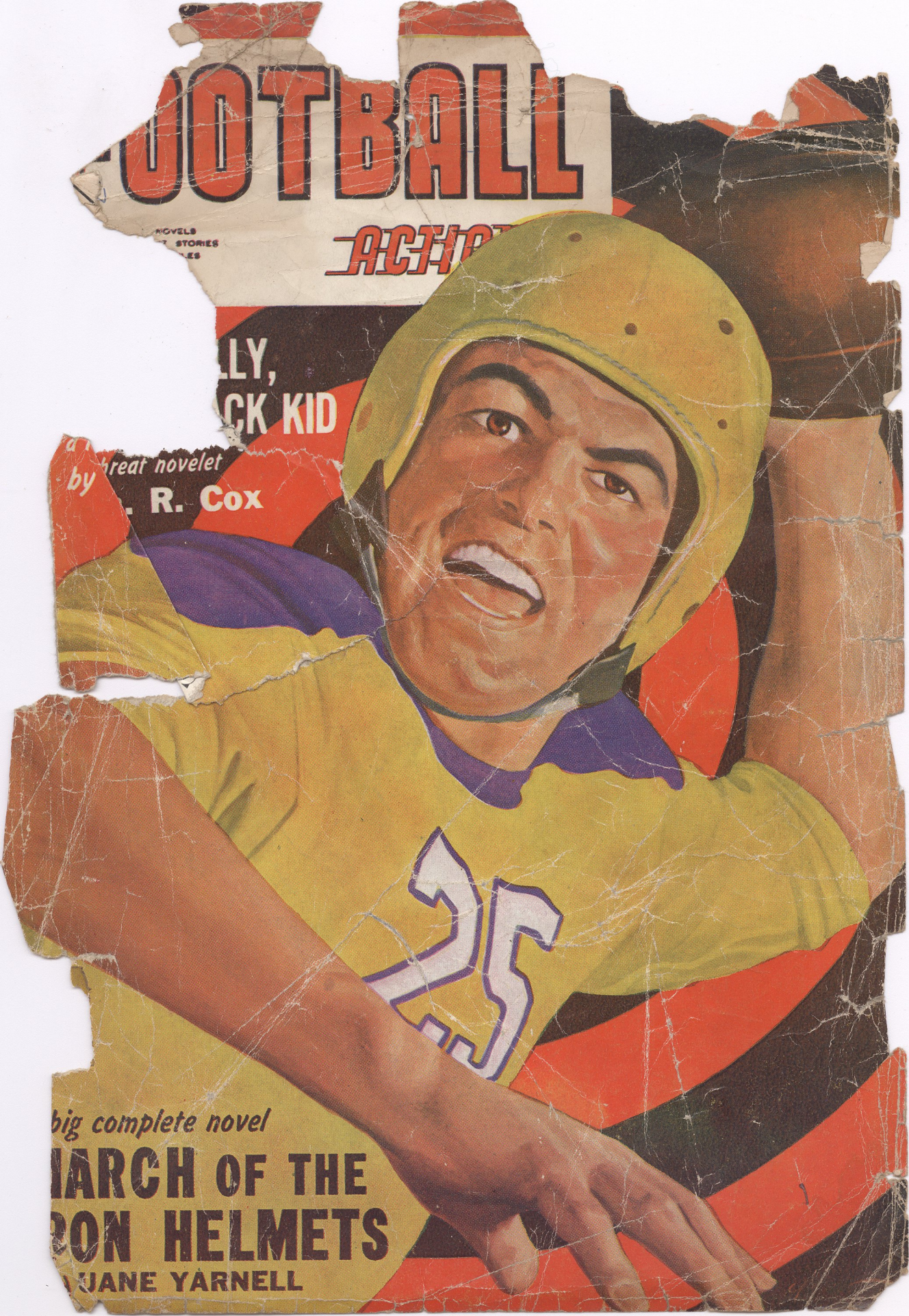
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### **MARCH OF THE IRON HELMETS . . . . . Duane Yarnell 76**

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## *Two Fast-Moving Novelets*

### **SIX POINT BOMBSHELL . . . . . Stewart Sterling 32**

Everything was pretty quiet on west coast gridirons that Saturday afternoon . . . and then—**BOOM**—Dynamite Dan Webb exploded out of a pile-up, streaking for paydirt like a golden sky-rocket. . . . He should have known there'd be plenty of Bowl-breaking reverberations.

### **WEEPIN' WILLY, THE TOUCHBACK KID William R. Cox 4**

Brand-new and cocky was Holliday U., the cow-town college that tried to build a century of sweater-and-letter tradition in one romping, wild, razzle-dazzle season. And even Weepin' Willy Cadore, the broken-hearted scat artist, had to admit they were on their way—to the Stadium of Stars or the Graveyard of Jerkwater Flops.

## *Two Pigskin Fact-Features*

### **RAMBLIN' WRECK . . . . . Jimmy Jones 24**

Bobby Dodd, young coach of Georgia Tech's *Yellow Jackets*, believes in letting his players get some fun out of football. And the scoreboard shows what a wonderful time they've been having—at their opponents' expense!

### **THE FOUR HORSEMEN . . . . . Walter Galli 93**

The immortal Knute Rockne's greatest backfield in a full page of action pictures.

## *Plus Two Triple-Threat Short Stories*

### **WING DING WATERBOY . . . . . Bill Erin 56**

When you're a puny shrimp like Little Joe Mathews it's better to let a campus cutie call the plays than listen to your razzing, raw-boned family of former All-Americans.

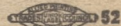
### **BIG BOSS IN THE BACKFIELD . . . . . Ted Stratton 63**

Ex-Ivy star Ricky Gravel tried to get those dumb miners to use their brains. They tried to get him to use his fighting heart. Maybe everybody was asking too much.

2nd Fall Issue, 1948  
Vol. 2, No. 7



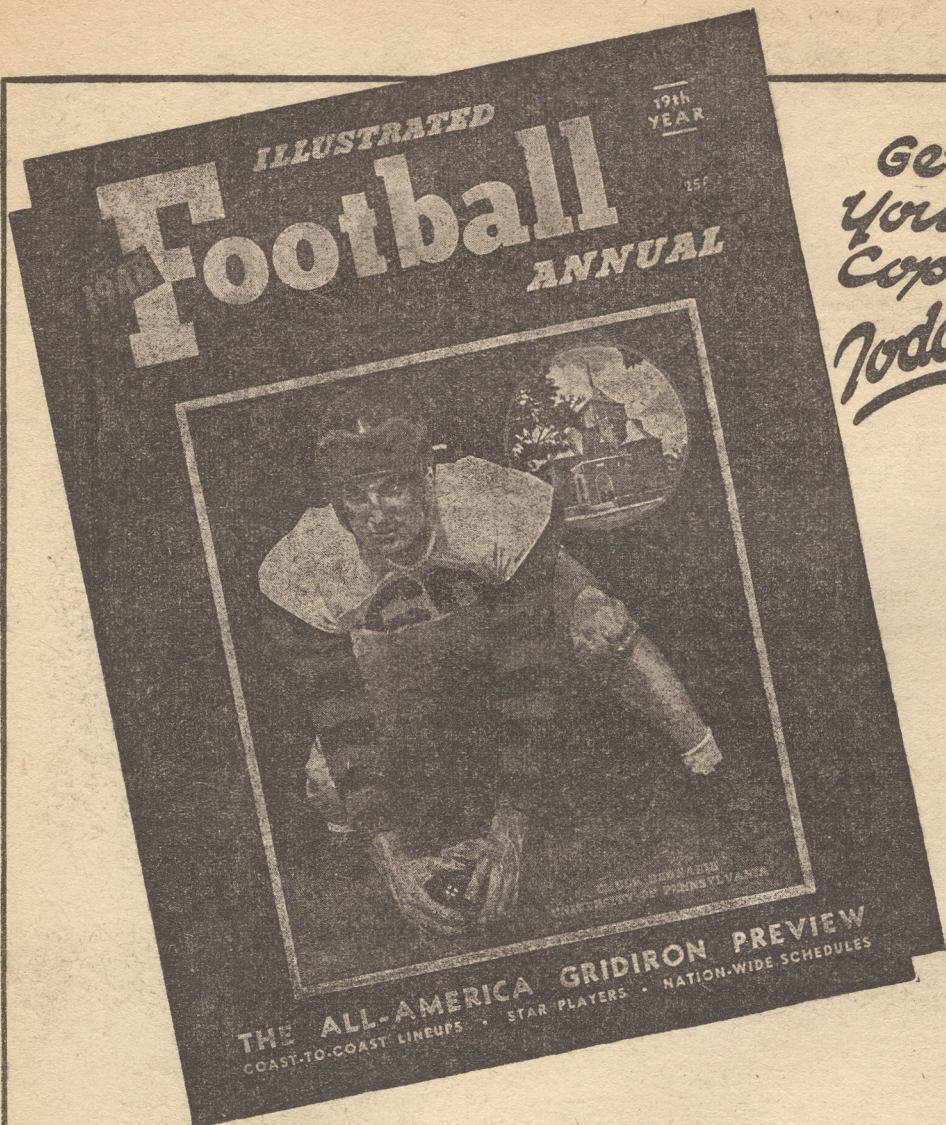
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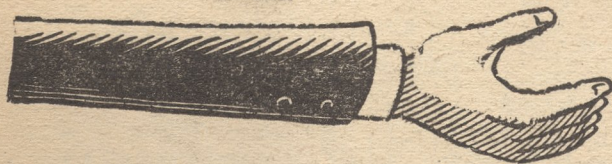
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# WEEPIN' WILLY, THE TOUCHBACK KID

By WILLIAM R. COX

**I**T WAS an amazing thing when little, new, brash Holliday University managed to get onto the schedule of old Bingham, glorious Bingham (drink 'er down, drink 'er down!) thought Willy Cadore, sitting on the end of the bench, his pixie face screwed up with concentration. The truth was that Holliday U. had a grand stadium as new as its uniforms, a flock of hard cash and a graduate man-

ager who had graduated not from Holliday, but from old Bingham (drink 'er down, drink 'er down!). Holliday U. also had Morgan W. Holliday, a great man.

On the field the yellow and black of Holliday strove against the eleven stalwarts from Bingham. The Hollidays were not doing so well. They were not doing so bad, either, Willy hastened to add. For a small-school team, trying to break into

**Brand-new and cocky was Holliday U., the cow-town college that tried to build a century of gridiron tradition in one romping, wild, razzle-dazzle season. And even Weepin' Willy Cadore, the broken-hearted seat artist, admitted they were on the way—to the Hall of Fame or the graveyard of jerkwater flops!**





big time, the Holliday outfit was gamely staving off a track meet. The score was merely Bingham 14, Holliday 0 at the middle of the third quarter. Willy moved on the bench, regretting the unsoiled freshness of the uniform he had never used that day. It was tough to be a sophomore and not very big and rugged.

He looked at Johnny Mace. He wondered if it was worse to be small and thin or to be big and dumb. Johnny Mace had a beat-up face, wide-spaced innocent eyes and hands like palm fronds. Johnny was a fullback and Willy was, allegedly, a scat back.

On the field Bingham failed to make their distance against a fighting yellow-clad line headed by Bo Sitzky, Holliday's talented tackle and kicked to the Holliday five, where Pat Slavin took it, but only got back ten yards before Moskap and Rat Kettle, the Bingham ends, made a magnificent squeeze-up on him.

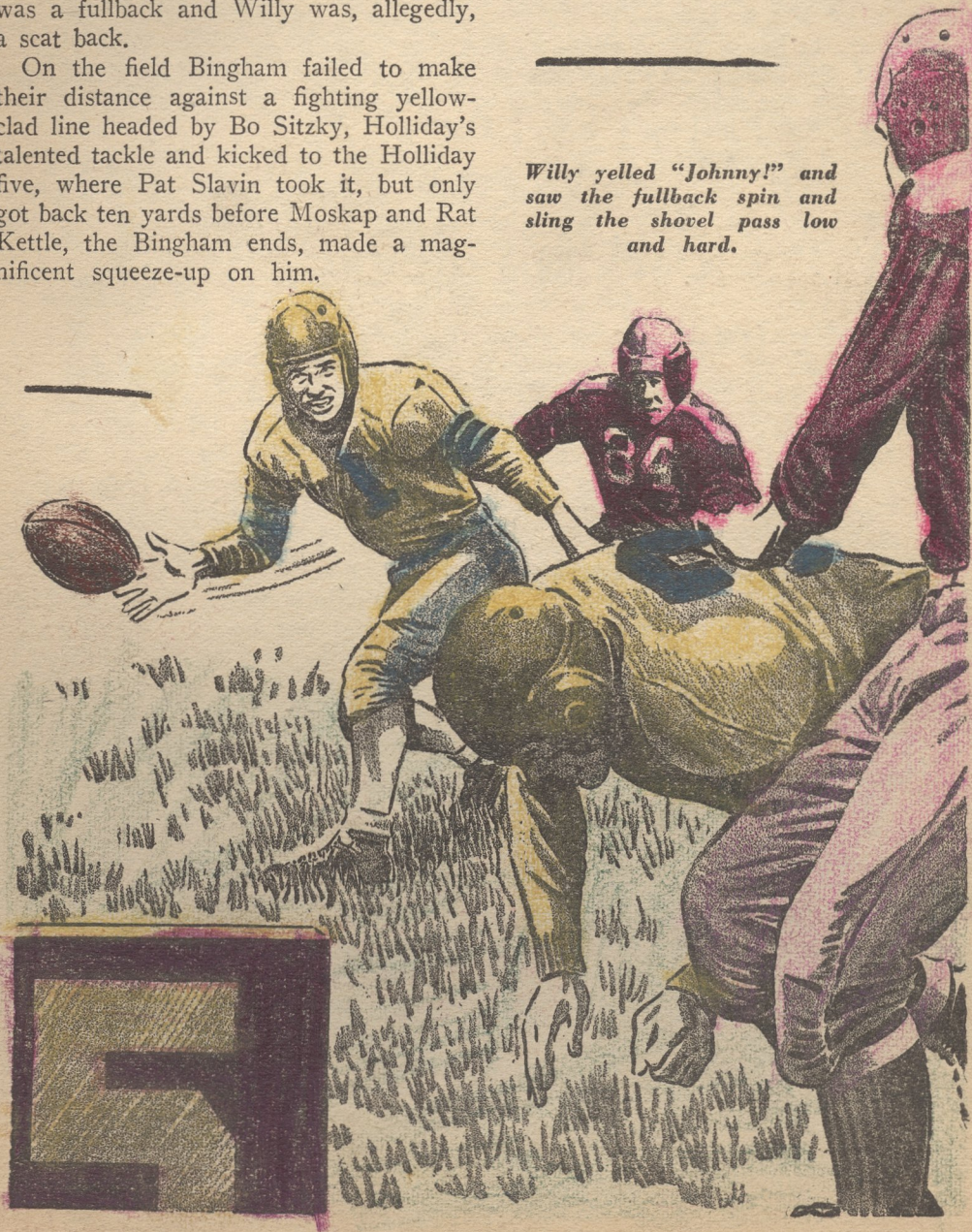
A voice wheezed, "Cadore . . . Mace."

Willy jumped so quickly he fell over Johnny's big feet. Johnny lunged and fell over Willy's prone form. Both landed approximately at the feet of gaunt, aging Papa Baer.

They did not call Baer "Papa" out of warmth and friendliness. He was "Papa" because of the old Czars of Russia, who were always called "Papa" by the millions under the knout, the idea being better the knout than the bullet. He glared at them from frosty orbs and said, "Nobody

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*Willy yelled "Johnny!" and saw the fullback spin and sling the shovel pass low and hard.*





is getting anywhere. This team, frankly, stinks on ice. My personal belief is that half of you sold out to Bingham and the other half are just plain yellow."

Johnny and Willy chorused, "Yessir."

"Go in there and fall over Bingham's feet," snarled Papa Baer. "Cadore, I hope you get good and killed. All-State! A hell of a looking All-State you turned out to be. Wait'll I get that Jeff King. He should tout me on one more All-State from Oklatexas."

"It was Arkanssouri," said Willy. He grabbed a headguard. It was too big for him, but he was in a hurry. He tightened the strap and ran onto the field. Johnny Mace went placidly, wordlessly at his side.

Abe Cohen and Bull Dana walked off. Pat Slavin glared at the two sophomores even more wickedly than had Papa Baer. Pat was frothing. The two Bingham ends had murdered him and he thought his own relief should have come on the field, Willy realized.

All the Holliday footballers were raging. Against Bingham's five-three-two-one defense they had done exactly nothing that afternoon. Bo Sitzky, a huge man, growled, "What the hell good are you two?"

"Ours not to reason why, ours but to do and die," snapped Willy Cadore. "Shut up, or I'll have my friend attend to you." He jerked a thumb toward Johnny Mace, who nodded agreeably.

Slavin said, "All right, if you can remember the 43 play, it's yours."

"Remember it? I invented it," said Willy, with confidence he was far from feeling. "Let's hike a little."

Slavin grunted. The team lined up in the short punt. The ball came back from the steady hand of Monk Cray. It shot to Slavin, who faked a hand-off to Dodo Sherman. Dodo blocked out Moskap.

Willy, counting, checked. Johnny Mace plunged for left tackle. Willy spun, took the ball and started to run. Rat Little, great Bingham end, slashed, correctly diagnosing the play.

Johnny Mace picked up speed. He was very large, but once started he could run faster than anyone Willy knew. He struck against Rat Little. There was dull, sodden noise. Willy Cadore, the ball tucked beneath his arm, slid inside. He criss-crossed as the backer-up rushed him. He

straight-armed Tuffy Raye, the fullback.

Tuffy seized a piece of jersey. Willy wriggled and twisted. Tuffy, a strong man if ever one lived, hung grimly on. A whistle blew. Cat Horner came in and slid under Willy.

Tuffy fell atop him.

They gave Willy a pretty nice going over. He covered up and took it. He really had been an All-State, he knew what it was to get shellacked in there. When he saw a chance he slyly kicked Cat Horner in the shins. Then he got up and took a look and saw he had gained eight yards.

He felt fine, going into the huddle. Slavin growled, "Same play, left, Cadore again."

So he reversed it. This time Moskap and Lou Lacey came on, wary, boxing the play. Johnny headed in between them. When he got there he seemed to explode in a couple of directions. Before either Moskap or Lacey could recover, Willy was between them and away.

This time he hit the sideline, running in the peculiar style which was his alone. He seemed to limp, ghosting along the white line. He seemed halt and lame. Bingham tacklers came rushing to shove this frail, pitiful boy across the boundary and out of play.

They came and took their shots at him. Willy, watching out of the corner of his eye without seeming to know there was anyone on the field but him, changed his pace like shifting gears in a high-class automobile. The scarlet jerseys, always imminently about to slay him, flew by harmless as tackling dummies.

SOMEWHERE downfield was Johnny Mace. He had a wonderful system. He slapped into a would-be tackler, then bounced him once again. After the second time, they rarely wanted to get into the play. Then Johnny would move on and clop the next man. He was methodical and quicker than he seemed to be.

Willy was almost to the ten yard line of Bingham. Two men came like wolves. Johnny could not nail them all, and these two were more than mere nameless tacklers in red. These were the great Tuffy Raye and quarterback Cat Horner, Bingham's best. They seemed to fly like air-



planes through the autumn air. They hit Willy and drove him.

He rolled over the line and out of bounds. He started to get up, grinning a little. Tuffy Raye hit him again. It seems Tuffy had not finished his drive, it was all very legal and whatnot. Willy went up into the air about ten feet and came down on his head.

He awoke on the bench. Johnny Mace was blocking industriously, he saw at once, craning his neck. Abe Cohen was running the ball. It was fourth down. Johnny slew a man on the goal line. Abe was just one inch short of a score.

Papa Baer said in his throaty voice, "I suppose you could have carried it over. I suppose you and your goon of a friend can work only as a team. I suppose I got another problem for next year, with you two schmoes."

Willy gasped, "Yessir." His head hurt. He lay back down and did not see Bingham kick out of danger.

Johnny Mace came off. Bull Dana went in. Johnny Mace came over to the bench. His mild blue eyes were no longer mild. He walked straight up to the Coach and said, "You took me out!"

"You clown," rasped Papa Bear. "Of course I took you out. You're here, aren't you?"

"Them two hurt Willy." Johnny actually gestured emotionally toward Tuffy Raye and Cat Horner. "They fouled him!"

The Coach said, "They had a right to hurt him. The damned fool didn't protect himself."

"You put me back in," said Johnny. "Let them protect themselves!"

Baer snarled, "You sit down. We want to play Bingham again next year, remember? We're on the schedule. At their stadium. Morgan W. Holliday and Jeepers Destiny have spoken. How the hell are we going to play them again if you kill their two All-Americans?"

Johnny said, "You mean I can't get them 'til next year?"

"Sit down!" roared Papa Bear. "How can I see those schlumps of ours mess up this game with you in the way, you big clonk?"

"Such language," said Johnny. "He talks worse than me, huh, Willy? Are you hurt bad, Willy? I'll get 'em after the game,

honest I will, Willy." He squatted on his heels. "They can't do this to us."

Willy said, "Never mind, Johnny. I'm all right. It's just my head."

"Your head?" Johnny's dismay was complete. "Oh, my! What are we gonna do if somethin' happens to *your* head?"

Willy said, "Relax and stop actin' as if I was fragile or something . . . Look, we messed up alright."

Holliday had failed to make the touch-down and Dodo Sherman booted it out on Bingham's forty and the quarter ended.

Willy realized later that his head really had been hurt. In the hospital they asked him a lot of questions and he couldn't remember anything about the final period of the game, except that Holliday had not scored and Bingham had. The final count, he knew, was twenty-one to nothing.

It was a slight concussion, they said, nothing serious. But he could not play the rest of the season.

Papa Baer visited him in the hospital. He growled, "So you're no good to me after all. I knew it. I'm not using Mace, either. Where you goin' this summer?"

Willy murmured, "No place near where you will be."

Bear said, "I should hope not! But go with that Mace. And throw a few passes, will you? Act like somebody. Learn the game. There's more to football than ghost running down a damn sideline."

He plodded out, an emaciated man with pigskin for a hide and a bladder for a heart. Somehow he had made Willy feel very good, though.

## II

MORGAN W. HOLLIDAY was a man who had made many millions of dollars. He was a man who wanted people to know it, and perhaps he was a man who wanted to leave something behind other than a beautiful daughter, something for people to remember him by.

At any rate, M. W. had bought himself a school. Naupeg College was rundown, feeble in the exchequer, when the big man had bought in. His millions had suffered a terrible dent, but then as M. W. said, he did not run a yacht and did not care



for chorus girls, and they did name the new school after him.

He sat in his office and *harrumphed* at Willy Cadore. Johnny Mace perched on a chair in the background, silent, listening, attentive. M. W. said, "We—er—paid your way through last year and the year before that. We—er—were led to believe you had abilities in scholastics. We—er—also hoped you would be of some help to our football team."

"Yes, sir," said Willy. He had found that yessing without comment gained him more ground among his elders. He had an ingenuous face, a snubbed nose and freckles. He was larger and stronger than last year. This was a new season, with the opener coming in a day or so.

M. W. said, "Mr. Destiny has made an analysis of the time spent in each game by each player we have—ah—aided in gaining an education. He finds that you and John Mace spent very little time on the—ah—field of valour last year."

Willy Cadore said, "Yes, sir. Did he inform Mr. Baer of this?"

M. W. said hastily, "This survey was Mr. Destiny's own idea. Mr. Baer and Mr. Destiny do not always see eye to eye. But remember, young man, I am this university and Mr. Destiny is my trusted aide." He fixed Willy with his fish eye, the eye which had made tycoons quake.

"Yes, SIR," said Willy.

M. W. rattled papers on his desk. "I shall have—er—an eye upon you, gentlemen. I shall expect a little more effort this year. Meantime, we have a new policy . . . A fiscal policy which I have inaugurated." The stout man bridled, his pale eyes gleaming a little. "We are running this school on a business basis. No play . . . no pay!" He *harrumphed* again. He said, "That is, your tuition goes on, you may have free books at the store. You may even have free recordings, that you may appreciate music, the better things. No hardships. I insisted upon that. But the—er—emolument ceases. Pending your performance, that is."

Willy said, "The emolument? Oh . . . yes, I see. Excuse me, sir, but does Mr. Destiny know of this interview?"

"I do not confide everything to Mr. Destiny," said M. W. sternly. "I—er—prefer to keep certain details within my own

sphere of activity. Goodday gentlemen. And I hope we improve. Beat Bingham! Eh?"

"Yes, sir," said Willy. He got up and bowed and led John Mace outside. He was afraid the fullback would burst. In the outer office a man with sleek hair and collegiate clothing, a youngish man with an accent not of Holliday U., was chatting with a girl.

Willy and John stopped dead, staring. They had been through this routine before, both knew. They had seen Connie Holliday before.

Each time, however, the reaction was the same. Willy's eyes grew large and round, like a small boy at a candy store show case. Johnny's face grew long and solemn, as if he was in church and the music was fine. They just stood and stared.

**H**OSEA DESTINY, graduate of Bingham, scion of an old but broke family, known to the students at Holliday as Jeepers Creepers Destiny, drew himself up to his considerate height and balanced his muscular heft on both feet. He said, "Good afternoon, gentlemen. See you some other time?" He had that rising inflection and a broad A.

Willy said, "Hiya, Jeepers?" Somehow he could never "yessir" this man. His voice lowered and became reverent. "GOOD afternoon, Miss Holliday."

Connie Holliday tilted an arched brow. She had a generous, curved mouth, freshly red with lipstick. She had wide shoulders and narrow hips like a good halfback only infinitely more attractive. She had long, slender legs and she was blond as the palomino pony Willy owned at home. She said, "I saw you go in practice yesterday. You were really carrying the mail, Willy."

She looked over Willy's shoulder at Johnny. She said, "Believe me, big John, if I could have you blocking out for me through life, I'd consider myself a lucky girl . . . Why don't you come up and see me sometime? You know where I live . . . how could you miss it?" She made a wry face. "It doesn't smell like the morgue, despite appearances. Come up and we'll play some music and dance. Both of you come, because M. W. is tough about dates



with college boys. He prefers Jeepers, here . . . ."

Through the haze occasioned by her words, Willy heard Destiny say sharply, "Really, Connie, that was uncalled for."

But amazingly, stunningly, while Willy groped, a new voice spoke. Johnny Mace, the silent, the gooney big guy, said, "We'd be absolutely delighted, Connie. You can count on us."

They were outside, walking. Willy was walking on air; he didn't know about Johnny. It was moments before he could say, "Pal, you are my life, my bulwark in a shaky, trembling world. I couldn't have answered that remarkable speech of hers for a country farm, bad as I need dough."

"She's beautiful," said Johnny.

"And you, the quiet type, muscling right in with a fine speech! I never knew," said Willy. "What a wolf."

"I am not a wolf," said Johnny with simple dignity. "I am a big dope, like you know. But when I see a beautiful girl like that with a creep like Jeepers, I got to say something. Imagine dancin' with her, in the moonlight, soft music playin' on her old man's Capeheart! Willy, I am in love."

Willy came down off his cloud. He stopped and stared at Johnny Mace. He opened his mouth to protest.

Then he gulped hard. He said weakly, "Well, what do you know?"

Johnny said severely, "Never mind my affairs of the heart. What about that jerk, that Jeepers? What about that there emolu . . . . what M. W. said?"

"Oh, yes. That!" Willy was silent. Things were occurring too rapidly even for his considerable capacity. After a moment he said, "I wonder how much it was supposed to be?"

Johnny said, "Jeepers Creepers, the muzzler, has been stealing our dough, that's all I know. I'm smart, anyway. We never got any dough. I don't understand why you didn't crack to M. W. about it. That weasel, he should glom our emolu . . . . what M. W. said!"

"Please stop talking like a movie gangster," said Willy. "Why didn't I expose that crook? I'll tell you why. He is M. W.'s confidential man. Maybe we could expose him and get him into vast trouble.

But creepers is solid with Bingham. The Bingham game is the big thing on Holli-day's schedule. If we crack down on Jeepers, he squawks he was unfairly dealt with and Bingham gets sore at us, maybe cancels the game. Then we could not get to play against Tuffy Raye and Cat Horner and Rat Little. See?"

Johnny said, "But he must be stealin' from a lot of the guys."

"That's their business," said Willy. "And besides, have you noticed that Pat Slavin and Bull Dana and Abe Cohen and some of the linesmen do not exactly love us since Papa has been using us so much?"

"Don't like us? US?" Johnny was incredulous. "Why, we are very nice guys, Willy. We mind our own business, we block for them, we make tackles when Papa lets us play on defense . . . ."

"But Papa is not planning to use us on defense," said Willy. "He explained it all to me in his charming, profane fashion. Papa is going to play like the pros, like Michigan. Within his limits, he is going to have two teams. The way it is here, he will have one not so good and one very good. Papa thinks he can juggle this into quite a something, considering our schedule, and come up to the Bingham game with us loaded."

Johnny said, "Now wait. Papa does not expect us to beat Bingham!"

"Papa would expect us to beat the Chicago Bears," said Willy. "Papa is understudying for the American production of *Great Expectations*."

Johnny said, "Papa must be weak in the head. Bingham's really got two teams . . . three teams. Plus Rat and Cat and Tuffy. I do not care for those boys but they are very good footballers."

"Papa is, beneath his crusty surface, an optimist," said Willy. "Leave us go see Papa and all the happy football players. They are expecting us."

Johnny shook his big head as they went to the football field. They dressed with the others and Pat Slavin was grumbling about something or other as usual and only Bo Sitzky came and spoke to the two friends.

Bo said, "So I'm captain, so I got to be on the job. This is a pretty fair country team, kids. You two are going great. I'm with you."



"Meaning," said Willy evenly, "that others are not."

Bo said helplessly, "I could lick them, but what good would it do? They do not like the way it is cooking up."

"I perceived as much," said Willy.

Bo said, "You'll have to be awful good."

THEY went onto the field. It was the last day of scrimmage before the opening game against Wellville. Papa Baer had the frosh out, a likely crowd who were, Willy thought, costing M. W. a pretty penny—whether they were getting it or whether Jeepers Creepers was pocketing it. They were from the farms, the mines, the city streets, and they were hard-handed and eager, if green.

Slavin, Cohen, Sherman and Dana started in the back field, with the ball in the possession of the frosh on their thirty. Papa Baer sat in a tower on wheels, equipped with a loud speaker he did not need and the assistant coaches took charge on the ground.

The freshman gained ground. They had youth and power. They knocked the Varsity on its heels with eagerness. Papa Baer's voice was like a file on an edge of metal, complaining in bitter accents. Bo Sitzky rose up and began knocking the frosh about. Zeke Williams, left end, refused to be blocked out and smeared a wide play. Dan Desirio and Slappy Peters, the guards, took hold and would not be budged. Randy Atkins at Tackle and Joe Terranova at end defended ably on the right. The frosh had to kick.

Papa Baer's voice came, "Cadore . . . . Mace . . . . In for Dana and Cohen."

The two backs who were removed turned reluctantly, slamming down headguards. Slavin put his hands on his hips and compressed tight lips. He was a quick-minded Irishman, big and strong and tough. Dodo Sherman, the blocking back, was scowling as Johnny came on. Blockers are always proud people and Johnny's skill was irksome to Dodo, Willy thought.

Slavin growled, "Sixty play into guard, Cadore carrying."

It was no play for Willy, despite his added weight and inches. It was a quick break from the T. Slavin, a great ball handler, faked and handed off as Willy picked up speed aiming for the hole.

Johnny could not block ahead of him on his play. It was guards ahead and get in there and slug.

Willy drove as hard as he could. The frosh fell upon him after three yards with glee and abandon. He covered up and suffered through it.

From afar off he heard the clarion call in Papa's worst voice. "Slavin! Out of the scrimmage! Come here!"

Willy knew what that meant. Nobody put anything over on Papa. He sighed with relief; then it struck him that he had nothing to be relieved about. Slavin would get bawled out. He might not call them wrong again. But by that very fact he would hate Willy the more. Life was getting very complicated. Willy wondered if he hadn't ought to matriculate at Yale or some place.

Bob Fine came on. He was a husky, short boy, with almost enough savvy to make first team. He briskly called Willy outside the tackle. Willy shot through where Bo made a path and there was Johnny, blithely knocking the frosh into cocked hats. Willy ran clear of the heap and paused short of the goal line, expecting a coach's whistle.

The stentorian voice crackled over the loud speaker, "What's the matter, Cadore? Getting primma donna on us because you made a run against freshmen? Take that play over. Same play, freshmen! Get him this time."

It was a tough life at Holliday U.

### III

THERE was one thing about M. W. Willy thought, which no one could deny: he did not insist on dressing room speeches before games or between halves. He merely sat in his daughter's convertible Lincoln Continental, top down, outside the field house, watching the players enter and leave. Willy wondered if there was not indeed a trace of wistfulness on the Roman features of the big man as he sat, like an idol, expressionless, and watching.

Willy and Johnny were passing this imposing vehicle when Connie Holliday called sharply, "Hey, you two!"

They stopped like automatons, wheeled and stood beside the equipage. Connie



regarded them severely. She said, "You never showed up. I told M. W. you were coming . . . both of you, of course. What are you guys trying to do, make a bum out of me?"

Willy's ready tongue again seemed frozen. Johnny said sturdily, "Miss Holliday, we been awful busy with the team. We would love nothin' better than to come and hear your recordings. But the team comes first, Miss Holliday."

M. W. almost beamed. He said, "Well now—er—Connie! You are too forward. These boys know what is best. However, we should be glad to see you, Cadore, and you, Mace, any evening. Er . . . yes."

Johnny said, "You can count on us, sir. C'mon, Willy, leave us cream these Wellvilles, on toast."

Willy trotted after the big man. He marvelled. There was nobody in the world just like Johnny Mace, nobody.

He groaned a little, thinking of the gorgeous Connie, her imperial rage at their non-appearance . . . and the twinkle he had detected in her eye even as she admonished them. There was an understanding girl, he realized. There was a girl who forced it into the open, letting M. W. know the score, making M. W. toe the line. There was a woman in a thousand . . . in a million, he added fervently.

And of course Johnny Mace had to be in love with her. Furthermore, the big clown found his tongue in her presence. Willy cursed himself for his inability to be glib when around the lovely creature of his dreams. Well, he would have to remove her from his dreams. Johnny was his pal . . . . .

**I**T HAPPENED that Bo won the toss and elected to receive. Papa Baer, gunning for sensation, immediately reeled off a new line-up. "Cadore and Mace in for Dana and Cohen. I want a score and I want it fast."

Bull Dana was as big as Johnny and had a busted nose which made him look tougher. Cohen was a runner, a slender, dark boy, sensitive, high-strung. They turned away, last year's starters, relegated to secondary roles. Willy frowned a little, adjusting his headgear. Papa Baer had his own ideas but Willy wondered if Papa was omnipotent or whether there was a

colored gent in the woodpile which Baer had not taken into consideration.

Then he was on the field and all extraneous matter was gone from him. He was testing the turf down near the goal line, moving restlessly, like a race horse at the post. A big Wellville man was teeing up the ball. Wellville was nobody's shove-over, a rough little team from Pennsylvania's mining country.

The whistle blew. Willy's stomach contracted, relaxed. He was starting his first collegiate game, the ball was coming down. It was coming right at him.

The leather felt mighty good in his grasp. He tucked it under his arm. Johnny was right ahead, like a mother hen leading a chick. Slavin made a sloppy block on an end, but Johnny lurked, mopping up. Willy ran slowly, with his halting, foot-and-a-half style, in Johnny's wake.

A tackle dove. Johnny cuffed him away with a negligent elbow. Willy watched the field. They were massing in his path. Even Johnny could not blow apart eight men.

Willy said, "Hep! Movin' up."

Dodo Sherman was up ahead and mixed it with a couple of defenders. Johnny put on steam and strewed a couple more along the thirty. Willy shot out, through the path which had been opened. He was across the midfield stripe and running easy when a fast little scat back got him from the side.

Slavin's nervous, driving voice was prompt, gathering the team for its initial drive of the season. They lined up in the single wing. Willy went wide on the play as they tested the Wellville line. Johnny carried into the center and got four yards, an encouraging plunge.

Slavin said, "Try it again."

Willy knew this was wrong. Papa's second down plays were touchdown affairs, always. He frowned and played flanker on the attack and Johnny slapped them down again for four. Papa Baer was walking the sideline, Willy saw. Slavin his jaw set, drove Johnny at right tackle on a reverse. Johnny made it a first down on the Wellville thirty-six by inches and the home crowd cheered as though Holliday had beaten Bingham.

But Papa didn't like it, Willy knew.



Slavin snarled, "Try it, Cadore, on the 43 play."

Willy tried it. Dodo could not help but throw a fancy block. Johnny went in behind Sitzky and murdered the defensive fullback. Willy slid like a greased pig among clutching arms and fought his way to the Wellville twenty.

Slavin said stubbornly, "Mace again, until we soften 'em."

Johnny took the ball in his huge paws. Willy flanked it, then cut downfield. Johnny was through and chunking along. Willy put a desperate block on a stocky Wellville player. Johnny went by and hit the five under a heap of them.

Slavin said curtly, "Dodo on the cut back."

Johnny blocked. Willy blocked. Dodo, no ball carrier, just put down his head and roared. They went over the goal in a body, the three of them with Slavin following the play.

Bo kicked the goal. Papa Baer took out Willy, Johnny . . . and Slavin.

Willy chewed his lip, going to the bench. Papa Baer's face was white with rage. Papa said, "So . . . Slavin! You let Mace and Cadore get it down there. Then you give it to a blankety blank blocker to take over! You've got a beef, Slavin? Let's hear it, right now, before I tear that uniform off you!"

Slavin said thickly, "Now wait, Coach . . ."

"You don't like my system? You don't like part-time ballplayers? All right, Slavin, From now on you are a part-time ballplayer. From now on Bob Fine can try running the team . . . the way I want it run."

Slavin said, "I can turn in my suit. You don't have to take it."

Willy Cadore said, "Coach . . ." He gulped. Then he said, "Coach, Pat had something down there. They never expected Dodo to run. Look how it went. We scored, didn't we?"

Slavin raved, "I don't want any favors from you, Cadore . . ."

"You won't get any," said Willy coldly. "I'm talkin' football. Ain't I, Papa? I mean, we don't care, me and Johnny. We just want to win some ball games and have some fun."

Papa Baer's cold eye was scornful.

"College spirit, eh Cadore? You'd die for dear old Holliday? Nuts . . . and you, Slavin, stop being a Sinn Feiner, or whatever they have in Ireland now. G'wan, get outa my sight!"

SLAVIN seemed disposed to argue, but Johnny put a big hand on him. Gently, but firmly, Johnny led him away. Into his ear, Willy was saying, "Don't be a lug. You're getting a free ride here, ain't you? You're quarterback. Bob's too green to stand the gaff. You don't have to like us . . . but use your head. Play football."

"Abe and Bull have rights, too," declared Slavin coldly. "I meant to show they could carry the ball as well as you two geniuses."

"Sure. Are we saying anything?" Willy was earnest. "You play it the way you want. But don't cross up on Papa. Papa is too tough for you."

Slavin said bitterly. "Of course, you're right. I'll play along. I'll never like you guys, you're too clannish. But I'll play it out." He went to the other end of the bench and sat alone, scowling.

Johnny said, "I'm so dumb. We're clannish, but it's okay for him to put in the pitch for Abe and Bull?"

"So long as he plays it out," said Willy. "What do we care? Sit down and watch the ball game."

He was craning around to get a glimpse of a certain box at midfield, himself. The daughter of M. W. Holliday wore a yellow chrysanthemum which was not half as beautiful as she. She carried a bright kerchief which she waved. Willy turned just in time to see John almost fall off the bench responding to the girl's gesture. He sunk his chin inside his shoulder pad gear and returned full attention to the field.

The Hollidays were doing all right against the big boys from Wellville on defense. The visitors kicked. Papa said, "All right you muggs. Back to the boiler factory. Slavin!"

Pat got his helmet. Willy and Johnny trotted onto the field. The ball was on the Holliday thirty-five. Slavin called for a fake buck by Johnny, who handed off to Willy and then galloped ahead, blocking like a crazy man. Willy made twenty-five yards.



Slavin growled, "Make it twenty-three play. I'll throw."

Willy ran downfield after flanking the play. He turned and looked for the pass. Johnny was somewhere around, knocking Wellville hopefuls right and left. Slavin heaved one away over Willy's head, almost to the goal line. He missed his target, who was Zeke Williams.

Slavin looked unhappy. He called the hipper-dipper with Dodo faking, Johnny going through, with a quick hand-off to Willy when the play was set. Willy took it and raced outside of end, then cut sharply back. He dragged a leg to let a guard miss him, feinted right and pivoted inside the halfback. Limping along behind blockers he went all the way down to the Wellville ten.

Slavin muttered, "Okay. Willy has it wide on sixty."

Johnny was like a runaway freight train with the goal in sight. Wellville unfortunates flew into the air, seemed to hang there as Willy scooted beneath them. He rattled over the goal line with no one near him.

He was very happy. He had scored his first touchdown for Holliday. He watched Bo kick the conversion from beneath a disgruntled Wellville linesman and the thrills went up and down his spine.

In another moment he was on the bench. Papa Baer said, "You almost got nailed by the end. Start a little faster, can't you, Cadore? And Mace—I saw that fullback stir after you hit him. Are you getting soft?"

Good old Papa Baer, thought Willy. He sneaked a look and the kerchief was waving again.

Connie Holliday was probably crazy about good old Johnny . . .

The Wellville's fought stubbornly but sullenly after Willy's touchdown run. The game seemed to pass quickly, with Holliday scrubs taking over after the score reached 35 to 0. At the final whistle the total was 42, and even Papa had little criticism to offer. . . . .

Willy and Johnny had a room together in a beat-up house on the edge of campus. Willy was deep in his favorite armchair when he saw Johnny wetting his hair and donning a necktie, of all things. He came

up, sagged back into the chair. He said, "You goin' to see Connie?"

Johnny said, "We are goin' to see Connie. Get somethin' on your carcass, these ain't no slum people, y' know."

Willy said, "You don't want me."

"Nope," agreed Johnny. "But she said the two of us. And M. W. said the two of us. So hike, son, hike."

Willy said, "I got tired in that game."

"Don't give me that," said Johnny. "And besides, Jeepers Creepers hangs around her a lot. Maybe you'll have to handle him."

He found himself worrying over his tie, his stubby haircomb. He walked alongside Johnny, fretting about whether Connie would be home, whether M. W. would be hanging around, whether the whole thing wasn't foolish. The house did resemble a national monument to a dead hero.

Johnny gave up on the huge verandah. He did not even have the nerve to ring the bell. Willy sighed and took over. A servant appeared, a sour-faced woman who scrutinized them as though they might have small pox. Then they were in the huge entrance hall, staring at objects of art worth a half million, edging toward a room from which soft music came.

Connie was wearing a soft dress of some green material and looked like an earthly angel. She came floating toward them on a cloud, it seemed to Willy. She took Johnny's great paw and led him into the long, wide room where the luxurious instrument played recordings in hushed, superb fidelity.

A bulky form turned from the record cabinet. Hosea Destiny said, "Well, really, Connie. I thought we had a date."

"We sort of have," she said. "Isn't it nice the boys came to break the monotony?"

Destiny said, "No, it is not." He had a bulldog look about him when he was annoyed, Willy decided. Despite his faintly juvenile aspect, there was a tough malice in this man.

Johnny was tongue-tied at last, staring at Connie. The music shifted to a dance time. Willy said, "Show Connie that new step, Johnny. You'll be amazed, Connie, but this guy can dance."

The girl said, "Who could amaze me?"



I've seen about everything except a Holliday victory over Bingham." She slid her eyes over them, twinkling. "Hosea informs me that such a thing is not possible. I am trying to get odds or at least 7 points from him."

Willy said, "I will discuss this matter with Jeepers while you kids trip the light you-know-what."

Connie seemed to melt into Johnny's embrace. She danced so close Willy was afraid Johnny would gum up the rhumba, but the big guy came through, like always, handling her as though she were eggs at a dollar per dozen, swinging into the rhythm like a pro.

Destiny said in his nasty voice, "Really, Cadore, I have no desire to discuss the matter with you. Obviously we cannot beat Bingham, but why should I wager with Connie?"

"Contradicting yourself, ain't you big boy?" said Willy lightly. "What do you really think about the game? As if your opinion mattered?"

His gaze kept going to the girl in Johnny's arms. After a moment the couple whirled out onto a terrace where they had more room to really cut a few rugs. Willy sighed and concentrated upon annoying Jeepers Creepers . . . . It was an evening of mixed blessings. Somehow he never did get to dance with Connie.

#### IV

THE TEAM continued to improve, Willy thought. Papa Baer, caustic, profane, fed them new plays each week, cursed them into learning assignments, drove them until they were on edge each Saturday. They beat Yarmouth 21 to 0. They won over a good Tech team by 6 to 0. They hammered Eastern 19 to 7, an upset win.

They had to play Canarsie U. next. Canarsie had a team which was undefeated and which was pointed for Holliday. Canarsie was another new school, begun to make a place for G. I. students, a school as football-minded as Holliday.

Papa Baer was gloomily and complaining. "We're not ready for this outfit. I doubt if we'll ever be ready for a good team. This crowd has as much guts as a passel of chipmunks. Slavin, you haven't

completed two passes per game. Run, run. Can't we do anything but chug along on the ground, you clowns?"

Willy would rather have kept still, but he felt he had to speak up. "Coach . . . . Johnny and I threw some this summer, like you suggested. Only he can throw better than me."

Slavin glared. Bull Dana and Abe Cohen snorted. Bo Sitzky said, "Let him try it, Coach. The big guy does everything else. Except score touchdowns." Sitzky looked meaningly at Slavin.

Willy said quickly, "If Johnny kicked a couple, it would lead to a nice deceptive pass."

"You mean he can punt, too?" Papa whirled on his assistants. "Why do you keep these things from me? What am I, a spy for Bingham? What is this, Russia? . . . . Get out there and show me, Mace."

Johnny showed them. Willy's heart warmed as the big back booted a couple of fifty-yard punts and led the ends with some heavy passes, then threw a long floater which almost hit Zeke on top of his head at the goal line.

Papa barked, "I'll have the plays ready and you'll use them Saturday."

It was another blow at the anti-Johnny-Willy combination. Papa Baer seemed unaware of the feeling; at least he gave no evidence that he knew of it. Slavin and the others played along as Slavin had promised, but there was something wrong in the machinery, as was proven that fine Saturday afternoon against Canarsie.

It was a glorious day in early November. Canarsie came to Holliday's stadium with a boy named Gentile, a full-time back who could do anything well and a line bigger and heavier than that of the home team. They were loaded for Baer, as the papers said.

Connie sat in her father's box, wearing a fur coat which would have looked well on anyone and managed to make her seem more desirable than ever. Willy stared, envying Johnny. The first evening of dancing had been re-enacted many times. Willy was getting to know Jeepers Creepers and M.W. pretty well by now. He felt that he was getting along with Mr. Holliday all right. But it was amazing how much worse Jeepers became with acquaintance. The big Bingham grad was



in the box with Connie now, and Willy squirmed with disgust at the thought.

Cohen, Slavin, Dana and Sherman were the starters that day, as Holliday kicked off. Bo put his large brogan to the ball and the boy called Gentile caught it. Williams and Terranova were down to make the tackle.

Big Canarsie men in bright blue jerseys formed a triangle of interference. The Holliday ends were swept inside. Desirio and Cray were mowed down by giants. Monk Cray, a fine center for Holliday, was shunted aside. Gentile, running with high "knee action, hit the sideline at the thirty-five and turned loose a streak of speed which made Willy gasp and turned Papa Baer green.

The Canarsie back scored going away. Then added insult by kicking the goal with a careless flick of his right leg.

Papa snapped, "It's too much to ask. A bunch of slugs, that's what I've got. Stumble-bums . . . Cadore . . . Mace . . . Go in there and get back that damn touch-down or turn in your suits, I don't care which, either."

"Yessir," said Willy. Johnny followed him onto the field. For once Cohen and Dana did not look angry at being relieved. The Canarsie line looked awful big and tough to Willy. He went down to the end of the field and restlessly awaited the kick-off. The Canarsies were laughing and slapping each other's backs, all but Gentile. He just looked serene and serious.

Johnny called over, "That's some boy. I'll watch that boy."

"Watch him good and here comes the kick," said Willy. The ball went into the end zone and he let it lay there. Slavin, his scowl deeper than ever, lined up the team on the twenty-five yard line and grimly called for a test of the Canarsie behemoths.

Johnny carried, going for the guard spot as Willy acted as flanker. The Canarsies were not fooled and ganged up. Johnny made himself two yards on strength alone. When he got up he was bleeding from a cut at the corner of his mouth and seemed quite happy. He said in the huddle, "Try that spot again."

Slavin tried it. Slappy Peters slapped a pivot block on the tackle and Monk

charged like a stallion. Johnny got his head into the hole and gained some traction.

The Canarsie mastodons split at the seams. Willy swung and sped downfield. Johnny was through and into the secondary. A lone figure dove and grabbed and Johnny tumbled on the thirty-one.

Gentile had made the tackle. Willy regarded thoughtfully the graceful Canarsie back. He was little bigger than Willy, although a few pounds heavier. He moved as though on oiled bearings.

Slavin grunted, "Your turn in the act, Cadore."

Willy took it on a wide reverse. Dodo and Johnny both were there and the Canarsie end fell down. Willy cut back, using his deceptive stride, watching Gentile out of the corner of an eye. The great Canarsie back came silently and swift to make the tackle. Willy tried to fake him.

He wound up on his back on the Holliday forty-two. Gentile was no longer serene. He was angry. He jawed at a teammate. It made Willy feel a lot better . . . at least they had not re-named Superman and stuck him in for Canarsie.

**S**LAVIN called the pass play. It was good strategy on first down. They ran it from the same single wing formation, not giving Johnny much protection, but with great deception. Nobody on Canarsie expected the big fullback to throw one.

Johnny pitched it in the flat, overhand. The pass had hair on it. Willy flung his hands and was grateful for the summer-time hours spent rehearsing this part of the act.

And then, suddenly, he did not have the ball. A blue streak interposed. Gentile had it, and was running. Willy chased him, but that was sort of silly, because given a ten foot start, Gentile could beat Olympic time to the goal.

The goal was where he went, through a disorganized Holliday defense. A moment later, while Willy sat on the bench beside Johnny and listened to a hail of hard words from Papa, Gentile made it fourteen to nothing for the visitors.

"THAT is a football player," said Papa, in conclusion. "Give him to me and we'd



beat Bingham and go to a Bowl and win there, too. Why must I have a bunch of left-footed, butter-fingered stop-gaps instead of a real football player or two?"

Nobody answered. The men on the bench were busy trying to peer through a cloud of gloom so thick it could be cut with a butterknife. Willy writhed with impotence.

Baer said, "Let Cohen and Dana try it. At least they won't throw passes into the hands of that-human football machine. You . . . my offensive backs! *Offensive* is the word!"

Slavin ran back the kick to the twenty-five. Then, with audible delight and vim, he sent Abe Cohen off the left flank. The slender back ran like a deer. He got past the big ends, who were not too swift, Willy perceived now. Dodo and Bill were blocking.

Sifting through like a ghost, Gentile split the interference. He seized Abe with one hand, jerked him from his feet. The gain was for only two yards.

Slavin, screaming encouragement, sent Bull Dana at the guard. Bull drove with everything he had. He got into the hole, but two big Canarsies were waiting. He made only three yards.

Fourteen points behind, Slavin was not kicking on third down. He called a tricky reverse. He handed-off to Abe and viciously blocked out his man. He was doing everything he could to help his pals come through, thought Willy with unstinted admiration. Slavin was a good man, true to his convictions.

Abe shot inside the end. Gentile, coming from the wing back position, sailed through the air.

Abe got three yards.

Slavin was almost weeping. He booted it himself. It went for only thirty-five yards. Gentile almost got away, but had to circle as Zeke Williams went out for him. Bo nailed Gentile on the Canarsie thirty-eight.

Johnny got slowly to his feet. He walked over to Papa Baer and said, "Better put me in."

"Siddown, you clunk," snapped Papa.

Johnny sat down. Gentile proceeded to tear the Holliday defense apart. The yellow-shirted linesmen dug in and battled furiously. The quarter ended and Papa

sent in all the second string on the forward wall.

The tongue-lashing he gave Bo and the others could have been inspiring, but Willy did not like it. Hunched on the bench, Willy was watching the Canarsie play. The half ended without another score as Bo and the others went back to perform heroic deeds and Willy was thoughtful going to the dressing room.

Connie was waiting in the Continental. M. W. was busy explaining to some rich friends that Papa was saving the fireworks for the second half. Jeepers Creepers was smiling in a way Willy did not like, talking to a couple of men who looked like Bingham scouts. At least they wore sad hats like Jeepers always sported.

Connie called, "The express got way-laid . . . What's with this Gentile? Somebody can't break his leg?"

Johnny said simply, "Papa won't let me."

Connie said, "Are you mice or are you my big, beautiful men?"

Johnny said, "Honest, Connie, they're tough. The boys are doin' all they can. Papa won't let us play."

Connie lowered her voice. "Listen, kids. Jeepers is after Papa. Jeepers wants a Bingham man he knows in the job. Me, I am Mata Hari, I am Tokyo Rose, I listen. Jeepers is making a pitch to M. W. all the time, he wants this Bingham slob to be Head Coach next year."

Willy said, "That would account for a lot. Who is this man Jeepers wants in the job?"

"His brother, who else?" said Connie blithely. "He marries me, his brother is Head Coach. What could be sweeter?"

"Marry you?" Willy was shocked to the core. "That creep?"

"M. W. thinks he is cute," said Connie. "His brother is assistant coach at Bingham now. When they murder us his stock rises like crazy. Losing today does not help Papa. Now run along and get your between-halves vitamin. And think hard, kids." She winked at them. She was the greatest woman in the world, Willy knew. She was beautiful, loyal and smart. He went in and Papa glared and cursed them both for lingering, but there was a question in Papa's hard eye, as though he had an inkling of dark



matters afoot. Willy debated, but decided not to spill his news.

THE SECOND HALF began. Canarsie received. Willy watched Gentile run back to the forty. Then he shifted his seat to be next to Papa. He whispered, "Coach. Let Johnny go in. The blocker on Gentile's right is always the same guy, that fast halfback. Let Johnny work him over."

Papa said, "Are you tellin' me how to run this team, you young jerk? . . . . Mace! Go in and give that number 56 man the business. And keep it clean, Mace!"

"Yessir," said Johnny. Bull Dana came out and Baer curtly passed the dope on fifty-six. Dana sat beside Willy and watched.

Canarsie ran from the T, with Gentile going wide. Johnny burst through from defensive full. He nailed the man wearing fifty-six. Bo Sitzsky got a grip on Gentile. The Canarsie back went head over heels for no gain.

Willy whispered, "He'll get mad now. That's his trouble."

Gentile said something to the quarterback. They essayed the same play. Again Johnny was on the spot. The blocker went down and lay very still. Bo ran Gentile out of bounds for a loss.

Again Canarsie rolled from the T. This time they tried some deception, but it was Gentile with the ball. The man seemed tireless and indestructible.

Johnny brushed number 56 aside this time. Bo came in. The two of them hit Gentile as he strove to out-run them. Stripped of his blocker, he was, Willy saw with relief, just another back. He got up slowly after the hard, clean tackle. He kicked out fifty yards, though . . . he was one whale of a back.

Papa said, "Cadore . . . in there and try not to butter-finger every ball you touch . . . ."

Willy thought that it would be a saltless life if Papa did not rake you over the platter each time he spoke. He went into the huddle and Slavin begged, "One good play . . . 43, Cadore!"

Willy took it in the well-learned pattern. Johnny got humping and knocked

down the end, kept his feet and looked for more worlds to conquer. Gentile came storming.

Johnny's laugh could be heard all over the stadium. He took a free swing and cross-blocked with his granite-hard body. Gentile rolled along the dirt and Johnny, taking no chances, wallowed with him, entangling legs.

Slavin and Dodo were true. Willy carefully followed their trail. Downfield, Williams and Bo Sitzky were piling into the large men in blue. Willy ran as though Papa Baer was behind him with a gun. He feinted a back out of position and headed goalward.

The quarterback made his bid. Willy ran straight at him, gave him the limp leg, took it away. He scrambled over the line for the touchdown in haste and glee.

Bo converted. Canarsie took the kick-off. Johnny stayed in the game while Willy rested. Papa Baer was grim-visaged, watching. Gentile started to run again.

A few plays later number 56 was taken out of the game. Canarsie punted and Willy went in. The big men in blue were sweating and panting. Canarsie, Willy decided, was not deep enough in talent this year. Willy ran fifty yards from scrimmage to the five.

Dodo on a quick line sneak, scored for Holliday. Bo kicked the goal.

Again Gentile tried to run. Johnny harassed him. He tried to pass. Dodo intercepted on the midfield stripe.

Papa said, "Cadore . . . the new 55 play."

Willy went on. He relayed the signal to Slavin. The quarterback gave it to the team.

From the short punt formation the Hollidays started what seemed to be a run by Willy. But at the last moment Johnny had the ball and Willy was protecting him. Gentile back-tracked, shouting. Johnny feinted left and threw right. He was so strong he always threw heavy ones, but Zeke Williams, in the flat, hung on for dear life and fear of Papa Baer.

There was no one near the end. Dodo and Slavin blocked him down and then he ran away from Gentile and scored.

Willy had a sort of let-down feeling. Gentile had been no good without his



blocker,; now he was weary and couldn't catch Zeke. The ball game was in the bag for Holliday. Willy knew these things . . . they were second nature to him. Holliday won, 21 to 14.

## V

**H**OLLIDAY U. edged out Hanover, 12 to 7. Then the week of the Bingham game, like a sudden thrust of early winter, was upon them in all its worry and confusion.

For the entire school and town, conscious of an undefeated season to date, was aroused. M. W. made speeches, in the village, in the auditorium, in the gym. The student body built up into senseless frenzy, bearing banners, "Beat Bingham", "On to the Bowl", "Win or Die, Holliday Heroes" and equally silly things.

Papa Baer grew hoarse, swearing at his players, insulting them, battling with those brave enough to answer him. And Johnny Mace suddenly could not block for beans, could not hit a wide-open receiver with a pass, fozzled each punt he attempted.

Willy was aghast. Papa Baer was inconsolable. Only Jeepers Destiny smirked, with an "I told you so" look on his fat face. M. W., becoming aware of impending disaster, went haggard and sputtering to Willy Cadore.

Willy said, "I don't know sir, what it could be unless he is stale. Papa Baer has taken him out of scrimmage . . . He doesn't sleep well. He isn't eating enough. It's awful, sir."

M. W. said, "You've got to find out what it is. This is tragic. What good is the team without Mace? Er. Or is it?"

"It's a pretty good club," said Willy sturdily. "But Bingham is a very good club and much deeper in strength. Even with John in top form, sir, we would be hard put to it . . ."

"We will beat Bingham, or else," said M. W. sternly. "I have passed my word to—ah—to a certain party . . . well, never mind that. No concern of yours, eh, Cadore? Yours but to do or die."

"Yessir," said Willy. He went back to the room. Johnny was sunk in a chair, staring at the wall.

It was five minutes before Johnny spoke. Then his voice was a wail from the tomb. "I got to tell you, Willy."

Willy tried not to sound over-eager. "Like what, chum?"

"She turned me down," blurted Johnny. "Connie. She is going to marry Jeepers, because life ain't worth the candle."

"Whose life?" Willy batted his eyes, taking the barb in his heart. "What candle?"

"I sneaked over when you were studying the other night and asked her," moaned Johnny. "She made some fool bet with Creeper the Jeoper on the Bingham game. Is everyone screwy? She even asked what you thought about it."

"About what?" asked Willy numbly.

Johnny waved a hand as limp-and as large-as a dish towel. "Everything . . . I dunno. She's so beautiful I get confused when I'm around her. She said she'd be a brother to me. She said she was very good at playing brother, to ask you."

"I don't get it," Willy confessed. "Johnny, I've got an idea, though. You know how nutty she is about football."

"If she was not the most wonderful babe inna world and I did not love her dearly I would say she is nutty, period."

★ Willy said firmly, "She loves the game. If she saw you on a day when you were really hot, Johnny . . . If you starred the Bingham game . . . And if she won her bet!"

Johnny sat up straighter. "I can't star. I'm a blocker. I ain't scored a touch-down this year."

Willy said, "Don't say 'ain't, Connie won't like it. And maybe you'll get a chance to score—and to star. Look, pal, I'll do everything I can. She mustn't marry that creep!" His heart was really broken now. But he could carry on for Johnny—and the team, he told himself. He settled down to do a real sales job on his partner and roommate.

After an hour he was exhausted, but there was still something to do. He left Johnny to think it over and walked across the wind-swept campus. Tomorrow the team left for Bingham Town. There was not a moment to waste.

He mounted the porch of a small house and was admitted to a warm room laden



with football trophies. Papa Baer said harshly, "More trouble, I suppose. Can't you muley calfs bring me anything but grief?"

Willy spread his legs and faced the dour Coach. He said, "I've been yessing the fool out of you all season. It's about time yes took a holiday."

Papa yowled, "I got troubles enough."

"You'd have more if I hadn't spotted that fifty-six blocker in the Canarsie game and Johnny hadn't softened up Gentile and the Canarsie line for you," said Willy. "You'll be murdered if Johnny doesn't play well against Bingham and we get skunked."

Papa Baer said, "Why you slab-sided whippersnapper, you are dead right!" He sat down, and then he looked very old and very weary. He said, "Okay, Cadore. I'm glad to relax. Tell me about it. You've been a help to me. I know something's afoot against me. I can smell it. Do you know what it is?"

Willy told him in a few words. He ended, "And if Jeepers Creepers has anything to do with Holliday football, I quit. And you know what? I like Holliday. I like you, too. I like the football set-up. I don't aim to have it all busted up by a crumb like Creeper the Jeoper."

"He is awfully strong with M. W.," said Baer wearily. "His brother, huh? That wind-bag. I'd hate it, Willy."

"Play Johnny in the Bingham game," Willy said flatly. "Play him to death. Have Slavin use him, let me throw a couple passes to him. Johnny has an incentive. He wants to shine. He is down in the dumps now, but you build a few plays around him and act like nothing went wrong and see if he doesn't respond."

Papa said curiously, "Willy, what kind of a course are you taking here at school?"

"Physical ed," said Willy. "And not because it's easy, either."

"I see," nodded Papa Baer. "I'll remember . . . if this works."

"If it doesn't work, we can both enlist in the Navy," said Willy. "Hell, maybe there'll be another war, anyway."

"Don't be cynical," said Papa sternly. "You're too young. Leave that to me. . . ."

Willy plowed back across the campus.



Connie Holliday

He went up the steps of the verandah of the architectural sepulcher which belonged to M. W. Holliday.

The girl was in the music room. She stared at him, then said, "Where is your bodyguard?"

Willy said, "Do not jest about the love of an honest fullback. Johnny is mourning. He is also playing lousy football. Where is your honor, Connie? You have led this boy on, now you spurn him. And just before the Bingham game, too."

Connie said, "Would it be kinder to give the big, swell slob encouragement? Just for a game?"

Willy said, "No. You're right there. But Connie, the guy loves you. I think I have him conditioned to prove it. He is going to dedicate the Bingham game to you. He is going to knock himself out to show you what he would do for you. Won't you give him a chance?"

She said, "Willy, you slay me." She walked away from him across the room. She turned on the huge record-player. It was a rhumba. She said pensively, "Can you dance like Johnny?"

Willy refrained from saying that he



had taught Johnny. He kept his eyes closed, taking her in his arms.

He danced.

She was as responsive as a leaf upon a slender branch with the breeze blowing gently through a forest of green beauty. He opened his eyes and her face was close to his and her hips swayed in unison with his. He stopped dancing and said, "Please Connie, give Johnny a chance? He's such a swell big guy . . . ."

The girl's voice was different than he had ever heard it. She said, "Surely, greater love hath no halfback . . . . Go, Willy. Go away. Please go away."

He went, bewildered. He had failed, he knew. He had gained no ground through Connie's defense. He had only made her sad, when he would have given his right eye to make her happy.

Still, he had more hopes on the other angles . . . . He was saving something for Jeepers Creepers . . . . He rode quietly on the train to Bingham Town, his busy little mind working like mad . . . .

## VI

**J**EEPER DESTINY was in his glory. He had the Graduate Manager of Bingham in the box with M. W. Holliday and lovely Connie. He was basking in the broad a, extolling the Bingham system of football, his brother's consummate knowledge of the game. Jeepers Creepers was ambitious to take over the whole works . . . .

What Bingham had was Cat Horner, Rat Little, Tuffy Raye and a hundred eager young aides. In other words, material. Jeoper's Aunt' Hattie could have coached the Bingham squad with success. They were Rose Bowl bound, as soon as they disposed of the little team from Holliday U., the only breather on their big time schedule.

What Holliday U. and Coach Papa Baer had was nothing to lose but their football set-up. It was amazing how the word got about that this was it, this was the pay-off. Slavin came boiling to Willy Cadore in the dressing room under the hostile stands.

"I hear Jeepers is after Papa. Did you hear it?"

Just as if he had not carefully spread

the news, Willy said, "Tell me about it, Pat."

"They're trying to get that dopey brother of Destiny's," Slavin exploded. "They want to can Papa!"

Willy said, "Well, Papa's pretty tough . . . ."

"He's the best damn Coach in the country," Slavin declared. "Look at the way he's brought us along. Look at how we beat Canarsie! Look at how we're pullin' together after all that stuff in the beginning . . ."

Willy said, "That's right, Pat. I agree with you! We used to not like each other, at that."

"Now we're all in there," said Slavin hotly. "We'll show 'em. Abe and Bull are ravin' mad. How's Johnny feel?"

"Does he know about it?" asked Willy innocently.

"I'm goin' to tell him now," said Pat hastily. He dashed off.

Willy put on his uniform. He was very careful about the protective pads. He knew the Cat and the Rat and Raye from last year.

Connie had driven up in the car. It was parked right outside. After the warm-up period, Willy came close and stared at her. Johnny was nowhere around. Willy said, "You didn't give him some encouragement?"

She said, "I wanted to tell you that I saw him. I talked to him." Her voice was still subdued, she was not the poised, flippant girl he had known.

Willy said, "Oh thank you, darling . . . . I mean Connie." He was conscious of a blush which swept him to the shoulder pads.

M. W. came steaming along at that moment and saved him.

M. W. said, "Er . . . well, can't be helped, I suppose. But I had hoped . . . . Do what you can, Cadore. Even if we cannot beat a team with such a wonderful—er—system, we can build for next year. Strive to keep the score close. No disgrace to lose, y' know."

"Yes, sir," said Willy. "Tell the other boys, Mr. Holliday. They'll be glad to know how you feel." He winked at Connie. She was staring at him and now there was color in her cheeks.

Connie whispered, "You'll never quit,



Willy. You'll figure something. Beat their brains out, Willy."

He said, startled, "I'll be in there, Connie."

Papa Baer was quiet, biting, deadly serious in the pre-game talk. He sent them out with one sentence ringing in their ears, "You've either got it, or you haven't and whether you have or not, damn you, I'm on your side all the way!"

It was an accolade, coming from Papa. He could not tell them he loved them, but he could make them know it. Bo Sitzky was weeping a little when he went out and lost the toss. Lou Lacey, the Bingham tackle and captain sneered at him, "Good old emotional uplift from Papa, huh? I hear you're losin' the old goat."

Bo did not even answer. He came back and nodded to Papa and Holliday started Slavin, Cohen, Sherman . . . and Johnny Mace in the backfield.

Johnny lingered a moment beside Willy. His broad face was lined and grim. He said, "I'll be waitin' for you in there, Willy. Everything is goin' to be all right, pal."

"I know," said Willy. "Knock 'em dead, kid."

Johnny went on the field. The ball was teed up. Bo raised his hand, Lacey made an insolent gesture. The whistle blew and Bo kicked the leather into the Bingham end zone.

Cat Horner started from the twenty with the smashing T formation. Big, fast Bingham guards split the line. Raye plunged.

Somehow the Holliday line closed up. Backing up, Johnny Mace threw his bulk under the play. Raye got one yard.

Cat Horner seemingly tried again. But, barely five yards back, he was suddenly hauling back his right arm. Rat Little, faking a block on Dodo, cut away and took the ball over his shoulder. It was not such a dangerous play, at that, with the ball always in the flat and the glue-fingered Rat wheeling and dodging and ever ready to make the catch. Horner worked it three times to midfield.

Abe Cohen was getting the worst of it. He simply could not keep track of the elusive Rat. He was trying hard, though. The Bingham quarterback faked and feinted and let loose again.

THIS TIME Abe was ready. He whirled, cut into the path of the ball. Tuffy Raye, coming down, had a wide open shot as Abe kept his eye on the ball. Raye cut him down as though Abe were a sapling under the axe.

Before Abe hit the ground, Papa was calling, "Willy!"

Willy started. There was Bull Dana for defense, a good big man. But Papa's eyes were gleaming in a way Willy knew. He got his headguard and went in. Papa did not even give him vitriolic instructions. The time was past for such psychological high jinks.

Cat Horner, lounging through the time out, sardonically surveyed Willy's slender form. They carted Abe off. It was first down on the Holliday forty. Rat had not muffed the pass . . . . .

Horner switched, now that the Holliday team was unsettled and spread, waiting for the passes. He began using Raye off the tackles, with Matt Weill and Matt Magee blocking. Acting himself as flanker, sending Rat Little down on every play, he organized a swift-breaking ground game which rolled over Holliday. In a few plays Bingham was roosting on the eleven, first and ten.

They made it. The last play found Raye trying to crawl over, beneath Johnny and Bo, a half foot short of the goal. It became first down and goal to go for Bingham.

Bo took time out. The players grouped about him. The big tackle said, "They're tryin' to get Papa. These bums were coached by some slob assisted by Jeepers Destiny's brother. I'm goin' to kill me one of them about now. Who else has got a man?"

It seemed that everyone had, but Willy was watching Horner and wondering what the quarterback would try. When time was in he had made up his mind.

Tuffy Raye had the ball. The Bingham line uncoiled its strength. Desperate, gallant Holliday men met them head-on. Willy, lurking in the background, broke with that deceptive stride of his.

The Rat was sneaking for the cheese. Willy got on his trail. Horner, fading, whipped over the short pass.

Willy shot ahead. In full stride he plucked the ball from the fingertips of the



star Bingham end. Racing out of the end zone he howled, "Johnny!"

Bingham players were heaved in several directions. Johnny in all his might was racing for the sideline. Cat Horner, covering his own pass, cursing heartily, was in the way. Johnny, remembering last year, hit him a blow which sent him out of bounds and rattling in every bone.

Bingham men came in their red shirts. Johnny lagged and smacked them. The field was clear.

Willy said again, "Johnny!" He wheeled and lateralled the ball. Johnny's eyes went big as saucers. He caught the pigskin and began running. Willy saw Tuffy coming up and let loose. He took the bigger man by surprise and laid him flat.

Johnny ran all the way for the score. The stands were as silent as the tomb except at a spot around the box where M. W. sat. There a girl leaped, screaming, and quick-minded men rose loyally to help her cheer, yes, even Bingham men who believed this freak to be a mere happenstance in an informal little push-over for the Red.

As Bo prepared to convert, Willy said, "She was yelling her head off. I saw her jump up and down."

Johnny gave him a queer look. He said, "Thanks, pal, for the hand-off."

Pat Slavin blurted, "You should have seen the block he hurled at Raye. Raye mighta had Willy, at that."

Willy said, "Never mind that. Let's hold these jerks."

They kicked off. Horner made a nice return to the twenty-five. Bingham started to roll again. Raye was great off the tackles and between guard and center. Holliday retreated, giving only a few yards, but going slowly back.

Horner tried one more pass on the march. Willy knocked it down. Horner scowled and went back to the difficult ground game. There were innumerable substitutions from the Bingham bench. Rat Little went out and a big, ugly strong man came in at end.

The big man raced through on the first play. He flung himself at Willy, although the ball was no where near. Willy, wary, backed up. The end kicked at him.

Johnny was just crawling out of the heap. He nodded. He shifted over. Bo

took the brunt of the next line drive. The big tough end, racing in, all attention on Willy, never saw what hit him. He could have read it in the papers the next day, had he regained consciousness, for all the reporters commented upon it.

Little came back in. Little had respect for the amenities, somehow or other.

Horner drove his team to the Holliday ten. Raye began battering at the line. He gained one yard. He gained two. He gained three.

It was fourth and four. Horner concealed his intent as well as he could. But the pass had to come. The staunch Holliday line was too brave, too smart. Horner leaped and threw one like a bullet.

Willy dared not cover Rat Little. He was playing the ball, a desperate chance to take. He had to fly through the air. He got a hand on the leather and batted it down.

On the twenty yard line Pat Slavin said, "One for the Papa Baer. A juicy forty-three, Willy. Hep!"

It was nice to know big, tough Pat was one hundred per cent on his side now, that Dodo would be blocking like a wild man, that the great Holliday line would be mopping up downfield if he got loose. Willy followed Johnny. He got eight yards.

Pat was chanting the signals. They hit a certain rhythm, all silent, listening to Pat, playing every moment as though it were their last, and their life work was in it. Johnny had it, on the switch reverse, and Willy was flanker. Big, fast Bingham men unaccountably banked against the play.

Willy said sharply, "Johnny!"

The big man turned and slung the shovel pass. Then he headed for the Bingham. Willy slowed down, changing pace to avoid a tackler, waiting for Johnny to shine.

Then he was running. Johnny was among the Bingham. Bo was down there, Slavin and Dodo and the others were industriously lacing red shirts all over the field. Willy ran to the midfield stripe before Cat got him by the ankle on a lucky stab.

Willy whispered, "Now is the hour, Pa. Johnny . . ."

"Right! Fifty-five," said Pat promptly.



Johnny took it in the single wing. Faking, he began running wide. Zeke and Joe Terranova were whipping downfield with Cat Horner screaming, "Pass! Pass!" and backing up as fast as his legs would carry him.

Willy ran down with the others. The ball would go to one of the ends, if he could run fast enough, for this was Willy's private secret, the play he knew Johnny could make. He raced along, a Bingham defender escorting him. They were giving Johnny fine protection back of the line, and the big guy was taking his time. Cat Horner was between the ends and the goal, with Tuffy to help him.

Willy ran a little faster, hoping he might block one of the Bingham stars out of the play if it succeeded. He ran down and made a loop to come in behind them. He heard Cat Horner shout.

It was Cat who put him on to it. He saw only the shadow at first. Then he knew it was the ball.

The whirling spheroid was heading into the end zone. Johnny had outdone even his own previous length on a throw!

Willy had the wheel again. He went over the line leaning at a dangerous angle, stretching every muscle. The ball tipped his fingers. He bobbled it. He fell . . . and caught the ball before he hit the dirt! . . .

There was a lot more to the ball game. But none of it counted until that last moment. . . . .

It was the closing play of the football game. Willy, battered and worn, had played forty-five of the long minutes. He stood and looked at the scoreboard.

It still read Bingham 0, Holliday 14.

Bingham had the ball. They were, for the umpteenth time, on the Holliday five yard line. Tuffy Raye, raging, impotent, intent only on gaining a touchdown to take the edge off defeat, was coming through.

Johnny Mace got lower. Johnny came up with Tuffy on his back and spread him high, wide and unhandsome. The ball, the precious ball, hurtled in a little leap.

Willy pounced. He grabbed it. He swung and saw Pat Slavin behind him. He handed it to Pat and howled, "Johnny!"

The whole backfield took that one down. Pat, who also had not scored a touchdown ere this game, went over. Then they all put their arms around each other as the gun sounded and the line came weaving down. And they cheered.

WILLY clung to the gleaming side of the big car. One eye was bunged. His mouth was swollen where Tuffy had clipped him. He had to think hard about how bad the Bingham had looked to remain erect. M. W. came reeling up. He said, "We won! We won!"

"You're telling him?" demanded Connie. She was holding Willy's hand.

Willy said, "How does Destiny feel? Like a tot?"

M. W. said, "He's—ah—converted. Says his system of bringing in—er—deserving men like you and Mace has paid off beyond his wildest hopes."

Willy said, "It sure has. It's paid him. Because we never got that emolument, Mr. Holliday. Neither Johnny nor me. Not the first dime."

"Oh!" said M. W. Willy thought he was about to weep. "Oh. You must have thought I was *mean*." He whirled. "Let me at him. I'll tear him apart. I'll fire him—er—physically!"

Connie said, "Go in and change and come back and ride home with me."

"Where's Johnny?" asked Willy.

"Looking for a telephone. I gave him the number of a cousin of mine who resembles me slightly," said Connie.

Willy took a deep breath. "A cousin? Looks like you?"

"Johnny has recovered. Johnny played this game for Papa Baer, for me, for old Holliday, but mostly for you, Willy Cadore. Johnny and Papa both know who sparked this team. And if you don't think I know it, you are even crazier than I. Oh Willy, what's the matter with you? Can't you understand anything but football?"

He stood, stunned. He said, "But Johnny . . . . it was Johnny . . . . You even said you wished you had him blocking out for you all your life!"

"Darling!" she wailed. "Who wants to be blocked out for? I want someone to carry the ball!"



# RAMBLIN' WRECK

By JIMMY JONES

**Bobby Dodd, young coach of Georgia Tech's high-flying Yellow Jackets, has the unorthodox idea that his players should get some fun out of football. And the scoreboard shows what a whopping good time they've had since Bobby took over . . .**

**Y**OU'VE heard it, of course. Especially if you're a radio or football fan. . .

*"I'm a Ramblin' Wreck from Georgia Tech*

*And a helluva Engineer,*

*A helluva, helluva, helluva, helluva helluva Engineer.*

For twenty-five years the football teams of the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta donned their mustard colored jerseys and sallied forth to play inspired football for a lanky, sagacious Scotchman from Mud River, Kentucky, named Bill Alexander. Alex had been the coach at Georgia Tech for so long that anyone nursing ambitions to succeed him was looked upon as a pretentious upstart.

For fourteen of those years, young Bobby Dodd was Alexander's backfield coach and a good one. People told him good naturedly that he was wasting his time hanging around Georgia Tech.

"The old man will coach forever," they said.

But Robert E. Lee Dodd, as his Confederate sympathizing father had christened him when he was born in Virginia in 1908, was a born gambler. He had gambled with destiny ever since the day he hid out on the sidelines as an overalled lad of eleven and caught a touchdown pass which helped him to make the varsity at Kingsport, Tenn. High School while still in grammar school.

As an All-American quarterback at the University of Tennessee in the late 'twenties, Bobby Dodd would dodge all over the field and give his coach the heeby-jeebies, for the sake of getting off a pass to one of his pet receivers, usually Buddy Hackman or "Whitey" Hug. For these shanigans and his crafty signal calling, he earned the name of "Football's Artful Dodger."

Bobby Dodd was still gambling when as

an assistant he turned down numerous lucrative offers to leave Georgia Tech and become the head coach at large Southern colleges. He was loyal to his chief, Bill Alexander, but in case Alex ever stepped down, Georgia Tech was the job that Bobby wanted.

Everyone agreed that Bobby stepped into one of the toughest coaching jobs in the country when he succeeded Alexander in 1945 just after the 'Old Man' had produced his fourth Bowl team in five years. Georgia Tech was a school that had boasted only two head coaches in forty years and Bobby had to shoot at the great records compiled by John W. Heisman and his pupil, Alexander.

After three years on the job, it now is possible to appraise and evaluate the work of Dodd as head coach. In three seasons as head man of the Engineers, the rangy, affable Dodd has produced two Bowl teams of his own (Oil Bowl '46 and Orange Bowl '47) and his teams have posted records of 22 victories against 9 losses in regular seasonal competition. Six of these losses came in Dodd's first season when his material was mediocre and his boys had not yet absorbed the intricacies of the "T" formation, now the accepted fashion at the Flats.

The season of 1947 was Dodd's best to date as Tech's head coach. His speedy Yellow Jackets ripped off a record of 9-1 for the season, losing only to Alabama (14-7) and then went to Miami and cuffed the University of Kansas in the Orange Bowl New Year's Day by a score of 20-14 in a Garrison finish.

As Bobby sat reminiscing in his office only a short dropkick from Grant Field, he felt happy over these accomplishments. This modest young Virginian knew that he had had a good season. At 39, life was just beginning for him as a football coach.



Bobby DODD



GEORGIA TECH



His long years of patient waiting had served him well. But that was not all that made Bobby happy. He chuckled as he puffed on a cigar and recalled how, as a gawky unknown from the Virginia mountains he once had been given the bum's rush by this fashionable school at which he was now the head coach.

"It happened in September of 1927," Dodd recalled. "An end named Paul Hug and I who had been schoolmates at Kingsport High were shopping around for a scholarship. Both of us came from poor families and needed all the help we could get. Vanderbilt wanted us but I didn't have quite enough entrance units to meet their exacting standards. We then tried Georgia but they offered us only partial scholarship. So we tightened our belts and paid Georgia Tech a visit. The man who interviewed us was the late Alva (Kid) Clay, then freshman coach at Tech. The interview lasted about five minutes. Clay told us that he'd never heard of us and that, besides, Georgia Tech had more good football players than they knew what to do with. They did, too, for that was the year before they went to the Rose Bowl in 1928. Clay told us frankly that we didn't rate a scholarship at Georgia Tech and advised us to try some other school."

The two young men left Clay's office completely crushed over their third straight rebuff.

Dodd had a married sister living at Perry, Ga., and the two youngsters, broke and despondent, headed there. They lived with Dodd's relatives while they plotted their next move. Meanwhile Mercer University in Macon, thirty miles away, offered the two boys full scholarships. They were about to enroll there when an offer from a larger school came through.

Up at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Major Bob Neyland, head coach of the Vols, had gotten wind of the fact the two wandering athletes were about to cast their lot with Mercer. Neyland knew all about the abilities of Dodd and Hug for his scouts had seen them play at Kingsport.

The major got Dodd's brother-in-law on the telephone.

"Tell those two hooligans to hop a train for Knoxville right away," Neyland shouted.

THAT NIGHT found Dodd and Bug on their way to the University of Tennessee and a great gridiron destiny. An ironical possibility that should be mentioned here is that Dodd, if he had entered Mercer, would have become a team-mate of Wally Butts, now his arch coaching rival at the University of Georgia in Athens. The stubby Butts was then a star end with the Macon School.

"Neyland didn't bother to meet us at the station when we reached Knoxville," Dodd revealed. It seems that the major, who has a long memory, had read a statement of Dodd's in the Tennessee newspapers in which the outspoken Virginian had expressed a preference to play under Dan McGugin at Vanderbilt. Naturally this didn't set too well with Neyland, since McGugin's Commodores then were several weeks before he completely forgave Dodd for his indecision about entering Tennessee.

But Neyland well knew the athletic abilities of Hug and Dodd, who actually had spent a few days at Vandy, working out. He registered the two boys in school that morning and that afternoon he played them in a freshman game. In those days of few rules, players could still transfer to another school after enrolling if they hadn't played in a regularly scheduled contest. And the Major wasn't taking any chances.

"I played quarterback and didn't even know the signals," Dodd recalled. "I just pitched passes to Hug with whom I had worked out some signals in high school."

This game launched Bobby Dodd on a glorious career as a player. In four years at Tennessee as a freshman and varsity star, he participated in only one losing game. That was a 19-6 defeat at the hands of Alabama's great 1930 eleven which later crushed Washington State's Cougars in the Rose Bowl at Pasadena, 24 to 0.

Dodd has a bitter memory of this game which was played at Tuscaloosa, in his senior year. He dropped a 55-yard touchdown pass from halfback Buddy Hackman behind the Alabama goal line that might have altered the outcome of the game.

"I'll never forget that," laughed Bobby. "I'd been throwing to Hackman for three



years and naturally all our rivals had us pretty well covered. So we decided we'd get clever against mighty 'Bama. Back in the huddle, I whispered to Hackman to throw to me this time. So when the ball was snapped I went sashaying down the field. The 'Bama secondary was so surprised to see me in the role of receiver that nobody tailed me. I got in the clear and was all alone in the end zone. Hackman threw me a strike but the ball slipped through my fingers. I'm still giving myself hell for that."

Dodd played on some great teams at Tennessee, some of the best Dixie has ever seen. He had as team-mates such illustrious help as Hackman and Hug, both magnificent pass receivers; Herman Hickman, a burly guard, now head coach at Yale and last, but far from least, Gene (The Bull) McEver, one of the greatest running backs the South has ever seen.

Dodd and McEver were great friends and mutual admirers. McEver called himself "Old Ephram" for some reason and Dodd was known as "Old Dodge," for good reason. The rangy Dodd had few equals when it came to eluding would-be tacklers behind the scrimmage line while he jockeyed for an opening to fire one of his deadly passes. Dodd's chief talents were as a passer and kicker, but he also was a heady signal caller—one of the brainiest of all time.

**I**N 1930 which was his senior year, Dodd was unanimous choice for all-Southern and made numerous All-American despite the fact that this was Frank Carideo's peak year at Notre Dame. Most of the critics were divided over Dodd and Carideo that year. Both were magnificent quarterbacks, but Carideo got a few more votes because Notre Dame was unbeaten.

Dodd still displays signs of disappointment because none of the great Tennessee teams he played on ever went to a bowl game. "Just imagine it," he says. "We lost only one game in three years and that to a Rose Bowl champion—but we didn't even receive an invitation to a Bowl. That kind of record these days would get you a half dozen bowls."

Dodd believes the 1930 Tennessee team would have gone to the Rose Bowl but for the fact the great McEver was hurt

and didn't play a minute all season and "Whitey" Hug was injured and out of the crucial game with Alabama at Tuscaloosa.

And there was one more good reason Tennessee didn't get a bowl bid those days—the University of Kentucky.

"Kentucky was our jinx," mused Bobby. "They tied us 0-0 in 1928 and 6-6 in 1929 just as we were being talked about as Bowl material."

It was in the 1929 game with Kentucky that Dodd participated in what some believe to be the greatest play ever pulled on a football field. For sheer desperation and courage on the part of a pass receiver, Dodd says it has never been equalled.

The pass receiver was "Buddy" Hackman, still Dodd's favorite of all time.

"We were trailing the Wildcats 6-0 late in the game on a snow-covered field at Lexington, Ky.," Dodd recalled. "The ground was frozen hard and slippery as glass. We hadn't been able to work our passes and the heavy Kentucky line had smeared our running attack play after play.

"It was the first time that Hackman had ever been behind in a game, either in high school or college and he was frantic. On the fourth down, we went back into the huddle at about our thirty, ready to kick the ice-coated ball back to our foes. But Hackman wasn't ready to surrender. He pleaded with me 'Throw me just one more pass, Dodge. Just throw it any old where and I'll catch it.' "

Against his better judgment, Dodd finally yielded to Hackman's pleading. They went back into formation and Kentucky got ready to receive a punt. Dodd whipped the soggy pigskin into the waiting arms of Hackman about twenty-yards away and alone out in the flat. The fleet halfback slipped on the ice as he pivoted to receive the ball and almost fell down. Then, he leaped, stabbing out one hand. Miraculously, he held the ball, and 55 yards across the snow covered turf to Kentucky's one-yard line. On the next play, the Vols bucked the ball across to save themselves a defeat.

That play still remains in Dodd's memory as his topnotch thrill in football. Next, he rates a 100-yard return of a kickoff by Gene McEver for a touchdown against



Alabama in 1928, when he and Dodd were sophomores at Tennessee.

"I'll never forget that one either. It was just as great in the way of a running play as Hackman's was from the standpoint of a pass play. Old Eph, as I called McEver, was the cockiest athlete I ever saw. He believed that he could do anything and he very nearly always did what he wanted to do.

"On this day, as we took the field against Alabama, we were a bunch of green sophomores and Alabama had a veteran team. Alabama won the toss and elected to kick. As we went back to receive, McEver yelled across to me. "I hope they kick it to me."

The Alabama man got off a long, low boot and Old Eph took it right off his shoe tops on our goal line. He didn't stop running until he had weaved and side-stepped his way 100 yards down field for a touchdown."

It was in that same year—1928—that these amazing Tennessee sophomores also accomplished another *lese majeste*. In their final game of the season they defeated a great University of Florida team, 13-12, knocking them out of a bid to the Rose Bowl. Florida, which boasted such stars as Clyde (Cannonball) Crabtree, "Red" Bethea, Rainey Cawthon, Dale Van Sickle, Dutch Stanley and others, had its greatest team of history and was being discussed, along with Georgia Tech, as one of the South's two leading candidates for the Rose Bowl game that year. Tennessee's one-point triumph over the 'Gators on a wet field paved the way to Pasadena for Tech. Thus Dodd was to render his first of many favors to the school that once refused him a scholarship.

## II

**A**LTHOUGH Georgia Tech has a long glorious football history, the school has had only three head coaches since General Leonard Wood, one-time chief of staff of the U. S. Army and Governor-General of the Philippines started the game there in 1892. The Engineers or *Yellow Jackets*, as they are best known, went along with student coaches until 1906 when the late, scholarly John W. Heisman, a University of Pennsylvania

graduate who had coached successfully at Clemson and Auburn was imported as tutor. Heisman coached the Engineers from 1906 to 1920 and won many Southern championships. His memory is perpetuated by the Heisman Trophy which is awarded annually to the Nation's outstanding football player.

In 1920 Heisman handed over the coaching reins to foxy Bill Alexander, who had been his aide since his graduation from Tech in 1912. "Alex" carried on the rich tradition of victory that "Heis" had established at the flats. In his 25 years as head coach of the Golden Tornado his teams posted 133 victories, 95 losses and eight ties against the strongest opposition available. His teams also played in five Bowl games, winning three. Alexander, like Heisman his predecessor, went in for intersectional games on a big scale and the Gold and White became known to gridirons far and near.

The Alexander System reached its zenith at Tech in the late 'twenties when the Engineers capped a five-year winning streak with an upset 8-7 victory over the University of California *Golden Bears* in the Rose Bowl on January 1, 1929. It was in this game that center Roy Riegels of California made his celebrated wrong-way run, and Alexander made an equally celebrated comment.

When Riegels, a fine player incidentally, was hit hard after recovering a fumble, he became temporarily befuddled and lost his sense of direction. To everyone's amazement, the lad set out toward his own goal line, the pigskin tucked happily under his arm, and ran about 70 yards before Teammate Benny Lom tackled him in the shadow of his own goal posts. A Georgia Tech substitute became tremendously excited and went rushing over to Coach Alexander, screaming: "Why in hell don't our players tackle him, coach?"

"Tackle him hell," snorted Alexander. "All he's doing is running the wrong way."

Alexander's teams copped Southern championships for Tech in '21, '22, '23, '27 and '28. Then, in the early 'thirties, Tech, like many other major colleges, became alarmed over the "Carnegie" report and put in a non-subsidization program. There followed several lean seasons when the Alexander star that had



burned so brightly in the twenties all but went into eclipse.

Realizing that his teams probably needed a virile young backfield coach fresh from college with new ideas, Alex imported young Bobby Dodd as his backfield assistant following his graduation from Tennessee in the spring of 1931. Dodd's youth—he was then only 23—his care-free ways and his bland, easy-going manner somewhat awed the old timers who were used to the austerity of Heisman and Alexander. They wagged their heads solemnly over his lack of experience. But the tall young man with the mountain burrs still in his speech soon showed his critics that he could devise scoring plays with as much skill and daring as he had shown as a quarterback. In the mid-thirties, following a particularly disastrous season, he persuaded Alexander to give his conservative single wing offense a little more deception and nerve by an injection of some razzle-dazzle.

"What if we do lose a few games while we're experimenting," Dodd told his chief. "We'll at least be a more interesting team to watch."

Until they mastered the tricky reverses, hidden ball plays and other legerdemain that Professor Dodd dreamed up, the *Jackets* took quite a few lickings. But in 1939 the bounded back to the top with another fine team that went to the Orange Bowl and beat Missouri, 21 to 7. There followed in rapid order a Cotton Bowl team in '42, a Sugar Bowl champion in '43 and another Orange Bowl contest in 1944. The Alexander-Dodd combine was hailed as successful and everything was hotsy-totsy again out at the Flats.

During the *Jackets'* comeback Bill Alexander was regarded as a fixture at Tech and various schools began casting covetous eyes upon Bobby Dodd, his talented young assistant and razzle-dazzle entrepreneur who was given much credit for the Tech offense. On more than one occasion Tech came within a cat's whisker of losing Dodd to other schools. Florida, Auburn, Texas A & M, Baylor and numerous tried at various times to laud him as head coach, but Dodd stuck with Georgia Tech. His patience and loyalty were rewarded in February, 1945, when the Old

Man abruptly announced his resignation after 33 years at Tech as assistant and head coach. Alex, on advice of his physician, retired to become athletic director, following his team's 12-26 loss to Tulsa in the Orange Bowl Jan. 1, 1945.

Thus, Robert E. Lee Dodd, the "Artful Dodger" who had been refused a scholarship at Georgia Tech once upon a time, inherited at the age of 37 one of the most coveted coaching jobs in the country—a throne that had known but two rulers in nearly a half century of intercollegiate football.

Was Bobby Dodd big enough for the job?

There was little doubt as to Bobby's technical football knowledge or his backfield coaching ability when he took charge. But there were misgivings as to his capacity for becoming a head coach. Not all assistants make good head coaches and some of Dodd's admirers wondered if he was seasoned and serious enough for the role—and if he possessed qualities such as poise, leadership, coolness, strategy, discipline and, above all, the ability to to inspire his players to reach those heights necessary to great achievements on the playing field.

"Bobby knows his football all right, but he's too good natured and easy going to be a head coach," muttered some of the Doubting Thomases among the Peachtree Street Quarterbacks.

"He's been just like a brother to those kids—they'll push him around any old way," another said.

But Dodd had been the long-time Crown Prince and he deserved the big break he was getting as head coach. Everyone agreed as to that. So Bobby became head man at the Flats in the winter of 1945 to the accompaniment of good wishes from press and public alike. The general attitude was "wait and see" and "let's give Bobby a chance."

Time will tell, they thought.

**F**OOTBALL FANS, particularly the college variety, are a mercurial and unpredictable lot. They had been used to victorious elevens wearing the Gold and White for many years. Alexander had given them four Bowl teams in seven years and that's plenty good. And before



"Jump Shift" artists had brought Southern championships to the Flats in 1915, 1916, 1917, 1918 and 1920.

It would be pleasant to report just here that Dodd picked up the baton from Alexander in his very first season as Tech's head coach and carried on victoriously. But such would not be fact. Material was scant that first year. Some of the fine players who had come to Tech in the Navy's V-12 unit during World War II such as Phil Tinsley, John Steber and Bill Chambers transferred to other schools and Dodd was left with a lot of under-sized athletes not of his choosing.

In the midst of such uncertainty, Dodd made a typical decision. He junked the time-honored single wing offense that Tech had been using for twenty years and installed the "T" formation. His backs were small and untalented, and there was no outstanding triple threat such as is needed for the tailback role in the single wing system. Some of his pony backs such as Jack Peek and Mickey Logan had speed and might be able to take advantage of the quick opening holes that the "T" exploits.

Dodd became sold on the "T" after seeing Notre Dame and the Chicago Bears operate it. His first move after making the decision to install it was to import Ray Ellis, a High School coach from Madisonville, Ky., as his chief assistant. Ellis, while he had no college coaching background, had been using the "T" for years and was thoroughly familiar with its operation as a successful high school coach.

Again the old timers shook their heads. Why didn't Dodd go out and get himself some "name" assistants? After all, he could afford them. But Bobby surprised the experts again when he brought likeable Dwight Keith up from the Freshman ranks and made him his backfield assistant. Incidentally, Keith also doubles as the Tech Athletic Publicity director.

"I'm going to put in my own system from top to bottom and I'll sink or swim with it," said the young coach resolutely.

In the autumn of 1945, the Dodd ship came close to sinking. At times the sailing was rough and the sails were reefed dangerously close for the young Tech mentor. Dodd's first team at Tech won four games

and lost six. It finished its season somewhat ingloriously by taking a 33-0 beating from the Georgia Bulldogs, led by the great Charley Trippi, and Dodd's fortunes were at a low tide. Some of his friends even suggested that he tactfully reverse his course and go back to the old reliable single wing and the razzle dazzle. But like his distinguished namesake at Gettysburg, Robert E. Lee Dodd decided to fight it out.

"Shucks, it's more fun losing with the 'T' than winning with any other formation I know," he told its detractors.

Bobby Dodd became more serious with the weight of responsibility. He and his staff worked terrifically hard in the spring of 1946 to rebuild their squad and win its confidence.

But football practice for the players continued to be fun at Georgia Tech. The boys still relaxed with touch football and similar horse play, with Bobby occasionally joining in the fun. Slowly but surely, Dodd's players came to idolize him. Instead of taking advantage of his natural friendliness, they became fiercely determined to win some games for their young coach the following fall and take him off the hot spot. Meanwhile Dodd was further strengthening his staff by importing Bob Woodruff, a successful assistant to "Red" Blaik at West Point, as his line coach. Woodruff, a personable fellow, like Dodd, did a wonderful job in this capacity and is now head coach at Baylor.

CAME the season of 1946 and the Georgia Tech team had a new look and *esprit de corps*. It started out with a 9-13 loss to Dodd's alma mater, Tennessee, but won its next eight games in a row and didn't lose again until the final game of the season when the Jackets fell before an unbeaten Georgia team, again led by the great Trippi, 35-7. Their 8-2 record landed them in the Oil Bowl at Houston where they plastered St. Mary's and Herman Wedemeyer, 41-19.

Bobby Dodd won his coaching spurs that year and Tech almost lost him to Baylor at the end of the season. Dodd went to Texas for several conferences but finally decided to remain with Tech. Baylor compromised by hiring Bob Woodruff, his line assistant.



Dodd and his Yellow Jackets really hit the Jackpot in 1947. Opening with a 27-0 triumph over Tennessee, the Jackets allowed only one touchdown (this by Auburn) to be scored against them in the next five games as they crushed Tulane, VMI, Auburn, Duke and The Citadel. Then they journeyed to Baltimore and nosed out the Navy in a thriller diller, 16-14.

The following Saturday they met Alabama—the South's most improved team last year—at Birmingham. The Crimson Tide was on the rebound under Harold Drew who had succeeded ailing Frank Thomas as the Tide's head coach. Harry Gilmer had a field day, throwing strikes and running like a wild man. When the game was over and the dust had cleared, Georgia Tech had suffered its first and only loss of the season, 14-7. But the Engineers finished up strong by smacking Furman 51-0 and then toppling Georgia 7 to 0, in their final game of the regular season before a crowd of 40,000 in Atlanta.

Along with Notre Dame, Michigan, Texas and one or two others, Tech ranked among the best teams in the country last year. It's 9-1 record landed the bid to play the University of Kansas in the Orange Bowl at Miami. And Bobby Dodd undoubtedly was the happiest coach in America the night the invitation came through. His determination to make football a pleasant pastime for his kids and, at the same time, win a few games, had paid handsome dividends.

Another Dodd gamble had paid off.

### III

**D**ODD'S attitude on football, in general, and Bowl games, in particular, is definitely a new approach from that of the average coach. "The kids make the game," says Bobby. "It is primarily a game for students and originally was meant to be a game of fun. But somewhere along the line it became a game for coaches and alumni. Then it became big business. The player became a small cog in the scheme of things. It is my plan to give the game back to the players as much as possible."

Dodd has suited his words to action. He feels that it is the players who make Bowl games possible and that they should have a little fun on these post season trips. While getting ready for the game with Kanas, Tech's practices rarely lasted more than thirty minutes and consisted mainly of calisthenics and signal drills. This was quite a contrast to what went on in the Kansas camp. It was the first Bowl game for the *Jayhawkers* of Coach George Sauer and they knocked themselves out with exacting drills. On the day of the game they were as taut as catgut while the Tech players were as frisky as a flock of spring lambs.

It was in this game that Dodd showed that he could be firm when the occasion demanded. Tech took it a little too easily in the first half of the game with the *Jayhawkers* which ended with the score deadlocked at 7-7. Between halves Dodd made one of his rare speeches. Fire flashed from the Virginian's eyes as he read the riot act to his boys.

The Jackets were a little ashamed of themselves after that. They felt like they were letting their coach down. They took the field with blood in their eyes and before the third quarter was over they had scored three touchdowns, one of which was called back. Kansas meanwhile had scored one more and was driving toward a third when Rollo Phillips, stocky Tech guard, recovered a fumble by a Kansas back virtually on the goal line. The game ended a short time later.

Dodd intends to remain as Georgia Tech's head coach as long as "They'll have me." He realizes that he is in a good spot, a good city and working for a school that is nationally known. If he ever quits coaching—and he realizes he must some day—he hopes to become a talent scout for some professional team and make the South his happy hunting ground.

Dodd is one of the few topnotch coaches in the game who works on a year-to-year contract. His only boss is Athletic Director Bill Alexander whose word is law at Georgie Tech. Out at Tech, Alexander does all the hiring and firing and it's a cinch he isn't hankering to fire Bobby Dodd.



# Six Point Bombshell

By STEWART STERLING

Everything was pretty quiet in the stadium that Saturday. Then suddenly—**BOOM**—Dynamite Dan Webb exploded out of a pile-up, streaking for paydirt like a golden sky-rocket...



DAN WEBB lay flat on his back with an armful of legs hugged to his helmet, a faceful of cleats grinding at his nose and mouth, half a ton of weight bouncing on his belly . . . and asked himself if the game was worth the candle.

The whistle peeled the pressure off his ribs. But there was no balm for bruised muscles in assistant line coach Yokum's whip-lash words. Not that the coach was bawling him out. Yokum was merely ignoring him.

"Soletti!" The caustic tone was directed

at the C team's towering left tackle. "How many times I got to tell you! *Check* that guard before you pull out of the line on reverses!

"*Check* him!"

Soletti nodded grimly, stalked to his position, glowered at Dan.

The guard murmured sympathetically: "Don't let it get you down, deep dish. Anybody'd think he never heard of a check bouncing, before."

Soletti grinned tautly. "Back in your bowl, wise cracker. You're due to be crumbled."



"Over," Yokum barked irritably. "But good."

The Cs shifted to unbalanced single wing. Dan crabbed over sideways to meet it. The man in motion cut across, crouch-

crashed. The leather bobbled loose.

"No . . o . . o . . o!" Yokum squinted as if in pain. His whistle peeled them off the pileup.

Again, the last blue jersey to move be-

*There was no hole, but Dan drove through like a madman!*



ing low, and getting up steam.

Coco Lewis, last year's freshman Wonder-Boy signal caller, stooped, wheeled, passed off . . .

Southern's famous wide reverse. 'Stoney' Hart's patented specialty. The gilt-edged ground-gainer, that—when clicking—made it look as if subs were pouring off the bench to block for the ball-carrier.

It didn't look that way now. Something gummed the works. The interference got balled up. The wing-back

longed to Dan Webb. His helmet was jammed down over one eye. Grass stuck to blood on his mouth. And the ball, to his waist pads.

He spat out grass. "Been fun, fellas." He hoisted himself erect by hooking his fingers in Coco Lewis's belt. "Have to get together over at *my* place, next time." He flipped the ball casually to Yokum.

Somebody sniggered. The coach's weather-burned face went deeper red as he waved the D-team center to take possession of the ball.

"Save those corny gags, Webb. We'll



audition your comic stuff some other time."

Dan murmured: "Don't bother. I'm strictly sustaining talent." He said it low enough so nobody except Soletti could hear him. Still . . . he meant it.

**T**HAT'S all he was. Talent for free. Competing with a huge squad, most of them here at Southern on cushy 'athletic' scholarships . . . with enthusiastic alumni boosters rooting for them. A few weren't getting any Athletic Office hand-outs. But those were the boys who'd checked in with big buildups from prep schools; they'd been tried out on last year's yearling squad.

There wasn't any ballyhoo background for Dan. No flashy freshman-record behind him. He was starting from scratch. And that would be all right with him—*if* they'd only rate him on the basis of his ability on cleats. They wouldn't, of course. He couldn't honestly claim there'd been enough time for the coaches to find out what he could do . . . and they had nothing else to go on. Outside of his tendency to horse around on the field. And that was no help.

He didn't resent Yokum's attitude. It was only natural for Southern's high-powered coaching staff to concentrate on material they knew something about. They didn't know anything about him. And *that* was all right with Dan, too. Less they knew about him, the better . . .

Yokum growled to Brad Sully, the D-team quarter. "Roll your own. Mix 'em up. Sock it in."

In the huddle, Sully decided: "Inside buck. To left. Right tackle's your meat, funny boy."

He looked at Dan.

"When better mousetraps are built, Webb will—" Dan broke off, suddenly.

A girl strode smartly along the sidelines. Girls weren't common at early-season practices. This one wouldn't have been common anywhere, anytime, he thought.

Not too tall, not too plump. Nice and neat. Slim, trim legs. A figure that made her fireman-red sweater envied among all sweaters. Hair that flowed like clear-smooth, lustrous honey down over the nape of her neck. Eyes that—he couldn't

be sure about the color of her eyes at that distance.

"*Heh!*" The ball shot back.

Dan was a split-second slow in pulling out, pivoting. He tried to make it up, plunging over to trap the moose-shouldered right tackle. He bumped his own blocking back, was dumped on his tail. The tackle bulled through, wrecked the works.

"Whatsamatter, Webb?" Yokum's voice dripped acid. "Maybe we better let you rest up a bit. Must be pretty wearing to think up those nifties, all the time."

Dan shook his head, apologetically. "Couldn't see where I was goin', coach. The blonde got in my eyes."

He flipped his fingers up to his helmet in salute to the girl.

## II

**A**T the midfield bench, Marla Gilman halted before a languid youth in wine-colored sport shirt and lime-tinted gabardines.

"Franno phoned to ask if he should bring his box out for the squad pix, boss."

Lin Hollet took off his dark glasses. It was the polite thing when you were talking to a pretty, even if she was only your secretary. Besides, he never could see enough of Marla, even without them.

"Tell him tomorrow, Marla. Stoney's cutting the squad after today's practice." He waved at the far end of the gridiron where the A and B teams were going through end-zone pass defense—across at the group going through blocking fundamentals on the opposite side of the field. "Franno couldn't get these all in, with a telephoto. There'll be twenty less, tomorrow."

"I'll call him back." Marla kept her eyes on the D-squad. "Who's the lad Yokie's raking over the coals?"

"Some gahunk named Webb." Hollet wasn't interested. "Transfer from Michigan. Backwoods boy . . . backwards about picking up the fine points of the game." He chuckled.

Marla watched the D's run the off-tackle buck again. This time Dan faked a block on Soletti, pulled back fast, behind the line, bunted him for a loop.

"Your gahunk seems to have picked up



the mousetrap trick, all right," she said dreamily. "He looks as if he had lots of—the old stuffaroo."

Hollet glanced at her quizzically:

"Think so? Take a good, long peek at him then. You won't be seeing him around after today."

"Are they dropping him from the squad?"

"Yup. No previous experience. Didn't even go out for frosh football at Ann Arbor. Hit-or-miss specialist, too. Hits this time, misses next. And," Hollet watched her slyly, "the coaches say he's always clowning around. Doesn't seem to take football seriously."

"No?" She jumped on the bench, beside Hollet; craned her neck to get a view of the action. The D's were trying the wide reverse, now. Klupper Smith carrying. Brad Sully, one halfback and both guards, blocking. Mostly one guard. Webb.

He mowed down his right tackle again with a stiff shoulder block, plowed through to the secondary. Backing up, for the C's Piet De Fano, last year's All Coast center, met him solidly. Dan didn't roll into him with a body block. He crashed into De Fano head on, standing up.

"Wowie!" Marla yelped, involuntarily, grabbing Hollet's shoulder.

The sound of the block was like a couple of freight cars being shunted together. De Fano went down, stayed down. Dan bounced off, kept his feet, went on.

Klupper was up even with him then, running in the clear. Only Coco Lewis between him and the goal. Dan put on a sudden, terrific burst of speed.

"Wait for pop!" He pulled ahead of the racing ball-carrier.

He left his feet in a flying, sidewise roll. Coco stiff-armed him away, but the quarter had to sidestep to do it. Klupper tore past. Only the whistle stopped him.

Marla let out her breath in a long, pent-up "Whee-you! If that's a sample of Mister Webb when he's just kidding, I'd sure like to see him when he really gets excited about something!"

ON his way to the shower, Dan paused at the mirror beside the locker room door. The features in the glass were clean, lean and well-freckled under the Califor-

nia bronze. But he paid no attention to his long, straight nose, the solemn gray eyes or the short-cropped thatch of rusty red.

What he scowled at was the swollen mouth. It felt as if somebody'd shoved a frankfurter between his gums and his upper lip. It didn't look that bad, but it wouldn't be any bonus, meeting a girl for the first time.

Of course there was always the possibility he *wouldn't* run into her—though he'd found out from Klupper Smith who she was and that she was working her way through the university, stenographing for Lin Hollet in the Athletic Director's office.

Also, it might not make any difference *how* he looked if he did meet her. There was no guarantee about anything—not even that he'd still be around the field house at all after the new squad list was posted today.

"An' if you aren't," he asked the reflection accusingly, "whose fault is that?"

The face in the mirror returned a mocking prop smile.

He nodded agreement, sauntered into the shower room. His own fault. Nobody else to blame.

So far as Yokum was concerned, Dan was, at best, a somewhat clumsy comer. Maybe the coach saw possibilities in him, for next year. Only next year would be nokay for Dan.

He had to make the grade *now*. All he asked was one good season of football before they found out about things back there in Michigan.

It was just the breaks that this fall Southern was three deep in big, fast-charging linemen . . . with plenty of experience in Stoney Hart's celebrated system.

*Stop kiddin' yourself*, he told himself, amiably. *You made your own breaks. Comin' out here as Joe No-Name, with a blank record. What'd you expect 'em to do? Throw their arms around you an' escort you to a place in the first-string lineup? Nuts!*

He balanced a piece of soap on the biceps of his outstretched arm, tightened the muscle suddenly so the soap flipped into the air.

*If you'd told 'em what happened, with*



*the Wolverines—maybe things would have been different!* He flipped the soap high again, caught it on his chin, as it fell. *Yeah! I'll say they'd have been different!* He grinned sourly at the idea.

Coco Lawis emerged from an ice-cold spray.

"Hey, where'd you learn that?"

Dan rotated his head, the soap still balanced on his chin. "Runs in th' family." He touched his throat. "We all got a jugular vein."

Coco snapped a towel-end at him. "I meant that standing-up block you threw at Piet."

"Ah—just lumberjack stuff." Dan hollered over the sound of the needle spray. "Some those top loaders get a few beers in 'em, they put on a Saginaw bull fight. Stick their fists in their pockets, stand up and butt each other—chest to chest—until somebody gets knocked on his can."

"Yeah?" Coco appraised his keg-chested build. "Might not work on Piet the second time. But it sure put the whammy on him then. Maybe Yokum'll have you teach th' rest of th' class how it's done."

"Maybe I won't be among those present when the class is called to order, tomorrow."

"That'd be terrible," Coco shook his head despondently. "What would we ever do, without that git-gat-giddle of yours, to relieve the dull monotony of practice!"

"If they cut me off the squad," Dan's voice was muffled by the shower, "I'll try not to take it quiet-like."

MARLA couldn't keep her mind on the list. The head coach's incisive voice, issuing from the office down the corridor, was too distracting.

"... not setting our sights for the Rose Bowl just yet ... few other little items on our schedule to think about first ... we're using the regulation leather ball, you know, not a crystal one ... ought to do pretty fair ... wealth of rugged material ..." Stoney Hart, giving out to the sport writers.

Marla's fingers made the keys clatter. *Cheyne. Cominski. Callahan. Dominique.*

She called to Lin Hollet:

"Those blasc birds from the newspapers. They'll see right through Stoney."

Hollet frowned. "In what way, my passion flower?"

"It's so obvious. They know him like a book. Chapter One: if we have a team that's a world-beater, Stoney's a pool of gloom. Chapter Two: when things don't look too rosy, he's bubbling over with confidence. Just listen to him fizz ..."

The publicity man scratched his nose delicately. "Can you keep a secret?"

She stuck her nose in the air, indignantly. "What's our weakness, now?"

"You know Stoney's formulae." Hollet came over to sit on the edge of her desk. "For the line, seven bulldozers who can double as whippet tanks. We've got the material for that, two or three times over."

She typed more names on the Revised Football Squad list, waiting.

"In the backfield," Hollet went on, "one who can punt and one who can pass."

"Everson, for the kicking," she nodded. "In a pinch, Quayley. Everson and My' Blumenthal, for the passing."

"One who can run and one who can block."

"Blumenthal can broken-field like nobody's business. And Dominique's even faster ..."

"Three from four leaves ... ?"

Marla stared up at him. "Blocking? Where would you go—except to the pros—to find a better blocking back than Ken Quayley?"

"A long way," Hollet admitted. "Quayley was sensational last year. He'd be a cold-riveted cinch for the big, black type and the four-color cuts in the magazines, come time for picking the All American crop this year ... except for one very small thing."

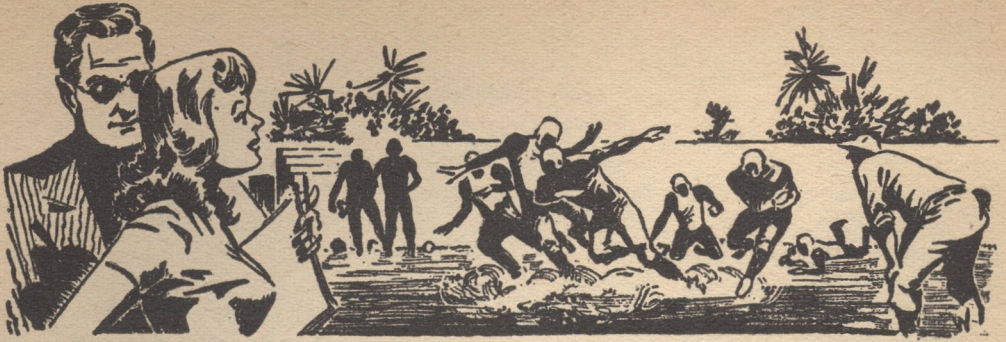
Marla's eyes widened. "An injury! He didn't show up for practice today!"

"At the hospital. Having X-rays. Showing a slight, not-to-be-mentioned fracture of the fourth lumbar vertebrae. That's what a cow pony can do to a two hundred and twenty pound fullback."

"So *that's* it." She made the typewriter hum for a moment. "Stoney's pride and joy, the big batter and lug man from San Antone is on the infirmary list!"

"It isn't fatal, you know." He patted her shoulder, soothingly. "Isn't necessarily too damn serious, either. There's Klupper Smith. There's Bill Prender ..."





*Prender. Vardeman*, she typed. The next name was *Wielaski, F.*

"What about Webb?" Marla asked.

Hollet walked back to his desk, sat down, cocked his feet up. "I told you he'd been cut from the squad."

She spun around to face him. "He's a blocker! You can't deny that, after the way he——"

"He's a guard, Marla. Remember?"

"What's the difference, if he can hit 'em so they stay down! Wouldn't be the first time a man had been shifted from one position to another!"

He smiled gently. "Trying to tell the coaches how to run their squad?"

"If the staff is looking all over for a four-leaf clover to replace the one they've lost, they might do worse than give this Webb kid a try. To me," she whirled back to the machine to avoid Hollet's reproving eyes, "it looked as if he had something, out there today."

"If he'd had enough, it would have shown up at Ann Arbor, precious. He grinned wisely.

"I didn't see him at Michigan," she retorted. "I saw him bounce Piet De Fanno on his ear, though. Klupper Smith couldn't do that if he was riding the front end of a locomotive. I've a good mind to speak to Stoney about him!"

"You may have a good mind, sweetie plum. But not a good idea." He sighed. "Coaches don't like little girls to stick their noses in the big boys' game. But if it'll amuse you, I'll mention him to Stoney, myself."

"Don't act as if you were doing *me* a favor. You *might* just possibly be doing a smart thing for the team. Of course," she tossed over her shoulder, typing rapidly, "I couldn't be expected to know about

such things. But I'll bet you Stoney puts him back on the squad."

"Bet me a date and I'll take you," he said lazily.

"All right." Swiftly she typed:

*Vardeman, T.*

*Webb, D.*

*Wielaski, F.*

**H**UN, taa, three, *zip!* Hun, taa, three, *zip!* Boyd Mason, backfield coach, barked over the portable amplifier.

Strung out in a circle, the squad alternately chopped wood with locked fists, then bent in a knee-straining squat. Dan Webb hummed, in cadence with the drill caller:

*Cal-is-then-ics, here I come*

*Right back where I started from——*

"All right," yapped Mason. "Backs at north goal. Ends here. Line, south goal. Put some life in it."

Yokum was organizing two-on-one offensive charging when Dan joined the linemen. The coach tugged at the visor of his baseball cap, scowling:

"I can take a joke as well as the next man. But not day after day. What you doing out here Webb?"

Dan raised his eyebrows: "Whatever you say, coach."

Yokum twirled his whistle: "Didn't you read the Revised Squad List?"

"Sure. My name's on it."

The line coach consulted his carbon copy. There it was, in smudged type. *Vardeman, Webb, Wielaski.*

"Mistake somewhere." Maybe Stoney'd reinstated this clown, in spite of the line coach's report. "Better see the head man."

Stoney Hart watched My' Blumenthal limber up the backs on quick buttonhook flips.



"Keep it low, keep it low, My'. So the secondary can't bat it down. Aim for the belly button. *What is it?*" He rasped brusquely to Dan.

"Mister Yokum told me to report to you, coach."

The pale, gray eyes in the long, narrow saddle-leather face studied him. "Webb, aren't you?"

Dan nodded.

The Head Coach recalled something Lin Hollet had said to him. Also, there were certain notations on Yokum's candidate-reports that lingered in Stoney's mind. "Lineman?"

"Played backfield some."

"Where?"

"Full."

The gray eyes sized up his hundred and eighty-five pounds. "Where'd you *play* fullback?"

"High school." Dan was bland. "Michigan."

"How many games they use you at Ann Arbor last year?"

Dan shook his head. "I meant my high school was in Michigan. Petosky."

Stoney let it go at that. "What can you do?"

"Buck, some. Block, some. Back up." Dan's flippant manner was gone.

This horsefaced man was one of the great gridiron strategists. He'd built a dozen devastating football machines here on the coast and down in Texas. The cutting edge of his sharp tongue had shaped a score of top rank stars who'd gone on to set new marks in the National Football League and the All American Association.

No sense kidding a man like this. "I'm not so hot on chucking or booting."

"No?" Stoney turned his head away, looked at him out of the corner of the cold, pale eyes, as if he couldn't believe the admission: "Can you *catch* a pass?"

"If I can reach it." No point underplaying himself *too* far, either.

"Get on the line, there."

The halfbacks were starting from the goal, as an imaginary line of scrimmage, sprinting ten, cutting over fast, whirling to grab the quick buttonhooks. Dan stepped in place behind Everson.

It looked easy. It wouldn't be, though. If Blumenthal timed his hair-trigger pass

wrong, if the rifled ball was wide—*Oh! what the hell!* he growled at himself, *It's only a game!*

Everson made his cut and his catch, lobbed the leather back to Blumenthal.

"Set . . . One . . . two . . . *Go!*" Stoney snapped

Dan got away fast, swerved, whirled, hands out *Voom!* The ball socked his navel. All he had to do was hold it.

He threw the oval back to the chunky Blumenthal with a grin of admiration for the passer who could place that leather like a moundsman tossing strikes.

STONEY said nothing to him. To Blumenthal he gave new orders.

"Long shots, My'. Thirty yards. Ten in from west side. Keep 'em high. Throw 'em soft."

Klupper Smith came up behind Dan while Al Dominique raced down for the first long heave.

"How'd you promote yourself to the backfield, skutch?"

"Not a promotion," Dan corrected him. "Just a probation. Yokum no likum. Mebbe Big Chief no wantum, either."

"Nothin' to it. You'll do it," Klupper encouraged him.

He did only fair on the long heaves, though, catching one, bobbling one. Stoney disregarded him, until the first and second string linemen came up to the north goal for scrimmage.

"B's ball on the ten. Lewis quarter, Dominique left, Pfeiffer right, you at full." He stabbed a finger at Dan. "Let's see some stuff, Coco." He set the ball fifteen yards in.

The A's strung out in the 7—3—1' last ditch defense.

In the circle of huddled shoulders, Coco Lewis regarded Dan skeptically. "When'd you get to be a back, Webb?"

"You heard the man," Dan said easily. "Don't you believe him?"

The quarterback grunted, unconvinced. "Left shift. Off tackle. Strong side. Pfeiffer lugs it. Drop that end, Dommy. Halfback's yours, Webb. Let's *go!*"

They lined up, unbalanced single wing, Dominique flanking.

It gave Dan a queer sensation to be stooping *there*, hands on knees, instead of crouching low in the line. A good feel-



ing. This was where he belonged. Where he could show something, if they gave him a chance. Maybe Coco wouldn't . . .

The snap-back. The quick start. Everson coming up fast from his back-up spot. The hard-rolling block . . . and the whistle. Ship Morey, the senior who held down the right wing for the A's, had broken through Dominique, spilled Pfiesser for a three yard loss.

"Come on! Come on, now!" Stoney demanded, urgently. "Second. Thirteen. Get a gain, Coco."

The quarter called for a buttonhook pass, to the right, after a fake buck. "Make your crossover fast, Dommy. I'm going to slam it at you."

It went sour. A guard ripped through, drove Coco back. The fake didn't work. Coco had to lob the pass, instead of rifling it. It was batted down.

Stoney was sarcastic. "That the best you can do?"

Before Coco could call his play in the huddle, Dan said:

"That guard thinks he's hell on hooves. Might be a sucker for a trap now."

The quarterback started to ask who the hell was calling B-team signals anyway. Dan could see it in his eyes. But Coco switched. He saw a chance to shift responsibility to the head coach. After all, Stoney'd stuck Webb in here. If the new back was a droop, *that* couldn't be blamed on Coco.

"Guard buck. Weak side. Webb takes it. Pfiess' . . . wait for that guard an' nail him! Hit it, everybody."

*All right, Dan told himself. Here it is. You asked for it! You got it! What you going to do with it? Muck it up, the way you've done everything else?*

Then Coco was slapping the ball at Dommy, pulling it back, socking it into Dan's ribs. The hulking guard crashed in. Pfiesser slowed him, shunted him. Dan took off.

There wasn't any hole. There was a slit. He knifed between charging linemen.

Ike Brady, the 220-pound defensive center, came up fast, in a savage, lunging tackle, arms wide.

Dan had no more than a yard to get momentum. He met the center head on. His rigid left arm hit the center's helmet like a crowbar. His right knee, riding

high, caught the pivot man in the wishbone. Brady fell on his face.

Dan stumbled, recovered, side-stepped Everson, bulled into Blumenthal full tilt.

Blumenthal held him. To a twelve-yard gain. Dan spun, twisted, churned fiercely ahead, step after step, the crack safety man clinging to his knees.

It took Everson to clamp hands on his shoulders from behind, pull him over backwards on the eleven yard line.

There was no whistle. Stoney Hart, Boyd Mason and trainer Doc Gurley were bent over Brady. The big center's face was puckered in pain. He rolled over on his side, clutching at his right shoulder.

Gurley's fingers explored. "Collar bone," he diagnosed.

Dan helped the trainer assist Brady off the field.

Mason grumbled: "That's the lousiest kind of a break."

"It's an ill wind," the head coach answered, "that blows *no* good. We may have lost a good center. But it sure looks as if we'd found ourselves a bucking back."

The pale gray eyes watched Dan expressing sympathy for Brady on the sidelines; on the head coach's long, glum face was a curiously puzzled expression, as if he was trying to recall where he'd seen Dan before. . . .

### III

The evening sea breeze, coming in from Santa Monica, whipped Marla's skirts up around her knees just as the horn on the battered blue convertible gave a long, gentle *beep, b-e-e-ep!*

She tilted up her chin, kept her eyes straight ahead, marked briskly on.

The convertible came up beside her with suggestive slowness. She turned her head away, pointedly gazing at the sunlight gilding citrus fruit on the Westwood hills.

The car stopped. The driver did a one-hand leap to the sidewalk. Then he bowed, unlatching the door.

"Take you somewhere? I hope."

"Wrong number," Marla said icily. "You'd better—*Oh!*" She halted, putting up a hand to reassure herself her hair wasn't disarranged. "It's *you!*"

Dan beamed. "I might have been dial-



ing blind. But I certainly have the right number."

"You have a nerve," she corrected him. "And you *don't* have a driving companion . . . if that's what you were looking for. I'm only going home."

He made a sweeping gesture toward the jeep. "She may not look it, but the old hunk will get you there, Miss Gilman."

"It's only down the block. The Kappa House. But thanks anyway." He deserved a smile for having gone to the trouble of finding out her name; she gave him one of her best, fully equipped with dimples.

"Do they serve dinner at sorority houses in this neck of the woods?" He took her arm.

"Why . . . !" Before she could properly protest, she found herself being helped into the jalopy. "I have a dinner date."

He shut the door, ran around, hopped in.

"Say where, m' lady . . ."

She couldn't tell him who her date was, or why she was dining out with Lin Hollet for the first time. "I have to stop at the house first—fix my hair."

He frowned at her page boy bob. "I can't think of anything it needs, but if you say so . . ." He slowed the convertible.

Marla put out seconds on the smile. "I'm not in such a rush I couldn't drive around a little, Mister Webb."

"Dan. Where?"

"Marla. Shore drive?"

"Suh-well! I was hoping you wouldn't suggest going up on Mulholland and looking down on Hollywood."

"Don't you like Hollywood?"

"I don't know. Back home, I thought they made pictures in Hollywood, but it seems the studios are in Culver City or Burbank or the Valley. I thought the stars lived in Hollywood. Come to find out, they live in Northridge or Westwood or Encino. I thought every time you dropped into a Hollywood restaurant or drugstore, you had to ask two starlets to move over to make room. Matter of fact, unless you can afford those snazzy spots in Beverly Hills or the swanky-panty country clubs, you could go a year without seeing anybody except radio peep . . ."

"Did you come out here to look for

starlets?" The low-hanging sun polished the Pacific to a pattern of copper and silver.

"No. Partly, to get an education. Mostly, to play football."

"Couldn't you do that back home?"

"Not very well." Dan wasn't curt about it. But he didn't elaborate. "Not sure I can do it here, either. Near's I can make out, I'm only on the squad by accident. Yokum didn't see me as a lineman. Hart let me work out as a back, this afternoon. But he didn't say anything about tomorrow."

"Don't worry, you'll stay on the squad." She had to make it up as she went along. "I'm in the athletic director's office, you know——"

He nodded.

"——and I keep my ears open. I can't tell you *what* I've heard"——for the very good reason, she told herself nervously, that you haven't heard *anything*, Marla Gilman! "——but I don't think I'm giving away any secret when I say Stoney has great hopes for you."

"That makes two of us hoping."

"Three," said Marla. "I hope you'll get in the game Saturday, against Pacific." But I won't be able to help you there, she thought. I don't make up *that* list on my little machine. Which reminded her: "I saw the proofs of the squad photo Tony Franno took this afternoon . . . and you must have moved or something . . ." She smiled.

"Yeah?"

"You're behind Ship Morey in the picture. Only about half your face shows. Nobody'll ever be able to recognize you."

"I'm heartbroken," he grinned. "What'll my public *do*? Think I ought to make 'em take it over?"

• "I think you ought to take me home. It's getting late."

"Okay." He spun the wheel. "But be sure and join us here tomorrow night——same time, same station."

She didn't say she wouldn't.

#### IV

**T**HE SCOREBOARD said there was eleven minutes of play left in the fourth quarter and College of the Pacific was trailing Southern on the low end of a



27-7 tally. But Stoney Hart was not happy.

Southern had been chalking up gains on punt runbacks and long passes, had racked up four t. d.'s on buttonhooks and wide end sweeps. Through the Visitors' scrappy line, they'd rammed over but one first down all afternoon.

Three of Southern's scores had been in the first half; Dominique's flashy runback of the kickoff after Pacific's lone marker accounted for the rest of the 27 points. Even the passes had been smelling this half. The team from up north had found out they didn't need to worry about line smashes; they were opening up in a 5—3—2—1 defense and beginning to intercept, instead of knock down, Southern's aerial attack.

Mason Boyd sized it up. "Be different if we had Quayley in there as a threat."

The head coach snorted. "If we go up against Washington with no more power than this next week, they'll rub our noses in it." He signalled to the third blanket from the end of the bench. "We haven't any ace in the hole. Might as well gamble on the joker."

Dan trotted up.

"In for Smith, Webb. Tell Coco to crack the middle."

"Wide open." Dan turned.

"—and Webb. Tell him to use the 50's."

Dan sprinted to the thirty-five, where Pacific had it, second and seven. The 50's were guard bucks, straight smashes. His dish . . .

Pacific faked a sweep, pulled a lateral out of the hat, ran it clear across the field for a one-yard gain.

They lined up quickly, short punt formation. Everson called "Pass". It was. A longie, down to the five . . . where Coco snagged it and was dumped on his duff by the Pacific right end.

Southern went into conference.

Dan said: "Coach wants 50's."

Coco called for a wide reverse, Pfeiffer toting. Dan blocked his man solidly, felt the old fierce satisfaction in the crashing contact. The play picked up only two yards.

They huddled. Coco wiped sweat off his chin. "Left shift. Fifty-two. Webb goes. Poosh 'em up, guys."

Dan relaxed, so he wouldn't give the play away by being too obviously set. The ball rammed into Coco's palms. The lines charged. Dan bored in. Coco slammed the leather at him.

There was a hole, but it closed instantly as a Pacific guard drove through the two-on-one block. Dan could have gone through the guard's arm, maybe gained a yard before he was pulled down. Instead he butted straight ahead, with every ounce he could put into the drive.

The guard grunted "Unhh!" caromed off. Dan tripped over him, stumbled ahead.

The Pacific fullback roared in. Dan couldn't get away from him, smacked into him with that galvanic burst of speed that gave him a little more impetus than the tackler. Dan's knees were pumping high and hard. The fullback's jaw met one, flush. There was a fraction of a second when it seemed as if Dan had been stopped. Then he was past, and the fullback's hands were slithering off him.

A sharp yell went up from the Southern stands. Dan ran with short, choppy, tied-in strides until the Pacific left half came in swift and low, lunging at him. Then there was that instantaneous acceleration; a twisting spin . . . and the yell became a roar.

But the halfback caught Dan's ankle, held on. Dan hopped and hobbled another two . . . but then they piled on.

The head linesman was pointing toward the Pacific goal, when Dan got to his feet. Over in the Southern cheering section, excited undergraduates asked: "Who is that?" "Who's that fullback?"

Somebody spotted his number on the program.

"Webb. Soph. He went *through* there, didn't he!"

"One second they got him—then *Voom!* he's away."

"First down . . . an' Pacific takin' time out."

While the team was moving around, waiting for the visitors to send in a replacement for the fullback, Everson pounded Dan between the shoulderblades. "Atsa old zok, boy!"

"I oughta go out for the lotto team!" Dan was disgusted. "Lettin' that guy hook my ankle like that."



Coco grinned. "Hey, bull o' th' woods! Care for some more of same?"

"With chocolate sauce," Dan said, solemnly.

THE CLOCK began to move. They went into the single wing, shifted, set.

The jarring up had softened the visitors' aggressive guard a little. There *was* a hole. Dan rocketed through.

The fullback replacement was waiting for him. For that same fragmentary moment, Dan seemed to be halted. Then the fullback was clinging to his knees and Dan was storming ahead. One stride, a turn. Two strides, a twist. Three . . . he was loose.

This time the stands came up as one man—

"Yea-a-a-a!" "Yo-o-o-w!"

The little group of Pacific rooters screamed, too:

*Gat heem!!*

The halfback came in. Dan practically tore his helmet off with a bludgeoning stiff arm.

The safety man raced over, warily.

Dan drew him over to the sidelines—fainted—and was nailed on the fifteen. The stands groaned.

But Boyd Mason was jubilant:

"He may not be another Norm Stand-lee. But he sure as hell can dynamite that line!"

Stoney Hart snarled: "*Smith. In for Webb. Go!*"

COCO LEWIS stepped to the end of the springboard, turned around so only his toes were on the wet canvas.

"Try this on your okarina." He glanced briefly down at the blue-green surface of the pool, bounced high, arched over backward, flinging his arms wide. Ten feet from the water his arms snapped together. He chunked in with a noisy splash.

He bobbed up, shook wet hair out of his eyes, floated on his back to watch Dan teeter on the edge of the board.

"That must be one of those low dives they warned me to keep out of, when I came to the coast." Dan held his hands at his sides, kept his body rigid, let himself topple forward, stiffly, his feet still on the board. When he was at a thirty-

degree angle from the water, he gave a little push. His entrance into the pool was smooth and quiet.

He swam to the edge of the pool before surfacing. Then he hoisted himself out onto the green tiling.

"Crazy country—swim in the ayem, play football the same day. Back in my corner of th' woods, the only thing you can do with water in football season is fish in it."

Coco backstroked lazily. "You can fish here, too." He sang, in a slightly waterlogged baritone:

*Everything you have got*

*We have got, better*

*We have got everything*

*Bet-ter than you . . u . . u . .*

"I wouldn't go so far as to say that." Dan made a back-of-me-hand-to-ye gesture. "There's a lot of pretty swell things about Michigan."

"I'll have to admit they put together quite a football team." Coco swam to the ladder. 'How come you didn't go out for it, keed?"

"Busy earning a living last year." Dan switched the subject. "The lad who owns this little bungalily doesn't have to worry about things like that, I guess." He admired the long, redwood ranch house with its enormous picture windows, the barbecue fireplace with its awninged brick bar.

"Frankie frets more about dough than you or I do." Coco stretched on the emerald-bright grass by the pool-side. "More you have, more you stew about it."

"Sure. But you can worry better when you're packing your ribs with those three-inch sirloins every night." All Dan knew about the owner of this fifty-acre paradise was that T. Francis Caytron, producer of Western movies, had married a cousin of Coco's.

"He's been on a milk-toast diet for a year," Coco bicycled his legs, to keep from stiffening up. "He's got enough ritzy liquor in there," he waved at the ranch house, "to fill this damn pool. All he can drink is fermented goat's milk. I wouldn't swap places with him for all the cuties in Earl Carroll's. Only fun he gets out of life is his share in the Gaters."

"The Golden Gaters? The pro club, up in—"

"He owns half of it." Coco flopped



over on his stomach to get sun on his back. "That's one reason I thought you'd like to come out and make howdy with him. Never can tell. He has a lot to say about who gets hired . . ."

Dan picked up a badminton racket, experimented with keeping the feathered bird in the air. "He been mixed up with pro football very long?"

"Four or five years. You ever think about taking a crack at that, after graduating?"

"Not much." Dan tried to keep his tone casual. "Hey, you know what time it's gettin' to be?"

"Around eleven."

"Later than that. Tell by the sun . . ."

"What's your hurry?" Coco sat up, surveying him curiously. "Frankie'll be home for lunch. He'll be sore if we don't stay."

"You stick around, Coco."

"Thought you said you didn't have any class until two!"

"Haven't." Dan moved across the lawn toward the house. "Just remembered. Date with dentist." He opened his mouth wide, pointed a finger at it. "Cavity."

"Goes right up inside your skull, you ask me. *Hi-yo, Platinum!*"

Dan nearly bumped into a man of forty or so with the wide-shouldered build of a wrestler and the shrewd, sharp face of a prosecuting attorney. His hair was iron gray. He wore beribboned oxford glasses which glittered in the sunlight.

"What goes, you case of retarded development," Frank Caytron called genially, keeping his eyes on Dan. "Well, well and ding-dong bell! As I live and behave myself. Janny!"

Dan left his mouth open; opened his eyes wide enough to match it. His forehead furrowed. "Huh?" he grunted. *Only thing you could do to make yourself look more like an imbecile would be to snatch at your thumbs!*

The producer stared.

Coco trotted over. "Slip five to Danny Webb, Frank. He's the stick of dynamite Stoney threw at Pacific, Sattiday."

Dan took Caytron's proffered palm.

The producer chuckled. "Line cracker, aren't you, Webb?"

"Just one of the wrecking crew." Dan knew this big shot would think it was odd

if he didn't come back with a query of his own. "Who'd you think I was?"

"For a second, there, you reminded me of a back I saw play in Chicago last year." Caytron put his arm around Dan's shoulders. "But that boy wasn't as heavy as you are. He was only a ring-ding scat-back, besides. He couldn't crack peanuts. I didn't see your game Saturday. But I read about it. You must be the answer to the maiden's prayer."

"Wish you'd tell Stoney that." Dan tried not to appear conscious of the fact that Coco was watching both of them like a kid determined not to be fooled by a magician. "Stoney thinks I'm pretty crude raw material. I'll need a lot of drilling—" he snapped his fingers. "That damn dentist! I'll have to scramoose, *my pronto!*"

"Aw, Dan!" Coco protested. "For cat's sake . . ."

"Stay to lunch," urged Caytron. "Come on now—"

"Can't. Wish I could. Late now. Just have time to change and buzz back. Sorry. Hope to see you again, sir."

Dan did a fast duck.

## V

THE BLUE convertible clattered along Sunset. Nervous neons jittered through the dusk—green, vermilion, lemon. The famous eating places of The Strip.

"Where wouldst tie on the feed-bag, m'lovely?" Dan's gesture took in the lot. "*Bit O' Sweden? Bublichki? Tail of the Cock? Larue's?*"

"So ordinary!" Marla snuggled close; there was a nip in the October air. "And I feel so sort of . . . special."

"*Mocambo*, perchance? No? How's about *Ciro's*?" He was solicitous. "Guinea under glass, at the *Players*?"

"No." Not until they'd swung southward did she see what she wanted. "There."

He swung over to the Drive In sign.

"Chicken-in-a-basket," she murmured. "Mmmmm!"

"Suh-well," he agreed. "The fact that it costs just about what the tip would in one of those glitter joints, is strictly coincidental. Coke or java?"



While they waited for the girl to bring their order, Marla said:

"Now that we're sort of engaged——"

"Whaddaya mean! Sort of!" He took measures to dispel any lingering uncertainty.

"I mean, we're not going to announce it yet or anything . . ."

Dan said: "I'll put it in writing if you prefer, Miss Gilman."

"You dummy! All I'm getting at is, it's *my* business now."

"What?"

"The way they're giving you the dirty end of the stick, Dan."

"Don't be ridic, chick. I'm not getting any raw deal."

"Just look at it! Here it is, the middle of October. You've been in three games already and everyone admits you're the mainspring of the team!"

"There might be a couple of narrow-minded critics who wouldn't agree to that," he waved airily, "such as Stoney Hart and Mason Boyd. But what does *their* opinion count among so many!"

"I've heard Boyd say you were the stuf-faroo. And, anyway, the sport writers know who gets put in when our attack bogs down. Dynamite Daniel, nobody else."

"Granted, granted," he nodded magnanimously, "I'm super stupendous. Outside of the trifling fact that I've only played a total of twenty minutes in three full games—that I haven't scored any points to date—that Bill Prender has it over me like a tent on defense——"

"No *wonder* they're giving you the run-around, if you're that good-natured about it!" She was indignant. "Even that glum old crumb on the *News* knows there's something fishy about the setup. Hart shoving you in the game when he's desperate for a gain, or to pull the defense in so the passes will connect, and then yanking you out the minute you get the ball down where you could score. Letting Everson or Dominique or Coco Lewis run it over and get the credit!"

"Be fair, baby." It made him uncomfortable to talk about it; he'd done too much thinking along those lines himself. "When the bunch gets down to paydirt, Stoney's system calls for deception rather than straightpounding. Deception means

that any back who gets the ball must be able to threaten a pass—as well as a smash."

"You can pass!"

"Not well enough to suit Stoney. He's been hammering it into me all week. Maybe I'll get so I can chuck it through that inner-tube at twenty yards. Coco can do it. So can Dommy. I can't . . . yet."

"Neither of them can be depended on to chew off eight yards every time their signal is called, though!" Marla paused in her Operation Drumstick. "Did it ever occur to you fraternity politics might have something to do with it?"

"Let's don't start that! That's the most moth-eaten, frazzle-tazzle excuse——"

"Oh, you schmo! Everson's a fraternity brother of Hart's. So's Prender. Don't you catch wise?"

He shook his head sadly. "You oughta know better'n to fall for that mahaha. Might be a little feeling among the alumni quarterbacks, concerning their Greek letter heroes—but only difference it makes to the coaches, they lean over backwards to avoid suspicion of giving their own brothers the edge."

"Why's Stoney so down on you then? Why does he always let you do the hard work . . . and give the scoring chance to somebody else?"

"Maybe he's holding me back for the big games," Dan answered lightly. "Or maybe he knows I don't care so much about racking up touchdowns as first downs. To me, football's fun, hon. Not a business. Takes all the joy outa life, you get too sweat up about it." He brandished a wing. "Forgetsis. Let's talk about us."

"About *you*. Here I am *engaged* to you—and I know practically nothing *about* you!"

"Well . . . I like Count Basie's records and blonde hair; apple pie with vanilla ice cream . . . and blonde hair——"

She poked him with her elbow. "I mean . . . your family. You've never told me a thing about them."

"Not much to tell. My old man isn't an airplane engineer like yours—he's just a sawyer."

"A . . . what?"

"Boss sawyer. In a lumber mill. He's a good one, too. And he's still got all his fingers after thirty years of it. You'll



like pop. He's rough and tough, but you never have any trouble figuring out what he thinks." Dan looked at her. "He'll like you, too. Plenty."

"And your mother, Dan?"

"Ah now, there's quite a party, that mom." His smile broadened. "She's got it to spare. Her last letter asked me about 'this Marla girl you're so interested in.' I'm gonna send her one of those snaps I took up in Griffith Park."

"Let me, Dan. I want to write her, anyway."

The girl came for their trays. He was glad of the interruption. He hadn't figured out what to tell Marla if she asked for his home address.

Sooner or later, he'd have to reach a decision about that.

But maybe he could put it off just a little longer.

## VI

STONE stood at the blackboard, with a fist full of colored chalk. The locker room was quiet except for the scraping of cleats on cement. Dan was sprawled out on a bench.

"The other team can't score while you've got possession of the ball," the head coach made red circles rapidly on the board, in the single wing. "They can't get the ball as long as you keep making those first downs. That's why it's more important to be able to make a first down than to try to shake a man loose for a touchdown on every play."

He sketched in a 6-2-2-1 defense in white. "Say we've cracked off tackle and inside guard and picked up only four or five on two tries. We've got one more down to gamble with, before we have to kick out of trouble. Play I'm going to outline is for a spot like that . . . and no other. If it goes, and it ought to work so smoothly it goes every time, it's good for that six or seven you need, to keep the ball and have four more shots at pushing it downfield."

Stoney traced the path of the ball in yellow chalk. "You don't want to use it very often or it'll curdle on you. Save it for those spots where you *have* to get that first down." He used the pointer. "It's a pass. Run from any formation. Goes best

when the ball is thrown by a buckler." He glanced at Dan.

Dan shifted his position uncomfortably. He knew all there was to know about the *Paycheck Pass*.

The pro clubs used it right along. No good for big gains. Tough to stop, when you needed small ones. Yeah. He knew how it went.

Stoney said: "You have to be about fifteen yards in. Pass goes right to the sideline—six or seven yards down. Like so . . ." he zigzagged the path of the mythical receiver. "End goes down, secondary covering him. He fakes a catch, as the passer fakes a throw. End cuts in as if he's going to cross over. Secondary runs along with him.

"Then the end wheels, sprints for the sidelines. The ball has to be there . . . about a yard inside . . . to meet him. The defense can't intercept or bat down, because the secondary has four or five yards further to run, since he's at an angle, while the end's running straight for the sideline. Understand?"

The squad rumbled assent.

"Webb?" Stoney was sharp. "See how it goes?"

"Sure." Dan had the feeling the coach was well aware how thoroughly the full-back understood that particular play.

"You'll do the passing." Stoney laid down the chalk. "We might need this against Stanford, Saturday. Let's go out, run through it."

As they trooped up the ramp into the stadium, pictures flashed through Dan's brain. Movie shots of the famous 'Jet' Janok, dancing back from the battling linemen, fending off tackles crashing in with upflung arms, calmly taking his time, faking off to the left, double faking to the right, firing the ball at the last possible instant far to the sidelines at the left.

THE PAYCHECK PASS. The Sure-thing Shot. How many had the flashy Janok completed? Twelve out of fourteen,—when the chips were on the line? Yes . . . he remembered very well indeed.

They lined up against the C's, on the forty.

Coco called: "Ninety. Webb. Block, youse. Block your butts off."



The whistle. The pass-back. Dan had it. He faded. Tacklers tore in.

He faked. Retreated another three. Faked again. Threw to Ship Morey as a shoulder drove into his hip.

Ship caught it, for seven. But Stoney found nothing right about it.

"What good's a fake, Webb, if you keep looking at the eventual receiver all the time? You have to bank on his 'being there, keep your eyes off him until you throw. Over."

They did it again. This time Dan didn't look in Ship's direction after the first momentary fake. His pass was a little low. Ship fumbled it.

The Head Coach was patient. He took Dan aside for special treatment while Dommy kept on with 90.

"Never mind about your passing style, Webb. Forget all that crap about hitting your ear with the ball when you bring it back. Throw it like you would a baseball. It's just like a baseball only shaped different. Use your wrist. Get some snap in it. It's just doin' what comes naturally."

Dan tried. Again and again. If he improved, Stoney didn't say so.

"Keep the point up. Ball coming at a receiver end down is twice as hard to hold.

"Don't try to see how swift you can shoot it. Nobody's going to intercept these. Just get 'em accurate."

And finally:

"You'll never make a great passer. Work your head off, you might get to be a fair one. That's all you need to be to make this 90 click."

"I'll get it down," Dan answered, "so he can catch it in a soup plate."

"Never mind perfecting it that far," Stoney retorted dryly. "Get it in clothes basket range, I'll be satisfied. Didn't you do any passing on your high school team in . . . where was it, Petosky?"

"Yuh," Dan said. "I did a little."

"You must have forgotten everything you knew." The coach started to say something more, changed his mind, turned back to the scrimmage.

"Webb in," he called. "We're going to get this right if we have to keep at it until they play hockey in hell."

"Yuh," Dan said,

LIN HOLLET hung his houndstooth sport jacket carefully on a hanger. He poked a cigarette in his genuine amber holder, eased into his swivel chair, adjusted it at a satisfactory angle and shuffled the morning applications for "six seats on the forty-yard line."

"Did my eyes deceive me, my precious petal? Or was that you with Dan Webb in the Bowl last night?"

Marla jerked a letter out of her machine.

"It was I. Why?"

"Don't tell me the big gahunk goes for longhair music!"

"Maybe he goes for me," she said primly. "And you're a fine one to be calling him a gahunk. We ought to have a couple more like him on the team."

Hollet slit open an envelope marked *Personal*. He read it with a smug expression. "The soph's done all right for himself so far," he conceded. "Stoney might make a back out of him, yet, if nothing goes wrong!"

"Promising young athletes have been known to flunk out. Or fail to make sufficient grades."

"Go ahead and bet your cash on Southern. Dan's right in there with the old marks." She was mildly scornful.

"You seem to be pretty hep on D. Webb." Hollet cocked a supercilious eye.

"I've been out with him two or three times. I think he's extra special." She challenged him to disapprove.

"Mean lad on that samba stuff?"

"Mmm, hmm."

"Pitches quite a line on the git-tar, huh?"

"Uh, uh. Strictly a zither man." She stacked a row of ticket envelopes. "Why so curious all of a sud!"

"My interest in you, light of my life. Hate to see you wasting your sweetness on a lone wolf with such an . . . um . . . vague and uncertain background."

She rose, planted fists on hips, elbows akimbo. Her eyes slitted. "Precisely what are you getting at, Lin Hollet!"

"Webb's kind of a mystery man." He was amused at her anger. "Nobody knows anything about him. Around the campus, I mean. Hasn't joined any fraternity. Rooms by himself. Doesn't buddy up with his classmates——"



"How awful!" Her eyes opened wide in mock alarm. "You think he ought to be psychoanalyzed or something!"

"Something." He agreed, imperturbably. "You remember Stan Llewellyn of the *News* called up to get the lowdown about Webb, for his colyum?"

"So . . .?"

"I put it up to Dan. Did he give me any dope? Not enough to shove in your eye. Bunch of mahooly about spending his vacations working in the lumber mills in northern Michigan, log-spinning or birling or whatever it is you do in hobnailed boots!"

"I suppose there *are* sportswriters who would call that 'color.' I could be mistaken."

He flicked ashes at a bronze tray. "It occurred to me the Dean's office would have enough to fill in, on him. I gave them a buzz. And what do you think!"

Marla clapped both fists to her cheeks, dramatically. "He's a fugitive from a chain gang!"

Hollet pulled down the corners of his lips. "Might *be* for all they know. They don't have any card on him. His application isn't on file in the registrar's office. There's not even any record of his credits from the University of Michigan, which he was supposed to have attended, last year. All they have is a notation: *Webb, D. Confidential. See Dean.*"

She thought quickly. "The Dean's abroad. Geneva."

"Exactly. Made it a little more difficult. But Old Slewfoot Hollet stuck to the trail. I dropped a line to Ann Arbor."

Marla came over beside him. "You're going to quite a lot of trouble about him, aren't you?"

"Business of this office, star-eyes. To keep track of our budding amateurs. The authorities in Michigan wrote back there was no student registered there last year by the name of Webb."

Marla sat down, slid an envelope in her machine, began typing. "If I tell you the truth, will you keep it under cover?" She asked, in a hushed voice.

"Huh?"

"He's really a member of the French underground, still being pursued by Gestapo agents for putting arsenic in Goering's cream puffs. If they learn where

Dan's hiding . . ." she drew a finger across her throat, shuddering.

The assistant to the Athletic Director reached for the letter he'd taken from the envelope marked *Personal*. "It might be a kidding matter, my honey bunny, if it weren't for the trivial item called *eligibility*. We're under obligation to competing colleges not to run in ringers on them. Take a slant at this." He tossed it to her.

She read it. It was from the office of the Principal of the Petosky High School. It expressed regret that no record had been found of any Webb who had attended that institution except a Laurence Webb who had graduated in 1937 and was now engaged in the undertaking business in a nearby town.

"Oh! For the love of——" she came up out of her chair, giggling. "Why don't you just ask Dan to explain, straight out, instead of beating 'round the bush like this! He isn't the kind to *lie* about anything he's done."

"We'll ask him all right," Hollet said. "Before he goes on the field for Southern, again."

THE SUN beat down on eleven men, ringed about by the coaching staff and a dozen second-string replacements. But the coaches wore light baseball pants and T-shirts . . . and the B's weren't being raced through their paces at this blazing speed, Dan beefed silently.

Sweat ran down him in rivulets. Sweat got in his eyes.

"Fifty," panted Coco. "Left shift. Webb, Go!"

"Zip it up!" roared Mason Boyd.

"Get some drive in it!" ordered Yokum.

"Faster!" barked Stoney over the amplifier. "You act like you're dead on your feet!"

The Friday signal drill. Dan would rather have scrimmaged all day than go through an hour of this relentless pace.

A line buck. A sweep. The wide reverse. Delayed off tackle. A pass. End around. No pause that refreshes. Just jump and bump. And over again.

It wouldn't have hit Dan so hard except for the terrific heat.

"This Califunny weather gets me down," he wheezed to Everson.



"That won't be all that'll get you down, tomorrow, if you don't shake the lead outa your baggy pants, clownier." The team captain had been surly.

Maybe it was just that Everson and some of the others were touchy on account of this tropical weather. Or . . . maybe there was a certain undercurrent of resentment against him. Dan wondered about that.

Coco was more than friendly. Ship Morey razzed him amiably enough. Dommy Dominique was openly admiring. Yet the others . . . ?

Dan was a soph and Everson was a senior, of course. So were some of the linemen. That might make for a certain reluctance to accept a new man, particularly a transfer.

Then, too, he wasn't any native son while most of the gang were. Dan wasn't even a Westerner.

He'd only been at Southern a few weeks; the majority of the squad had been mixing with others at the university a couple of years, at least. Dan was the Johnny-Come-Lately. Yeah. That would account for any rough edges, naturally.

*Who you kiddin', Danny! You know there's something more than that! You know what it is, too! You're not one of the bunch. You're an outsider, and what did you expect? You don't talk about yourself, so how can they get to know you? You clam up every time any one of them begins to show an ordinary, friendly curiosity about you. Why would they warm up to you? Give me one good reason why!*

"Try that 90," Stoney yapped.

They worked it neatly. Dan shot the ball toward the sideline pocket with a short, sharp wrist-snap. Ship couldn't have missed it blindfolded.

## VII

COCO took them across-field with an end run; they rehearsed 90 on the other side with Coddington catching. Dan laid the oval in there, right across Coddy's chest.

In scrimmage, it hadn't gone that smoothly. It wasn't the fool-proof, sure-fire ground gainer the professionals pulled off. But it would do, in a pinch. And

that's the only place Stoney wanted them to use it.

"The defensive half knows you can't get past him," the head coach had told Ship. "He's got you pinned to the sideline so you can't get loose. Out of habit, he'll let you make that small gain rather than risk another receiver's racing in from nowhere and grabbing a pass behind him, for a score. But don't use it too often . . . or he'll get out of the habit of letting you get away with it."

They'd need 90 against Stanford, he'd warned them. The White Indians were coming down from Palo Alto with a line that could break up a herd of stampeding buffalo, an overhead attack that was spectacular, and a sweet total of 89 points against 14 for their opponents in the first three games.

*Stanford's It for you, Dan told himself. You're in here, signal-drilling with the first team. Stoney wouldn't be whipping you to a pulp this aft, unless he meant to start you tomorrow. One big chance, coming up!*

Off-tackle buck. Buttonhook to right half. Guard smash. Flat pass. Wide reverse. Speed it up! Get in there! Drive!

His tongue was hanging out, his knees were melted butter, by the time Stoney called for a halt . . . and twice around the cinder track!

At the first turn, Coco jogged up beside him.

"Frankie gave me couple ducats to Sunday's game."

"Yuh?" Dan had no breath to waste.

"Gilmore Stadium . . . Pitts Burgers . . . wanna go?"

"Can't, Coco . . . beach party . . . Santa Monica," he panted an excuse. There was no place on the West Coast he'd avoid more carefully than Gilmore Stadium. Sunday!

"Hell! Ditch your date . . ."

"Like to," Dan lied. "No can do."

They finished the second lap, dragged themselves wearily to the ramp.

"How's about bustin' out to Frankie's tonight?" Coco asked. "Bunch of the pro joes'll be whoopin' it up."

"Ask me again, I'll say sure. But I have to work tonight, Coco."

"A job? Doin' what!" The quarterback was surprised.



"Baby sittin'. Got to sit up with baby, long as trainin' rules allow."

IT was cool enough for coats by the time the jeep reached Malibu. He got out to help her into the camelhair shorty. He took his time about it.

Presently she said: "Let's sit this one out, Dan. There's no moon, but——"

"There's you. Who wants the moon!"

The beach houses of the glamour names in Movieland were dark, gabled shadows against faintly luminous sea. Lights twinkled offshore; a freighter bound up the coast for San Francisco or Seattle.

"Wonderful country," he sighed contentedly. "First month here I was so homesick I thought I'd never stick it out. Now I'm beginning to love it."

"Enough to live here?"

"Sure. If you want to." He watched the white line of surf against black, glistening rocks. "Only I'd like you to visit home with me, just to see how you like *that*!" He hummed the tune, softly:

*Gee, how I wish again*

*I was in Michigan*

*Down on . . . the farm . . .*

"Tell me about Petosky," she murmured.

"There's one grand town! We don't really live in Petosky,—my folks, that is,—our place is in Bay View, few miles out——"

"Ha!" Marla straightened exultantly.

"I knew it! That explains it!"

"What?" He was baffled.

"Oh! That nosey Lin Hollet! And the high school principal . . . and everything!"

"Relax," he soothed her. "You're among friends. What's it all about?"

She told him. At length.

He sat silently until she finished. "So that droopy goop of a Hollet is trying to make out there's something strange about you, Dan. Something that might make you ineligible. And of course your living out of Petosky clears everything up—except . . . why did the people at Ann Arbor write that they knew nothing about you?"

This was the psychological moment to break down and Tell All. He realized it very well. He wanted to, too. But the words kept hammering his mind, the words he couldn't forget, no matter how

hard he tried: *Don't ever tell anybody!*

"Listen, chiquita. You trust me?"

She indicated she did.

"No lurking suspicions that I've deserted a wife and three starving children back on the Upper Peninsula somewhere?"

"Don't be a dope, mope!"

"Kayo, then. We'll just have to let it ride at that, time being. I can't put my cards face up on the table, because . . ." He tried to get as close to the truth as possible . . . "well, you might say I'm playing somebody else's hand."

Marla moved away from him a little.

"I don't care what it is, Dan, or whether you want to tell anyone else, but I think I have a right to know all about you, with things the way they are, between us."

He made no attempt to draw her closer. "I guess that's one way of looking at it, baby. I hate to act like one of those 'So y'won't talk' muggs in the movies but I can't tell you."

"I don't think you're being fair!" She was annoyed at what she thought was stubbornness.

"If it'll help any, I *did* go to high school in Petosky. I *did* go to U. of M."

"Then *why*——"

"My name isn't Webb, Marla." He was beginning to be irritated at the way she was dragging it out of him. *Don't ever tell anybody.* Al-l-l right. He'd told her all he was going to!

She stared, frowning. "You mean to tell me I was engaged to marry a boy when I didn't even know his right *name*!" Marla laughed, but there was nothing humorous about the sound.

He stared out over the ocean, moodily. "Was engaged?"

She shrugged, pulling the coat up around her neck. "Here I've been dreaming about how perfectly marvelous it would be to have people call me Marla Webb! Now I find out you're just crazy to have me become Mrs.-Something-or-other, whenever you get around to telling me what your name is!"

"Aw, shugie!"

"I'm getting cold, Dan. We'd better be driving back."

He tried to square himself, but she drew away with an irritated: "Really, Dan!"

It was chilly in the convertible all the



way to Santa Monica. When he swung left on Wilshire, she made the only attempt at conversation:

"I don't know whether it interests you, because I can't figure out how your mind works about such things. But I suppose you ought to know Lin Hollet says you won't play against Stanford tomorrow unless the eligibility angle is cleared up!"

"That'll be just ducky!" he said bitterly and knew before the words were out of his mouth that she'd misunderstand him.

She didn't wait for him to help her out of the car, at the Kappa house, but slid out hurriedly and ran up the steps without looking back.

He guessed she was crying; he didn't run after her or call goodnight or anything.

Maybe a milkshake would take the bad taste out of his mouth. He drove to the University Drug Store, parked.

But a trio of bobby-soxers hailed him: "Hi, Webbie." The name grated on his nerves. And in the window was a poster. A jerseyed figure lunging ahead to drive past a tackler:

**P — IGSKIN  
P — YROTECHNICS  
P — ITTS BURGERS  
GILMORE STADIUM  
SUNDAY**

He went glumly back to the car.

## VIII

**S**ATURDAY was as advertised in the Chamber of Commerce circulars — clear, bright and sunny. But it didn't look good to Dan.

Coco Lewis started it off wrong over the ham and eggs by showing him Llewellyn's *Lockerroom Lowdown* in the *News*:

Word gets to this garrulous gossip that Stoney Hart's chances of scalping the Palo Alto braves may have suffered a shock over the rumored elimination, from Southern's lineup, of Dynamite Dan, the Blasting Man, whose gutsy line crashing has helped the locals to their last two wins. What lies back of this fiddling, deponent sayeth not,—having nothing but the veriest hearsay to go on. But one gent, in a position to talk through something besides his Stetson, suggests Dynamite Dan, who has been listed on my programs as D. Webb, 20, 185, might have been playing un-

der a **NOM DE GRIDIRON**. Could his real tag be one which is well known to the pro fans of a certain Pennsylvania city? And if so, what will this do to Southern's standing, if the games in which he has already appeared, should be erased from the records?

"For crying!" Coco moaned. "What is this hodelyo!"

Dan laid the paper down, picked up his fork.

"The creep is doing his damndest to say I'm a pro, that I've been wearing a Southern uniform under false pretenses,—and that I've mucked up our chances of being Coast champs or Rose Bowl candidates. You don't believe that horse, Coco!"

The quarterback played with a salt cellar.

"Hell, no, keed. But,—Stan Llewellyn's generally a right guy. Where'd he get this guff?"

The muscles along Dan's jaw tightened. "Lin Hollet in the Athletic Director's office, probably. I've been going around some with his secretary. Marla Gilman. Guess he goes for her, too. So he goes gunning for me."

"You oughta beat his face off!"

"Wouldn't help." Dan dug into his breakfast. "Don't run a fever. I'll be at the gym this aft." He didn't say he'd be on the field.

He couldn't say that.

Coco got up. "Your name is Webb, isn't it?"

"Not exactly." Dan mumbled through a mouthful of toast. "I was christened Daniel Webster. But I was afraid peep would always be expecting me to bust into oratory, an' since I'm practically tongue-tied . . . why . . . y'see, I just shortened it a little."

"Yeah." Coco grinned, clapped him on the shoulder. "Natch. Wear your frock coat to th' festivities. An' bring your best gestures. We'll need 'em. Those Palo Altos are gonna be tough." But the puzzled expression was still in his eyes, when he left.

The morning was sheer misery. Dan avoided everyone; shunned the telephone. He put off going to the field until the last possible moment. When he walked into the locker-room, there was a sudden lull in the noisy chatter.

He had thought there might be word



for him to report to Hart's office immediately. But there was nothing.

Ship Morey ribbed him cautiously:

"You hire a praise agent for y'self, Dynamite? I see th' notices in th' morning rag . . ."

"Just a build-up," Dan agreed quietly. "They're fixin' for me to be the next Walkin' Man on that goof radio show."

My' Blumenthal stuck his thumbs in imaginary galluses, teetered back and forth on his heels, addressed the squad in sonorous tone:

"I rise to call the attention of this gathering to one of our fellow members who has been libelously traduced in the scurrilous press. True it may be that he is a man of dubious morals an' limited intelligence, but are we to permit this outrageous——"

"Shuddup," called Everson. "Lay off."

That suited Dan. He didn't want to talk about it or hear talk about it. Coco had passed on the christening story, and that was oke, far as it went. It didn't go anywhere near far enough. He realized that.

There was an uneasy tension in the locker-room, all the time he was getting into his pads. It didn't lessen when the coaches came in, in a group.

*Here it comes!* Dan warned himself. *They're going to throw it at you, now! Why bother to climb into your nice, clean, blue jersey with the white 67! They're going to rub that number right off your back!*

But they didn't. They gave him the silent treatment. Stoney glanced at him once, out of the pale gray eyes, then passed on to Dommy, Klupper, the rest.

The head coach began to talk about Stanford. The scouts had brought in last minute reports: the Indians had a trick lateral which they'd kept pretty well under cover. Probably they'd use it, to-day. Stoney briefed them on defense against it.

**T**HE CLOCK above the trainer's table moved sluggishly around toward game time. Finally, Mason Boyd read off the starting lineup. In the backfield, *Lewis, Blumenthal, Everson, Pfeiffer.*

Dan kept a poker face. He sensed the glances the others were shooting at him.

This was the way it was going to wind

up, then! There hadn't been time to investigate Lin Hollet's charges. They weren't going to take any chances. He'd sit this one out. Hell, it would have been better if they'd *thrown* him out. A slow anger began to burn, deep inside him.

It fed the fire to realize, when he'd clattered up the ramp out onto the field and over to the bench, that the gang was taking it for granted he was responsible for the coach's shifted lineup. If they lost, he'd be the louse.

He kept getting madder all the time he watched the warmup, the signal practice, the toss for goal. By the time the Stanford captain elected to receive and the teams were strung out across the field, he was ready to pop the first person who made a crack at him.

*You'd be out there now, he raged inwardly, you wouldn't be parked here stewing about Marla and what would happen after the game and all the rest of the mess, if it wasn't for——*

The long shrill blast on the whistle seemed to cut through the turmoil in his mind:

*Don't ever tell anybody!*

**D**AN sweated out a first half that lasted for years. Stanford ran wild, passed Southern dizzy, broke up Stoney's carefully drilled attack. Replacements went in. Nobody looked at Dan, or spoke to him.

Half time found the White Indians on the long end of a 20—0 score . . . and knocking on the door for another.

Jogging off to the ramp, Dan didn't have heart to lift his head and search for Marla in the stands. But he saw her, anyway.

A girl's voice called shrilly, "That's Webb. Number 67! Look, Eddie!"

Dan glanced up, briefly. He couldn't place the girl who'd cried out. But there was no mistaking the other,—the one with the blonde page-boy bob further along the aisle. Or the man sitting beside her.

Why it should have made things blacker to have Marla watch this particular game, in company with Lin Hollet, Dan couldn't have said.

In the locker room, Dan was left strictly to himself. Doc Gurley worked over the first eleven. Yokum stalked around



glowering. Mason Boyd sat talking to Coco.

It would have been a sad session under any circumstances. But Dan couldn't duck it. The gang figured him for the monkey-wrench in the machinery. Nobody else.

The realization made him sick. Actually and physically sick. He scarcely heard what Stoney was saying to the squad . . .

" . . . they aren't that much better . . . those passes won't get through you this next half . . . I'll go out on a limb and say you're going to pull this one out of the fire yet . . . all the confidence in the world in you . . . "

While Mason was calling out the second half starters, Dan wondered whether it wouldn't save a lot of unnecessary hard feelings if he just slipped into the johnny and didn't go out on the field again.

*Hell with that!* he swore at himself disgustedly. *Don't let these crumbs get you down and put the calks to you!*

They went out of cool concrete into hot sunlight. The university band was wailing the final strains of the Alma Mater.

The Stanford stands thundered welcome to white jerseys.

Dan plunked on the bench, glad he wasn't out there for the kickoff. Way he felt, he couldn't make it to the sideline.

Everson caught the low, looping ball, tore to the 28 before being slapped down. They tried a wide reverse. Good for six inches. They slammed Pfeffer off tackle. Maybe three yards.

*Here's your spot for that Paycheck Pass, Coco!* Dan found himself trying to send a telepathic message to the quarterback. *Hold that ball now, in our own territory, maybe it'll give the gang a lift.*

It was 90. Dommy to Ship. Almost to Ship. A yard short. Incomplete.

They had to boot now. Everson got away a high one.

The flashy Stanford quarter lost it in the sun. He found it—tried for it—foozled it.

Dan came up on his feet with fifty thousand others as the oval hopped crazily toward the Stanford goal. He saw three men dive for it. One wore a blue jersey. Cuddy. He recovered on the 25.

Next to Dan on the bench, Klupper Smith pounded his arm.

Dan grunted. "Nice work."

"Coach wants you, you jerk!"

Dan scowled, turned.

The pale gray eyes were on him. The head coach was calling:

"Janny!"

## IX

YOU'RE cracking under the strain, he cautioned himself. He's calling you Danny, that's all!

But he came up off the bench fast.

All Stoney said was: "In for Pfeff." He took Dan's arm, walked to the edge of the field, holding him until Coco's first play was completed. "Tell Coco to slug the 50s."

"Right." Dan's stomach did a flip-flop. Maybe the coach *had* called him Janny. If he was gambling on Dan now after that stink in the newspaper, he must *know*.

Stoney gave him a pat that was a shove. Somebody, high in the stands, gave a piercing war whoop:

"Yee-owww-wow! DYNAMITE!!"

The brass drum boomed. Somebody shook a cowbell. The cheering section gave a short yelp for *Webb-Webb-Webb*. He didn't mind the damn name so much, coming this way.

He reported, was cuffed wonderingly by Coco, joyously by Ship. They were full of questions . . . but this was no time for gab. Work to do.

They huddled. Wide end sweep to the left. It was second and seven.

Dommy carted it for two.

Dan said huskily: "Coach says bet fifties. On the nose."

Coco growled: "So say we all. Fifty. Right. Talk it up, men."

They hit positions chattering:

"Here we go!" "On our way!" "In yere, ev'body!"

The ball socked in. The hole was there. Dan roared through, onto the backup man before the Indian could get set. For sheer satisfaction at the chance to let off the steam of boiling anger, Dan smashed into him savagely, head on.

The Indian lost interest. Dan slanted away from the moose-shouldered Stanford left half. At the instant of tackle, he swerved, knees riding high, stiff arm pounding like a 2x4 at the white helmet.

The half back held him . . . to a seven-



yard gain. The last three yards Dan dragged two tacklers with him.

"Pour it on," Coco snarled in the tight ring. "Same! Over! Harder!"

Stanford began to barber it up, too.

Also, they were expecting Dan this time. The hole wasn't there, when he bulled up to the line.

He rammed it, anyway,—felt bone and beef give, —exploded through . . . into that same fullback. He spun, wrenched, tore loose, stumbled, went down under an avalanche of white wool.

Net four. Second and six . . . on the 9.

"How 'bout it?" Coco gauged him in the huddle. "Mix 'em up?"

"Same dish for me." Dan wiped sweat off his mouth, was surprised to find it was blood. "With plenty whip cream."

The enemy played it cagey. Too cagey. Nobody banged away with the same buck three times in a row, when they were 20 points behind.

"Pass," their defensive signal-caller warned.

The blue-backed line opened the gate just a little, driving the defensive right down on his knees to block the gap. Dan socked through, lunging into the Palo Alto center, caroming off into the left half, savaging his way to the two before they cut off his legs at the knees.

First. . . and goal to go.

Coco started to call "Fifty" again but Dan panted "No."

The quarterback called "Twenty." His own number.

Stanford piled in as if to bury Dan six feet under. Coco sneaked through, standing up. To score.

Everson toed it between the uprights. The 7 looked better, up on the scoreboard. But the 20 was still big. And time marched on. They were starting the fourth quarter.

High in the glass booth on the rim of the stadium, Stan Llewellyn reported, in his excited nasal drawl, to ten million seated on the 760 kilocycle line:

*"Lewis scoring, Everson converting. But it might be worth casual mention that Dynamite Dan—I won't call him by his last name because I left my program in my other pair of pants so I can't tell what it is,—this newly injected fullback lugged that hoghide eighteen yards on three tries,*

*which averages six yards a shot unless somebody wants to correct my arithmetic. Dynamite is a soph,—but if anybody comes up with that oldie about a soph touch, kindly refer him to Stanford for particulars."*

Southern kicked to Stanford. Dan had a blurred impression of seething stands, a cheering section hoarsely chanting "Fight-Fight-Fight", drums booming, and the Indian quartet being dumped on his 10-yard line by Piet De Fano.

The white jerseys kept the ball for sixty yards and four endless minutes. Then the big left half coffin-cornered a brilliant punt across on the Southern three.

Dan carried it. Took it down to the 12.

Dommy lost four, slipping on the grass. Third and five.

Coco was uncertain: "We're not fifteen in, now. What think, Ship?"

Ship held both fists out. "Can do."

"Ninety," Coco yapped. "Webb. And crys,—block, guys!"

Ball back. To Coco. To Dan. The fake. The retreat. End diving at him. Let him dive. Ships not cutting back. Take your time. Don't look at Ship. Wait. . . . now!

It never went better. Ship snagged it on the sixteen. First down! Four more chances!

The west stands were jubilant. The Stanford side almost as noisy, pleading: "Break it up . . . Smear 'at man!"

Coco arranged the breaking up,—to suit himself. He faked a smash with Dan blasting into the guard slot,—switched to send Dommy slashing off tackle . . . into the clear,—almost. The safety man ran him out of bounds at midfield.

"Now we're moving! Yet's GO!!"

Coco houdinied the ball himself. Faded, searching way downfield for Dommy and Ship. . . . then lacing a swiftie to Coddington who spun on the Stanford thirty-five for a neat, sweet buttonhook.

"Now, Dan." Coco was raring. "Fifties. Left. Zok!"

They boxed out that Indian right guard for him. A reaper could have gone through the hole. Dan went through, with the throttle wide, gaining momentum every yard.

He stiff-armed the Stanford right half fiercely. A lance of pain stabbed up his



wrist . . . but the half plowed turf with his nose.

THE SAFETY MAN committed a shade too soon. Dan turned on that galvanic spurt, ripped through a clutching arm, pounded clear to the six-point stripe and over.

The gang hugged him, frenzied. He hung his head bashfully, dug a toe in the turf.

"Shucks. Twan't nothin'. Any one of you'd of done the same, if you'd got the chance."

Coco patted his helmet. "You're a card, son. But we haven't all day to play you. Just five minutes left to beat these buzzards."

Everson called for a towel. He wiped the ball. Wiped sweat out of his eyes. Wiped the toe of his kicking shoe.

Then he booted the oval solidly between the uprights.

20-Pandemonium. Stanford receiving. Ship hurling himself through a swarm of blockers to slam the Indian fullback into the ground on the fifteen.

The blue line caught fire. They fought like men full of benzedrine. They held two battering-ram bucks to a scant yard total.

The Palo Alto tribe punted on third. Coco, reversing his field, brought it up to the blue forty.

Dan banged and butted off left tackle for three.

Everson, battling for a high pass far down, missed by a fingernail. A penalty on the play, anyway. An over-eager blue guard. Holding. Third and twenty to go!

"Too far for a 90," Coco said through his teeth. "Dan?"

"Fifty, on the snoot," Dan spat blood. "Right."

Lineup. Shift. Pass-back.

The ball slapping against his ribs. He cracked into the thin wedge of a hole hard enough to take a bank door off its hinges.

The guard got him, got a knee in the face, too, and a pile-driving hand-heel on his helmet.

Dan shook him off.

The fullback missed him, except for a hand-hold on the neck of his jersey. Dan pulled him along until Everson bodyblocked him out. Two more Indians dived in

for the kill. Dan split them like an axeman working on dry pine.

When they smothered him, he was on the Stanford thirty-eight, the blue-sweated cheer leaders were doing nipups,—the bass drummer was beating the hide off his instrument.

First, ten and two minutes to go.

"Stand back, ev'body!" Coco tongue-lashed them. "Gonna be blood spatterin' ever' which way. Fifty . . . left!"

The spring was gone from Dan's legs. His right wrist ached. His lungs felt as if he'd inhaled flame.

He surged up to the slot. The Stanford center slammed the door in his face. He went through somehow. A clutching hand tore his helmet off. Somebody ripped his jersey. He couldn't see where he was going because an arm was clamped around his head. He rolled, fought, slogged ahead. They dropped the boom on him.

"First. . . ." screeched Everson, in his ear. "Yatta boy!"

On the twenty-five. Less than a minute left.

Coco looked at him, pleading. Dan shook his head. "Ninety. Ship." If they could do it on third, they could click with it on first, couldn't they? Then maybe Dan could slam it over for the needed three or four yards.

It went. Slick and smooth. Ship flat on his face on the eighteen. Thirty seconds on the clock.

"Now," Dan grunted. "Fifty, right."

Coco shook his fists at them. "One good punch, bunch."

A roaring in his ears, which might be the stands in hysteria . . . and might not. An ache . . . not any special place . . . just all over. He sucked air into his seared lungs. The ball came back.

He never did know the details until he read them in Llewellyn's down-by-down account next morning. He had a nightmare notion he was back in the woods in a Saginaw bull fight . . . only now there were three men in front of him . . . they weren't sticking to the rules . . . they were hanging onto him . . . trying to trip him . .

Two of them were still hanging onto him when he was stopped by the post. He put out his hand, to make sure it *was* the goal post. He'd gone ten yards over that last white stripe.



He could barely make it back to the lineup. But Stoney let him stay in, until,—in a hush that made the ear-drums ring,—Everson carefully booted that point that made it a game . . . and a 1-point win!

There was still ten seconds left.

Stoney used it to send Prender in, and let Dan come off the field by himself, jogging wearily, while even the Stanford stands joined in a tumult that could have been heard halfway to Palo Alto.

## X

HE was looking in the mirror again when Coco came along. "Stop admiring y'self. Enough other peep to do that." "Just examining my black 'n' blue marks."

"Never mind 'em. Gent outside says he has to see you, but *pronto!*"

Coco took his arm. In the corridor, Frankie Caytron waited, with another man. A big bronzed individual with a face that was the duplicate of the one Dan had been inspecting in the mirror . . . only without Dan's cut lip and swollen nose.

Dan scowled, darkly. He flushed. The bronzed man hesitated, held out his hand.

"I take it all back, Dan'l. You've shown me. You're a ball player for anybody's dough. Maybe you're no razzle-dazzle broken fielder. But you sure can pound through there. And I never worked that Paycheck Pass any better in my life."

Dan shook hands. "Didn't know you were here, Sam," he muttered lamely.

Caytron scoffed. "Ah! You knew all right. I got wise you knew your brother was here with the Burgers, soon's Coco told me how fast you ducked my invitation. Up till then I thought you *were* Janny . . . and then *he* showed up at my place with the rest of the Pitts . . . and it all came out in the wash.

"Yuh?" Dan wasn't so sure. He went close to his famous brother. Memories crowded in.

His failure to star as a passer, as a running back, at Michigan. Sam's bull-headed attempts to tell him *how* to pass, *how* to run, how to do *everything* just like successful Sam . . . the celebrated high scoring 'Jet' Jannok of the pros. Dan's difficulty, trying to make out on his own,

under the handicap of being a younger brother of one of the game's all-time Greats. His unwillingness to make the grade on the strength of big brother's name, anyway.

And then, the bitter quarrel at home. The ugly names. The words "Lazy", "yellow". Other words,—nastier. His mother, stopping it. And the angry decision to get away,—far from home,—to make good on his own—without any pulling or pressuring from Sam.

As a topper, Sam's sneering taunt: "Okay! ..Okay! ..But don't ever tell anybody you're my brother!"

"I thought you didn't want anybody to know. Sam." His eyes probed the other's.

Jet Jannok grinned. "You're such a hot-headed fathead. You never did take anything seriously,—except *me!* I figured you'd never do any good, trailing after me. So . . . maybe I prodded you too hard. But I'm damn well proud of the way it worked out. And pleased. The folks will be tickled, too, when I talk to 'em on the phone tonight."

"Did you tell St—Mister Hart? Who I was?"

"No," drawled a lazy voice. "I did."

Lin Hollet. In the doorway.

"I had to, at half time, or my life wouldn't have been worth a plugged *peso*. I heard about Jet Janok being in town. . . and how much you looked like him. . . and put this and that together. When Marla found it out, why—"

"Dan."

She was just outside. Not proper for little girls to hang around the big boy's locker room!

"Dan," she held out a hand. "Why couldn't you have *told* me! You were wonderful!"

He purposely misunderstood her. "Will you put *that* in writing, shugie?"

Jet thumped him on the back.

"Introduce me to the lovely, heel."

Dan bowed: "Marla, slip five to Samuel Adams Janok, my big stiff of a brother. I told you mom was terrific. After putting that kind of a tag on him, she named me Daniel Webster Janok. Can you imagine having a label like *that?*"

"Oh, yes," she said dreamily. "I can. I'd love it."



# Wing Ding Waterboy

By BILL ERIN

**L**ITTLE Joe Matthews, as he was known on the squad, sat on the bench and watched the proud, tradition-drenched Horton University team going down to defeat. The big game of the year, of every year, was almost half over. As predicted, the age-old rivals of Horton, the mighty blue of Medenah, were smashing through Horton with ease. Medenah was fast this year, and in Ike Fawcett they had a passer that couldn't be stopped. He couldn't be stopped because his receiver, Petey Smith, could out-run anyone in the Horton backfield, and Ike always had the ball where Petey wanted it.

Little Joe was bitter. His father and both his brothers were in the stands. When they had played for Horton, Horton had never lost to Medenah. Of course, they couldn't exactly say that Little Joe played for Horton. He was in uniform, and he was on the bench, but he very seldom got into a game. Little Joe was fast. He had more speed than any of his distinguished, football-playing relatives ever had. But he was little. He had no drive, no fight. Give him a clear field and he could out-run anybody, but how many times do you get a clear field?

Still, the coach kept him on the squad. He kept him because of his speed and because he had the famous Matthews name. The coach kept hoping he'd wake up and find some fight and drive to go with that speed.

Medenah had their third touchdown called back on a long, fifteen yard penalty. The air was filled with mixed boos and cheers. That meant nineteen yards to the goal line for the mighty blue, and only one down to make it in. It would be Ike Fawcett passing to Petey Smith. Everybody in the stands knew it, everybody on the field knew it. Ike faded, spotted Petey coursing down the sideline, and led him well with a long, floating pass. Two Horton men were converging, but with a sudden burst of speed

Smith took a short lead and gathered the leather into his arms. Jimmy Nelson, the safety man, made a desperate lunge and tripped Petey Smith on the two yard line. Horton's ball.

Well, little Joe reflected, we—*they* stopped that one. Now they'll punt and Medenah will start all over again.

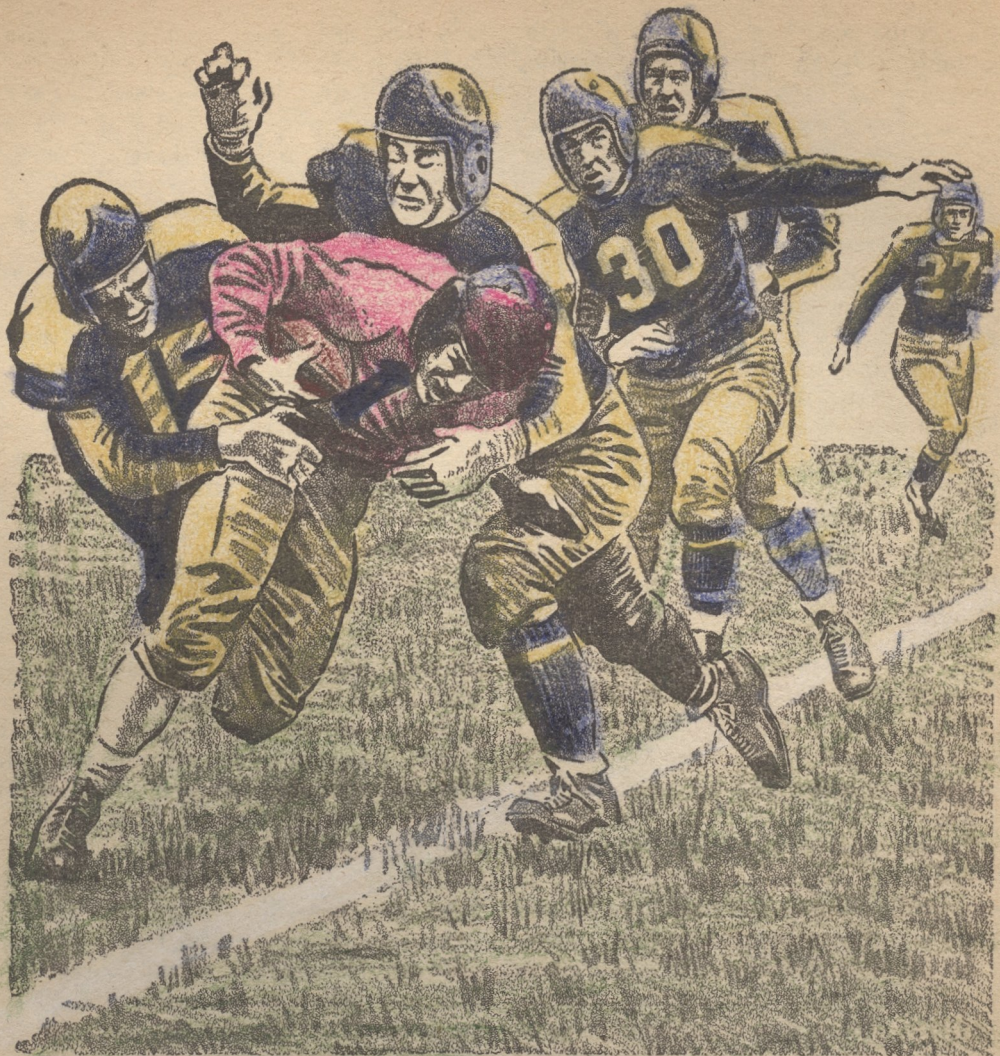
**T**HE THREE of them had come to see the big game, as usual; Big Sam Matthews; his son Sam Matthews the second; and his other son, Big John Matthews. Little Joe Matthews was already at Horton in his senior year. Little Joe was small-boned, like his mother, but the other three were big and powerful. They had all helped make gridiron history at Horton.

They were full of laughter, handshakes, yells, and bottled-in-bond cheer. They held no disdain of little Joe. They were willing to overlook his frailty, his lack of football prowess. They slammed him on the back and told him it was tough, but everybody couldn't be on the first string. They told everybody else it was tough, but everybody couldn't be on the first string. Photographers took pictures of the *three* great Matthews, back for the big game. There was some mention that another Matthews was on the squad, and that a Horton squad with a Matthews had never been defeated by Medenah, but those traditions were bound to be broken sooner or later.

On the field Medenah fumbled and Horton recovered near the fifty. That was a break for Horton. The half was almost over and Little Joe watched them run three plays. The big, fast Medenah team was all over Horton. They got nowhere. They punted.

Medenah almost scored their third touchdown in spite of the lack of time. It was Fawcett to Smith, Fawcett to Smith, and then Fawcett to the other end all alone. If the other end had had Smith's speed it would have been the third touch-





down. But Jimmy Nelson came fast from nowhere to make another desperation tackle on the five, and the half ended before Medenah could run another play.

The coach took them in at the half and he was raging. If the second half went the way the first half looked, Medenah would score another four touchdowns. It would be the most lop-sided game in the long rivalry. No matter how unevenly matched the teams were, the weak team usually came up with something to make it a game. From somewhere came the inspiration to make it a game.

"You guys are dead on your feet," the coach raged. "Every time you turn around, some Medenah player has turned around twice. You gotta move faster, you gotta fight. Get out there in this second half and play ball."

Little Joe's attention drifted away from the coach's words. The words weren't for him. He wouldn't even get in the game. He didn't have what it took to make a football player. In the Columbia game he had been put in during the late stages, and had returned a punt forty-eight yards. He had scooted up the field so fast he had almost made it all the way to a touchdown. The year before against big Pennsylvania, he had skidded through a big hole off tackle for fifty-two yards. That was good against Pennsylvania. That was the biggest gain of the day. But they were isolate examples. On the whole Joe was too little to play football. The big men almost broke him in two, and Little Joe had no heart for that kind of thing. He wasn't much good to the team.

The big blow-up had come later last



night at the hotel room. That's when the laughing and the jovial back-slapping and the embarrassed introductions of the was the biggest gain of the day. But they son who wasn't much of a football player, had come to an end. In the hotel room Big Sam Matthews, flanked by his two sons, had glowered at Little Joe.

"Joe," Big Sam had said, "I hear you're running around with that little tart again."

Joe had become used to his father calling her a tart. At first it had made him angry, a futile anger, but now he accepted it. Mary was, of course, no tart. She was a very cute girl, small like Joe and very nice. She worked in a restaurant. Joe was in love with her and had made the mistake of introducing her to his father two years ago. She had been out of place in that big house. She had been *verboden* since, although Little Joe broke the regulations consistently—in secret.

"How did you know?" Joe asked. It was a question that came from his surprise, and was the only thing he could think of to say.

"Never mind how I know," Sam said. "I know it. Maybe I made a mistake to begin with. Maybe I should have let you go on with her without opposition. Maybe by now your infatuation would have burned itself out. Certainly no sensible, intelligent young man would saddle himself with a floozie with her background."

"She's no floozie," Joe had flared up. He had stood, trembling with anger.

"Sit down!" Sam thundered. And Joe sat down. "Now you listen to me," Sam roared. "If I ever hear of you talking to her again, I'll jerk you out of Horton before you graduate and put you to work in the factory, do you understand? You've had milk in your veins instead of red Matthews blood ever since you were born, and you've caused us enough embarrassment without marrying an ignorant waitress. Do you understand?"

Little Joe had left. He thought for a minute that his father was going to grab him by the coat collar and hurl him back into the chair. But from somewhere, with actual, shameful tears in his eyes, Little Joe had found the courage to walk out.

The coach was through and the team

was running back out on the field. Little Joe sighed and stood up. If only he could do something to establish his independence. If only he could find the courage to face himself, he'd have the courage to face his father.

"Well, Matthews," the coach barked, "what's the matter with you?"

The rest of the team had dragged itself out on the field and Little Joe was alone with the coach. The coach, as he glowered and looked down on Little Joe, a sort of contempt in his face, reminded Joe of his father. The courage that had been growing in him with maturity, the courage that had given him strength to walk out on his father the night before, came to Joe again.

"I wanted to talk to you," Joe said.

"Well?"

"Look," Joe said, "the only way you stand a chance with Medenah is to get some speed out on the field. You've got to have someone who can stay with Pete Smith, someone who can run with Ike Fawcett when he goes wide, and someone who can get through those holes before they close."

"All right," the coach said, "where do I get that speed?"

Joe mustered all his courage. For one statement he mustered all the courage he'd ever had before in his entire life. "Me," he said. "I'm the fastest man on the squad."

THE COACH didn't sneer as Joe thought he would. He didn't look contemptuous. He looked, rather, as though this wasn't an entirely new idea. "This is a rough game," he said, instead of saying no. "They're hitting hard out there. You've got the speed, but . . ."

"I know," Joe said. "I duck my head on tackles and I stop when I'm gonna get hit, and I'm so light I can't block. I know. But if I stop Petey Smith, it's worth it. And if I go five yards and stop when I get hit, it's better than the two yards we have been making." Little Joe was making no promises about tackling or blocking. He knew how easy it was to make up your mind to tackle with your eyes on the knees, and how hard it was to do it.

The coach nodded briskly. "We'll give it



a try," he said. "And remember, a team with a Matthews on it has never lost to Medenah."

Joe grinned sourly at the pep talk. "I know," he said. He trotted out to the field. For the Medenah game the old college rah-rah came back. For the rest of the season they were a modern, hard-working football team. But for the Medenah game they pulled out the stops.

The coach made one change for the second half. He put Little Joe at left half, the key spot in the backfield.

"All right," Jimmy Nelson, quarterback and captain, shouted as they lined up to receive the kick-off, "let's go!"

The ball came sailing back deep, end over end. As it came, high through the air to Little Joe, the thousands of fans screamed, the bass drum rolled, and the cheer leaders did handsprings. Little Joe got buck fever. His legs trembled and the sweat stood out on his forehead, ran down his back. The ball thudded into his mid-section and his arms wrapped around it. He started up the field.

Little Joe raced across the white chalk marks; the fifteen, the twenty, the twenty-five, and then the big blue jerseys were cascading toward him. He turned on the steam and whistled across the thirty between two big tackles who were a little to slow in converging. He cut to the sideline and out-raced two more Medenah men. Then he was hit.

Little Joe didn't go down. He spun, and let his momentum carry him away from the tackler, and he kept his feet across the thirty-five. He was hit again, but he twisted and stretched as he went down, and he almost made the forty yard line.

*I did that, Joe thought as he got up. I made that run, and I didn't go down when I was hit the first time. I'm in one piece, I'm not hurt, and I made a run like that.*

*All right, if it's that easy when you get mad, I'm staying mad. Maybe I get killed, but today I run all the way, and if I have to tackle I keep my eyes on their knees, head up, tail down.*

The ball came to Jimmy Nelson, and Joe raced past the quarterback. He grabbed the ball deftly and slipped through a small opening in the line. He scooted past the line-backer like a scared rabbit, and

raced into the secondary. They hit him high and low at the same time. He went down with the wind whooshing out of him, and somebody caught him in the face with a knee.

Joe rolled over when they unplied and gasped for breath.

"You all right?" Jimmy Nelson asked.

"Sure," Joe said, and he scrambled hastily to his feet. He didn't want to get taken out now. He'd never get back in.

Joe felt something warm on his lips and tasted it. It was salty and thick. He felt with his fingers and it was blood. He had split a lip already. Look at that, he thought, I'm hurt and I'm still in the game. I'm hurt, and it isn't bad at all. He grinned with a sort of savage glee. He remembered Big Sam telling how he played the whole second half of the Medenah game in 1922 with a broken nose. They had won the game, 9-7.

"Eight yards," Jimmy said in a huddle, "two to go. Let's get that first down."

Joe fainted off the tackle, and George Mack, the fullback, crashed over center for three and a first down on the midfield stripe.

Then Jimmy, hoping to catch Medenah napping, called a pass play with Joe doing the passing. Jimmy flipped the ball back to Joe and cut down a guard that was coming through. Joe faded and he could see the big ends converging. Never mind them, he kept telling himself. He was a good passer in dummy scrimmage, but when they came in for blood he got panicky.

Joe tried to forget the ends and find a receiver, but his panicky eyes could find nothing, and they smashed him savagely to the ground for a ten yard loss.

Anger burned in Joe, and he couldn't face the accusing eyes of his teammates.

"I was wide open," Ken Deeter, at the end, said.

"All right," Jimmy said, "same play."

They can't hurt me any more whether I throw the pass or don't throw it, Joe thought. He took the flip from Jimmy and he kept his eyes on Ken. He concentrated furiously on the end as the man raced alone down the sideline. He laid the ball carefully in the air, but he never saw whether or not Ken got it. Those ends tried to kill him.



**J**OE figured he wouldn't get up. He had a lot of pain somewhere, and he'd just lay there and let them bury him with a hero's honors. But when the ends got off him, he got up. The ball was down on the Medenah twenty-seven, first and ten for Horton.

They passed again, and Medenah went into a five man line. Only one man came charging at Joe. Joe couldn't see the receiver, so he cut around the man at the last minute and raced into the flat. He stopped there and saw Jimmy all alone on the ten. He banged the ball home to Jimmy and the quarterback fell to the eight when he was hit.

Joe had time, when he trotted down the field to note that the Horton stands were going insane, and a deep satisfaction welled through him. He wondered what his father and his two brothers were thinking now.

Jimmy banged Mack at the line twice, but that big Medenah forward wall wasn't giving an inch. It was third and eight.

Jimmy pivoted and flipped the ball off to Joe going wide. Joe had to run back to the eighteen yard line to turn the end, but his speed did it for him, and he cut down the sideline. Medenah men were coming from everywhere, so Joe cut back toward the center. With a burst of speed he out-ran them all before they could reverse, and then knifed down the center of the field toward the goal line. He was on the two before somebody smashed down on him with a big pair of hands and belted him to the ground.

Fourth and two. Joe hit into the line, taking a hand-off from Jimmy, and he whipped into a small opening. The big blue men were there, and Jimmy dove between their legs like a small boy at a circus. He saw the double stripe pass under him, and then his face was being ground into the dirt. There was a big weight of men over him, but he lay quiet, with his face in the dirt, until the frantic referee dug down to him and saw that he was in pay-off territory.

Big-toe James, whom the coach had trained for this one function, came in to add the extra point, and they were behind, 14-7.

Medenah came smashing back. Their fast backs shredded the Horton line, and

they moved to a first down in two plays. Then Ike Fawcett came off tackle on Joe's side. He had an opening, was slowed momentarily by the line backer, but fought his way clear, and Little Joe had the All American all to himself.

Little Joe drew a bead on Ike's pumping knees and drove. He kept his head up and his tail down, and he wrapped his arms around the piston-like legs. There was thunder in his helmet and a flashing in front of his eyes, but he held in. Ike was down.

Petey Smith came along, and Joe raced with him. The ball was coming, and Petey turned on a burst of speed. But Joe turned it on, too, and stayed right beside him. He went into the air with Petey and one desperate, reaching hand hit the ball to bounce it away incomplete. Again they sent Petey down, and again Little Joe stayed with him to bat the ball away. Medenah had to punt.

Gradually it turned into a nightmare for Joe. He dove in to get his head knocked off, or he ran deep with Petey Smith and leaped high in the air to break up the passes. Once, clever Petey button-hooked and lost Little Joe. The pass was complete, but as Petey whirled to run, Joe hit him at the knees. Joe was furious when he hit, and he struck hard, driving after he hit. He pulled the legs out from under the big end as he caught him sideways, and banged the man to the ground like the hammer on a pile-driver. The ball bounded away from Petey Smith. Jimmy Nelson recovered.

Then it was either race at the line to take a hand-off, scoot through for five or six yards before they knew where you were, or fade for the pass, and those big ends ready to murder you. Joe was very weary, but there was a satisfaction in it that he hadn't known existed.

The third quarter ended with Horton on the Medenah twenty-two and threatening to score the tying touchdown. Mack hit the line to open the final quarter, but he got nowhere. Joe raced at the line, but there was no hole. Medenah was giving nothing now. Joe scooted along behind the line, but he was hit and dropped for a three yard loss.

All day long the right half, the man-in-motion, had been running wide with



nobody using him. Jimmy decided the time had come. He called a play and said: "Right into the end zone."

Joe faded and saw the man going down. He looked the other way and cocked his arm. The ends went into the air to block the pass instead of hitting Joe, a trick Joe was just developing in self-defense, and Joe ducked under them and around them. The half was running into the end zone and cutting over, and he had several steps on his lax defender. Joe pitched the long pass carefully, and then somebody bounced him off the turf and he slipped into blessed oblivion.

HE heard them talking before he opened his eyes. "What do you think, Doc?" the coach asked.

"I don't know yet, let's see how he acts when he comes to," the doctor answered.

Joe opened his eyes. "How you feel, Joe?" the coach asked anxiously, the way he would about any star player whom the team depended on.

"Fine," Joe said, the way any star would answer, regardless of the beating he was taking.

"What day is this?" the doctor asked.

"Saturday," Joe said, "when did we start playing football any other day?"

"Can you count to ten?" the doctor asked.

"I didn't get into college on a fake diploma," Joe answered, and he struggled into a sitting position.

"He's all right," the doctor said.

The coach patted him on the back and they ran off the field. Joe stood up and the stadium wavered back and forth before it came to focus. Big-Toe James unerringly booted home the extra point and the score was tied.

Medenah took the kick-off and struck back. They smashed furiously up the field, ripping, tearing and clawing with the inspiration of any team in their Big Game. They surged across the fifty before the ground defense tightened down. Then they took to the air. But Joe covered Petey Smith like a tent, and the passing attack broke down, too. Medenah punted.

Joe broke loose for one twelve yard jaunt, but he was hit behind the scrimmage line on two other plays, and Mack couldn't get anywhere, so Jimmy Nelson

had to punt back. Ike Fawcett\* fought his way into Horton territory.

The game began to take on a dream-like quality again. Joe didn't pay much attention to where the ball was or what down it was. Whenever the ball was snapped by Medenah, Joe glued himself to Petey Smith. The rest of the secondary stayed in tight to bottle up Ike Fawcett, and Medenah didn't have another great pass receiver who could break himself loose and grab the leather. They broke the back of Medenah's attack on three successive tries.

But the score was still tied. Time was running out and the tired Horton team couldn't get an attack going either.

Medenah had fourth and eight, and a Horton substitute came running in. "Coach says Joe should receive the punt," the sub said.

Joe dropped back into safety. The ball came high, a beautiful spiral, long, back to the five-yard line. Joe grabbed it and started straight up the field. The left tackle of Medenah drove for him, but he stopped on a dime to let the big man overshoot him. He spun away from the end and head for the sideline. He raced up the sideline with everything he had, and he got blocking. The Horton team mowed down the tacklers as Joe tight-roped up the sideline.

Ike Fawcett came charging over to take a shot at him, but Joe turned on a final burst of speed that carried him past the All American. It was too much for his tired legs. He lost control of them and they seemed to be hitting the ground and jamming back up at him without control. He stumbled and lost speed. He was in the clear, but he almost went on his nose. Joe crossed the fifty and regained control. Medenah men were coming fast and he turned on the steam again. He went across the twenty, and the ten, but his legs wouldn't answer and his knees were buckling. He stumbled across the goal line and fell into the end zone. Joe rolled over twice and lay on his back.

His breath was coming in great gasps and his teeth hurt with an ache that was almost unbearable. He lay on his back and he was through. To hell with it, he thought. It wasn't worth it. He'd never been that tired, and the crazy monkeys



in the stands jumping up and down could stuff it.

Then his joyous teammates arrived. They pulled Joe to his feet and mauled him, and Joe had to grin. Joe got a rest while Big-toe James kicked the extra point and they went up the field to kick-off.

Time was almost gone, and Fawcett-to-Smith was the only Medenah prayer. Only because Petey Smith was tired too, was Joe able to stay with him. He broke up one play, and then they both raced across the fifty-yard line for the next pass. Joe went into the air, swung his hand, tipped the ball straight up in the air. He fell to the ground on his back, and the ball dropped right into his arms.

That was all. George Mack smashed three times at the line for Horton, with his big arms wrapped tightly around the ball, and the game was over.

Little Joe had a hard time getting to the dressing room. Everyone wanted to pound his aching body, and finally his teammates hoisted him up and got him away from the maniacs. He undressed slowly. He just sat on the bench in front of his locker for five minutes at a time and grinned at the hilarity in the dressing room. Finally he made it to the showers and let the hot water soothe his aches. He washed the dirt and the blood off, and then he just stood and soaked while he thought.

**H**E had done it. It had been tough, but he was still alive and no bones broken. He should have tried this a long time ago. He had won the big game, and all the honor that went with such a feat was his. For the next few days they'd give him the campus if he wanted it. A Matthews was once again a football hero at Horton. There was a deep, firm satisfaction in the thought. It was a maturing, hardening satisfaction. He was now a man who could stand on his own two feet and face any of the football deeds of the rest of his family without fear.

They were in the dressing room when he came out of the showers, his slight body dripping. They were laughing, but there was real pride and joy in their eyes as they beamed at him. They were all set to pound him, but Joe held up his hand.

"If you touch me," he said, "I'll fall apart."

The three of them laughed uproariously. Big Sam shook his hand solemnly. "Son," he said, "I've never been so proud of you in my life."

"Terrific game," said Sam the second. "Greatest game I ever saw," said Big John.

They continued to babble while Joe dressed. Joe let the talk cascade over him the way he had the warm shower. It was just as warming to him.

"Tell you what," said Big Sam when Joe was dressed, "we'll go over to the old Yahoo Bar and hang one on, the four of us."

Joe shook his head. "No," he said.

"No?" Sam asked. "Where you going?"

"I have a date with a girl," Joe said, and he looked his father straight in the eye.

"With that—" Sam started.

"You say 'tart' and I'll kick your damned teeth in," Joe said, and he meant it.

"Listen," Sam started again, but Joe shrugged into his coat.

"Go stuff it," he said, and he walked away from them. There was a swagger in his walk, too.

"By damn," Sam said, his face slack with astonishment. His two sons were also astonished. Then slowly a smile came to Big Sam's face and he looked at his two sons. The pride was back in his eyes. "By damn!" he said again, but this time it had a different tone.

The two sons nodded in agreement.

"Come on," Big Sam said, "this really calls for a drink." Together the three of them headed for the Old Yahoo Bar.



# Big Boss in the Backfield

By Ted Stratton

**Ex-Ivy star Ricky Gravel tried to make those dumb miners use their brains. They tried to make him use his fighting heart. Maybe everybody was asking too much.**

**A**T the start of the time-out period, Ricky Gravel's football mates, the rugged Coalers, knelt in a ring on the ground. He stood above them a moment, a frown darkening his lean good-looking face, then he loosened the strap on a white plastic helmet and let the night air cool his hot face.

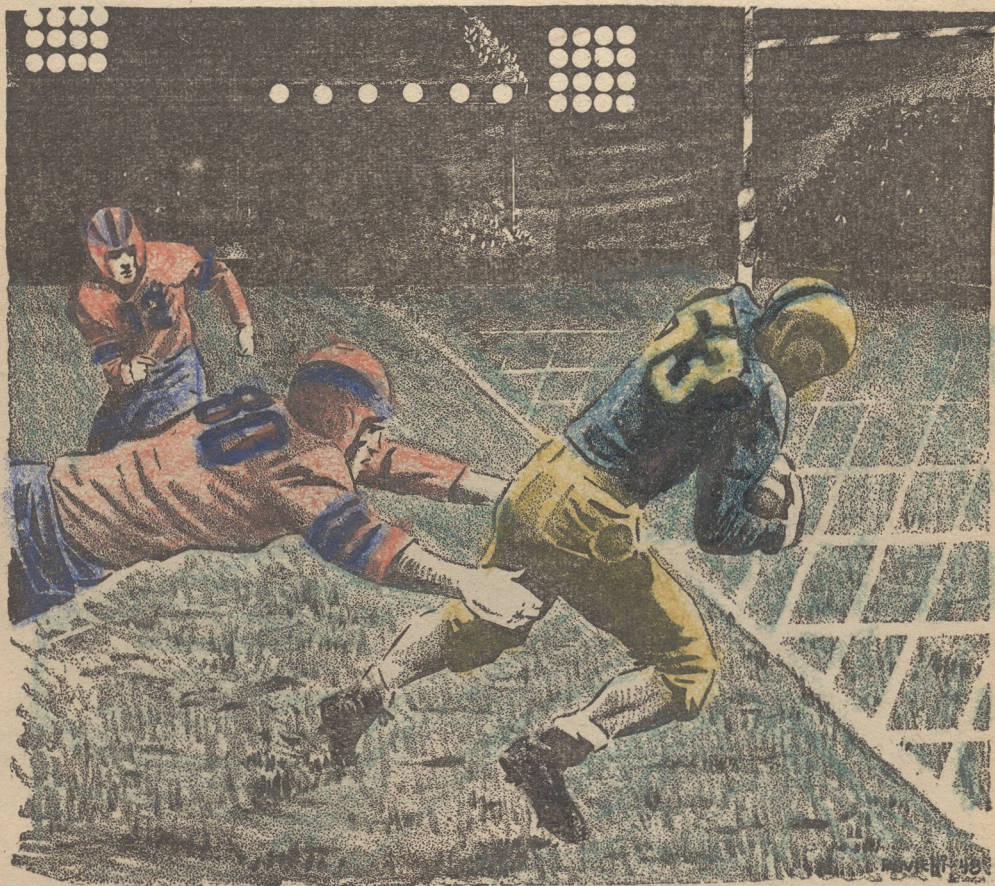
Batteries of floodlights cast a weird, bluish-white radiance across the Shamokin Miners' home gridiron. In the shad-

owed stands behind the glare, he heard the pleased rumble of the fans.

In this first game of the season he was tired. But that could wait.

The game couldn't wait. Only two minutes left to score a touchdown from the miners' forty-yard line. Time enough, but could they score? They should have been a couple of touchdowns in front, instead of behind by three big points.

What was the matter with the Coalers?



*Something from behind struck his right leg. Ricky stumbled, tried to spin, began to lose his balance as the goal posts loomed up ahead.*



Like the Miners huddled over there, the Coalers were big broad-shouldered men who had been reared in the coal regions. They typified the kind of outfits that formed the Black Diamond Profesional League—miners, coal handlers or town men. But the stamp of the coal regions were on all of them.

To Ricky's trained football mind — he had starred at State—the Coalers needed a boss. So far in the game, Bohunk Bedenk, the middleweight quarterback and captain, had run the team into a three point deficit.

Ricky studied the broad faces of his mates. Not a trace of worry showed at the imminence of unexpected defeat. They never went to college, he thought, then changed that to: "Probably never saw the inside of a high school." Anyway, he'd have to take over if they were to pull this game out.

He stepped inside the ring, knelt down. Bohunk's dark eyes studied Ricky curiously. Then Bohunk asked: "Any ideas, Mr. Gravel?"

"We'll start playing it my way," Ricky said crisply, grabbing off Bohunk's cloak of authority. "The Miners expected us to throw plenty of open stuff at them in the final two minutes. We'll out-fox 'em; rush the ball until they congest and then open up."

"That could be a good idea, Mr. Gravel," Shedloskie, the big center, said gravely. "What you t'ink, Bohunk?"

The captain hesitated, his eyes somber. "It is always better to use the brains," he said slowly.

"My brains," Ricky corrected.

Walinchus, the king-sized fullback, rumbled: "You gimme that ball, huh? I murder them dumb palookas."

"Hit the line once with your head up," Ricky snapped. "You've been butting into piles all night."

"I been murdering them dumb palookas," Walinchus bragged.

The whistle shrilled time in.

The Coalers sprang up, huddled. Over the lowered shoulders of the linemen, Ricky watched the Miners deploy into a loose, five-man line to meet an expected flurry of passes.

"Their middle's wide open," Ricky snapped, grabbing Bohunk's role as sig-

nal caller. "Nicolini on the quick opener."

Shedloskie glanced at Bohunk. Momentary anger fired the captain's dark eyes, then he shrugged. "It is always smart to outwit your opponent," he offered, "and we need that touchdown badly."

Bohunk crouched under Shedloskie's tail. The backs fanned out in T-formation with Nicolini at right half, Walinchus at fullback, and Ricky in his favorite slot at left half, the speed spot.

On the snapback, Nicolini darted forward. Walinchus faked wide with Ricky on his tail. Nicolini bored through the loose defense for seven long yards.

In the huddle, Ricky said jubilantly: "My idea is working. I'll hit tackle. Ride it, ride it!"

**I**MPASSIVELY, the men lined up. Ricky crouched. He was a tall, wide-shouldered youngster with a slender waist and muscled calves. On the snapback, he bolted forward. Two steps got him to Bohunk, who slapped the ball into his stomach.

Ricky's shoulders widened an eye-lash hole. He ducked under the viciously swung arm of a tackle, swerved in. A backer-up drove in from the side, caved in Ricky's knees with a hard tackle.

Ricky hopped up. He'd gained four yards. For a moment, he had thought that he could have gone all the way. If one of the Coalers, he thought bitterly, had remembered an assignment and slid through to pick off that backerup . . .

In the huddle, Bohunk suggested: "We have been saving that 58-pass and they are congested. Maybe you should—"

Ricky interrupted with a crisp, "Walinchus on the delayed buck. We'll sucker 'em."

The teams settled into position along the picket line. Walinchus bellowed: "You dumb palookas, it's me up the middle!"

The Miners laughed derisively. "You can't bust a paper hoop," a big lineman jeered.

"I knock you flat, you bet," Walinchus roared back.

Should I call off the play that Walinchus tipped off? Ricky wondered. Maybe the Miners would think that the fullback had bluffed, intending to circle wide. It was worth a gamble, he decided.



Nicolini and Ricky faked smooth cross-bucks while Bohunk completed the feints with swift working elbows and hands. Walinchus stormed up the middle. As he hit the pile, his shoulders heaved. He disappeared under the pile, tunneling, then the top of the pile caved in on him.

The men untangled slowly. Ricky glanced at the clock. Forty seconds left. Forty seconds in which to win. They'd have to go all the way, maybe on this next play.

Walinchus strutted into the huddle. "Hey," he bragged, "you seen me bust them dumb palookas, you bet!"

"You gained a lousy yard," Ricky snapped.

"You should not tell them where the play is to go," Shedloskie warned. "Is that not so, Bohunk?"

"That is dumb football," Bohunk agreed quietly. "Walinchus, tell 'em you'll bust the center, then circle wide." Bohunk turned to Ricky, asked: "A pass, Mr. Gravel?"

"No," Ricky decided. "It's 48, and— and drive it!"

It would be the last play, the Coalers knew. They growled, "Touchdown, you bet!"

It was a pretty play, a variant from the standard T-end run. Nicolini bored into the tackle slot. Bohunk hand-faked, swung back, and handed off Ricky who cut past the delaying Walinchus.

Ricky sprinted wide, his camera eye snapping the picture of the unfolding defense. Bohunk shouldered the defensive end inside, headed for the wingback. Nicolini butted into the backup. The Coalers right end, Fetkowitz, slid through, hesitated, then set sail for the distant safety man.

Behind Ricky, Walinchus bellowed: "Gimme that ball!"

Normally, Ricky would have lateraled to Walinchus, then continued ahead to block. But Bohunk had the situation in hand. So he turned downfield, instead of lateraling back.

Bohunk upended the wingback. Ricky cut inside. Walinchus yammered: "Hey, gimme the ball; Hey—"

Ricky rocketed into the unprotected bucket. This was what he liked best in football. The shrill yelp of the crowd as

danger threatened the Miners. The speed in his flying legs. The white lines twinkling underfoot. The smooth, hard splat of his cleats on the turf. All that, and the goal posts coming up fast.

Ahead, Fetkowitz neared the safety. Ricky slowed to take advantage of this last important block. Fetkowitz lowered his shoulders, faked once, then slammed into the safety.

At the ten-yard line, somebody from the rear hit his right foot. He stumbled two steps forward, lost his balance. He hit the turf, rolled. Roll, roll, he thought desperately.

In the middle of the second roll, somebody nailed him to the ground. There ahead of him, only a yard distant, was the white line that meant victory for the Coalers. Then the gun banged, ending the game.

The tackler jumped up, yelled. The Miners took up the shout. The crowd echoed the sound. It was the Miners' game.

Ricky climbed to his feet, slammed the ball down. He stared fascinatedly at that final, last white line. One yard short of a win. And he had had the victory easy, until somebody had tripped him from behind. Easy, like pulling stuff out of your Christmas sock!

"I t'ink," Shedloskie said gravely, coming up, "that you almost pulled it out, Mr. Gravel. Next week, I t'ink we're gonna show them Steelers some fine football."

"You bet," Walinchus rumbled. "Only I don't mean to trip him up, see?"

Slowly, like acid corroding metal, the words ate into Ricky's brain. *I don't mean to trip him up*. So it had been Walinchus, yammering for a lateral, who had tripped him. Walinchus, who had cost them the game. Ricky advanced on the fullback, stiff-legged.

"So you beat us," he flared. "You big, dumb hunk of meat, why didn't you throw a block? I had the game in my back pocket! I ran through 'em like water down a brook! I—"

"You wait it a second," Walinchus protested. "You don't run that 48-play right, Mr. Gravel. It says on the paper Bohunk give me that you lateral to me. Only you don't. Me, I coulda murdered them dumb palookas!"



BOHUNK shoved in between Ricky and Walinchus. "It's an optional play, Walinchus," Bohunk said calmly, as if losing a close game were like tossing a burnt match away. "Sorta like a bootleg, see? Ricky—uh, Mr. Gravel doesn't have to lateral. He saw the course of the play change up ahead when I went after the wingback. He kept the ball to save time on the run. With you behind him for a possible lateral, that made 48 stronger. Next time if Mr. Gravel doesn't lateral, don't crowd him. Give him plenty of elbow room to cut."

"Next time, you bet," Walinchus agreed, and grinned. "I am learning this football fast. I out-fox them Steelers. Ain't that right, Mr. Gravel, huh?"

Ricky's mind still rankled from the unnecessary defeat. He snapped: "You'll need a new set of brains to out-fox anybody! You're a Coalier, all right! You've got big shoulders and a—" He took a step forward.

Something warned him. He stopped. Bohunk Bedenk's eyes were somber. Walinchus stared, mouth open. The Coaliers stood silent, impassive. Then big Shedloskie flexed his big fists, said softly: "I t'ink I take a shower."

The men nodded. They moved off. Walinchus took a single step towards Ricky and Bohunk said quietly: "Take a shower."

Craftiness in Walinchus' eyes, and maybe a little hate. "Maybe," he rumbled, "we need Mr. Gravel's brains against the Steelers, huh? It ain't everybody what has played college football, you bet."

Walinchus shambled off and Bohunk offered: "It was a mistake to call him dumb."

"He is dumb," Ricky flared.

"Calling men names is not good," Bohunk continued patiently. "Have you ever wondered why I asked the boss to play with us, eh?"

"You needed football brains on this outfit. You knew I had played at State, that I was picked for the Eastern All Stars in the Shrine game at Frisco."

"Maybe," Bohunk said, nodding. "Or I wanted you to get closer to the men who work in your uncle's mines. You'll be the big boss there someday and you must learn the ways of the miners."

"I'm not following this," Ricky said impatiently.

"You are new in the coal regions," Bohunk went on. "I have always lived in the shadow of a slag heap. Miners have a tough life. When the big boss thinks more of his men, we all will be better off. Then there will be no work stoppages or strikes."

"If these men are miners," Ricky said slowly, "isn't it because that's the job they can do best?"

"Put it like this," Bohunk said. "These men are smart enough, Mr. Gravel. They have never had the advantage or the disadvantage of a college education. They are like big children. One handles children with patience, correcting their weaknesses without calling names or losing the temper. One leads them and—"

"Maybe," Ricky interrupted. "What concerns me is losing this game. I'd have won it, but for Walinchus."

"Nothing bigger than football here?" Bohunk prodded.

"Nothing," Ricky said, and trotted towards the lockers.

He had cooled off. He could feel the night wind in his bones. Maybe he had been too harsh with Walinchus and the Coaliers. He could straighten that out with them inside a couple of days. There would be little details of the offense to straighten out, now that he had taken over the direction of the team.

Yes, and another little matter to attend to. That constant, "Mr. Gravel", from the men. There wasn't any need for that. He'd let them call him plain Ricky. That would put everybody on equal footing.

He went into the silent, depressing atmosphere of the lockers.

## II

CAMPBELL GRAVEL stood six-foot-two in his stockinged feet. He had the shoulders and thick wrists of a man who had once wielded a pick, but long years at desk had smoothed the callouses on his palms. He sat behind the bleached wood desk inside the office at Star Mines.

"I didn't see the game against the Miners," Campbell Gravel said, and smiled at Ricky. "The super tells me you were the



best ball player the Coalers had. That right, eh?"

"The super's full of flattery," Ricky said.

"I saw you beat Pitt with that long run your senior year," the old man went on proudly. "You'll show these Coalers how to play football. They lack imagination, Ricky. You use a pick handle to get ideas into their thick heads. Here and there you find a man with some intelligence and those men you have to watch. Uh—has this Bohunk Bedenk been putting ideas into your head, eh?"

"Ideas?"

"He does a lot of talking, stirs the men up," the old man said, his dark eyes hardening. "He and several others may be Commies. Keep an eye on him Ricky. He's a union delegate and thanks to John Lewis I can't fire him for that! He's told the super that the company should remodel its houses, lower prices at the store, put in street lights, a central sewage system and—hell, a bathroom inside every company house!"

The old man laughed. "Imagine these lunkheads using a—a bathroom, Ricky!" He stood up, rounded the desk, and laid a kindly hand on his nephew's shoulder. "You're the last of my relatives, Ricky. You remind me of young Campbell, who would have been the big boss here, if he hadn't been killed in that automobile accident."

The old man shrugged. "You'll be the boss here someday, Ricky. Learn the business. Hold on to what is yours. Fight for it! Now run along and practice some football and watch that Bedenk."

Ricky walked across the thick rug. He could hear the old man sputtering, "Bathrooms!"

He went through the long, silent office where the clerks worked. In the private locker room downstairs, he got out his football shoes, donned old clothes and went outside.

In the twilight, massive mountains of slag and the ugly shapes of coal breakers formed the background of the sprawling Star Mines that would be his someday. Further down the hill, if he had noticed, were the tiny, grimed houses leaning against one another for support.

He walked carefully along the company

street, avoiding the puddles of water left to evaporate after the last rain. He did not see the faces behind the windows nor the little girls leaning idly against the clapboards.

In an open space down hill, boys played with an old football. They eyed him solemnly. As he went on, one said, awestruck: "That's him, the boss."

Ricky had his mind in the clouds. This would be all his someday. He could live in the city, drive out here each day, like his uncle did. He'd be the BIG BOSS. Someday—

The Coalers practiced on the baseball field downhill near the river. It was a flat, fairly level strip of ground devoid of grass. A dozen arc lights set on poles provided faint illumination for the nightly practice sessions.

Tonight at the field there were the usual crowd of hangers on and a dozen or so of the Coalers. They nodded to Ricky, and big Shedloskie offered gravely: "I t'ink Bohunk and the rest will be along in a couple of minutes, Mr. Gravel."

"I'll practice a few punts," Ricky said.

Shedloskie got a ball. Ricky punted across the field and several of the Coalers covered the punts. Ricky could kick. He had a smooth, easy leg swing that developed drive. The football bored holes into air, disappeared high above the yellow light, and then came into sight again.

Then, with only Bohunk Bedenk and Walinchus absent from practice, Ricky tossed the ball to Shedloskie, said crisply: "Maybe we'd better start forward pass drill."

They looked at one another, then nodded. Ricky passed from the left half spot. He threw well, keeping the ball out ahead of the others. When his arm began to tire, he called the men together.

"We've got to get moving for those Steelers on Sunday," he told them, taking over. "We—"

Bohunk and Walinchus trotted onto the practice field. "Had a meeting," Bohunk said, and Walinchus rumbled, "I bet I murder them dumb Steelers come Sunday."

Ricky nodded, said: "We're starting signal drill. Walinchus, take fullback. Bohunk, fill in at the quarterback spot."

A little quiet drifted in over the practice field. Impassively, the men waited, eyed



Bohunk. They accepted Ricky's statement for what it was, a challenge to Bohunk's leadership.

"Sure," Bohunk said, and stepped behind Shedloskie, who bent over the ball.

"Delayed buck, Walinchus," Ricky snapped.

On the snapback, Ricky and Nicolini crossed. Ricky turned, watched Walinchus. As the fullback lunged forward, Ricky called: "Wait."

Walinchus slid to a stop. "Yeah, Mr. Gravel?" he wanted to know.

"You failed to fake to the right on the two count," Ricky detailed. "The play has to look like a crossbuck. That's why you couldn't gain against the Miners. Make it good."

Slowly, painstakingly, he worked until Walinchus had the play down pat. That brought them to the five-yard line in front of the goal posts. "Pay dirt," Ricky said. "I'll carry on 32."

He bolted across the line behind the men. "Again," he ordered. Three times he carried across the line, then headed the men upfield.

It was Nicolini, then Walinchus, finally Ricky on 48. Wide in the flat, Ricky faked a lateral to the fullback, spun upfield. Bohunk offered: "Maybe you better practice that lateral, Mr. Gravel."

"No need," Ricky said. "Walinchus knows now that he's more of a decoy on the play. Crossover pass. Get down deep, Fetkowitz."

Ricky wheeled back with the ball, poised. Fetkowitz cut deep, crossed over, and Ricky flung the ball. Fetkowitz picked it off the hook, downed the ball on the ten-yard line.

Ahead of the others, Ricky sprinted up, barked: "They'll look for a buck down here. Wide end run to the right."

He shot off the marks fast, grabbed Bohunk's swift lateral in stride. "Drive it," Ricky hollered at Walinchus out ahead as a blocker. Ricky ran with the wind in his feet, eased across the goal.

Walinchus eyed him curiously, spat out: "You like to carry that ball, huh, Mr. Gravel?"

"In the pinch," Rickey said, "it's always wise to use your best runner. And Walinchus, you needn't call me Mr. Gravel. That's too formal." He included the rest

of the men when he added: "From now on I'm Ricky to all of you."

He drove them hard for a half hour. Through every play, over and over again. Straightening out the details that made the plays click, hounding the men, and setting an example of speed and hustle.

Then: "That's all, men. Tomorrow night at seven."

They nodded, stared curiously at Bohunk, and drifted off. Satisfied that the team had looked better, Ricky went to his room in town. They needed a boss, he thought, and I'm Mr. It. I'll get this team working and playing the way it can play.

FOUR straight nights Ricky drove the men hard. He was on top of them every minute, urging them on, driving himself hard as if this were a game instead of practice. There wasn't much talk among the men. They accepted the leadership. And Bohunk? The deposed captain and quarterback said little, but Ricky had no cause to worry. Bohunk handled the ball smoothly and easily.

Sunday night and the Steelers at Sunbury . . .

A big crowd on hand under the arc lights. The Steelers had a big team, raw-boned and husky. The Coalers kicked off. A Steeler halfback brought the ball back to the thirty-yard line.

Playing defensive safety, Ricky watched the Steelers shift into a single wing with an unbalanced line. They had a big fullback with speed in his legs. The fullback butted past midfield in three plays and the home crowd roared approval.

Then a light wingback circled on the reverse, out-smarted Nicolini, and ghosted down the sideline. Ricky edged over. The wingback wagged his hips, but Ricky refused to be fooled. He pushed the wingback out-of-bounds on the Coalers twenty-yard line.

"Time out," Ricky called, and the Coalers huddled.

"Get that line low and drive under them," he warned the linemen. "You're standing too high and letting them drive you back. Walinchus, that Steeler fullback can be stopped. Hit him hard."

Walinchus, who had been backing up the six-man line, rumbled: "Maybe I ain't



caught on to how it's done, Mr. Gravel. Maybe you can stop resting back there at safety and take my place, huh?"

Ricky looked the fullback over quietly. "Take safety," he ordered. "I'll show you how it's done."

When time came in, Ricky backed up the line along with Bohunk. "You shouldn't have put him back there," Bohunk said softly. "If they pass, he won't know what to do in that unfamiliar position."

"They won't pass," Ricky said confidently.

The Steelers sent the fullback hurtling into the line. Ricky moved in. He shoved the lead blocker aside, bent at the hips. he hit the fullback low, stopped him for a yard gain.

"Like that," Ricky called back to Walinchus, and the big fullback rumbled, "I am learning it fast, you bet."

Again the Steeler fullback drove at the line. Ricky moved in confidently. "No, no!" Bohunk yelled.

Short of the scrimmage line, the fullback jumped high in the air, floated a jump pass to an end who had slid through. Ricky wheeled, back-tracked. Bohunk leaped high, just missed the pass. The end caught the ball. Bohunk dove, missed the tackle.

The end cut diagonally in front of Walinchus. The fullback delayed too long. When he dove, the end was close enough to the Coaler's line to dive over for the score.

Bohunk shrugged, spread his hands wide in disgust. "He doesn't know how to defend against passes," he told Ricky.

"And he can't tackle," Ricky snapped.

The Steelers kicked the extra point, grabbed a quick 7-0 lead.

On the kickoff, the ball came straight downfield toward Walinchus. Ricky, on the run, cut in front of the fullback, picked off the ball. He had a jump on the Steelers. He got back fifteen yards before they jammed in on him. He cut on a dime, slid around the pack.

A shrill, warning yelp from the Steelers fans as Ricky hit into the open at Coaler's forty-yard line. At mid-field, the safety angled him into the sidelines. Ricky feinted, cut back. Bohunk came up a fraction late for a block, and a Steeler overhauled Ricky on the Steeler's forty-yard line.

Walinchus carried on a power buck, gained a yard. Nicolini grabbed off two more yards on a quick-opener. "They're bunched tight," Bohunk said, and waited.

"32," Ricky said, calling his own number.

Not even an eyelash hole, as Ricky bolted ahead. He hit the pile, slid off, and circled to the left and outside. The defensive end lunged, but Ricky got around him. The wingback came up. Ricky cut back, raced up the middle. The safety picked him off on the ten-yard line.

"We're rolling," Ricky said, as the Coalers panted up. "Drive it, drive it."

Walinchus rammed into the line, got a single yard. "We can't wait," Ricky snapped in the huddle, "32, and drive it."

He lunged at the wall of men. He went up and over the pile, rolled to the five-yard line. Third down, five yards to gain. "I'll carry, wide to the right," Ricky ordered.

Bohunk fed him the ball. Twisting and driving, Ricky whirled around the end. Walinchus missed a block. Ricky cut back. He scrambled forward to the two-yard line.

Fourth down coming out, two yards to gain. "I'll carry," he said. "Crossbuck."

Nicolini crossed in front of Ricky. Ricky grabbed the hand-off from Bohunk, slammed into the line. Hands grabbed his jersey. He worked his legs, lunged. Steelers pinned him down. When the referee arrived, the nose of the ball was a foot short of the last line.

"Steelers ball," the ref ordered, and the home fans reared.

"Too bad, I t'ink," Shedloskie said, shaking his head. "Maybe you ain't got enough weight to buck the line, Mr. Gravel."

"I'll make it next time," Ricky panted. "Let's block that punt."

He sent Walinchus back into the safety spot. The Coalers charged hard, but the punter got off a low, bullet-like punt. Ricky turned.

The ball rocketed past Walinchus, anchored on the forty-yard line. Walinchus turned, lumbered after the bounding punt. The Steelers ends trailed the ball. On and on, the ball rolled. On the Coaler's thirty-yard line, Walinchus lunged for the ball.

It slid off his fingertips. One of the



Steeler's ends picked the big fellow off. The second end swooped down on the ball, picked it up. Not a Coaler was within yards of him as he sprinted into the end zone for a quick touchdown.

"Oh, hell," Bohunk said disgustedly.

Ricky pounced on Walinchus. "The bench," he snapped. "You've cost us enough yardage."

Walinchus shambled off and the second-string fullback reported. The Steelers notched the extra point, took a 14-0 lead.

Late in the second quarter, the Steelers punted from mid-field. Ricky had switched to the safety spot. He took the high punt on the ten-yard line, drove straight upfield. The ends hesitated a second. Ricky feinted to the outside, then drove through between the poised ends. Bohunk got in a block on the next man.

Ricky angled to the sidelines. He was full of good running tonight. He needle-threaded down the sideline, shaking tackler after tackler. At mid-field, he hit into the clear. A Steeler angled over. It would be a race to the goal line, Ricky knew.

He called on the last ounce of reserve. Slowly, imperceptibly at first, he pulled away. The Steeler made a belated dive on the ten-yard line, but Ricky had enough lead to outstep the clutching hands. He hit the end zone, turned triumphantly.

A patter of applause from the fans, then the Coalers trotted up. "Nice," Bohunk said.

"I t'ink you can dodge like a rabbit, Mr. Gravel," Shedloskie said gravely, and nodded his head.

Fetkowitz kicked the extra point. At halftime, the Coalers left the field seven points down.

"We can take 'em," Ricky told them in the dressing room. "A little more drive, that's all we need. I'm going to give Walinchus another chance this half. Maybe he can get going. The rest of you, play heads up ball. We need this game, right?"

They nodded somberly

### III

THE SECOND half started. It was a stalemate. Neither team could work an offense. The ball crossed and re-crossed midfield on high soaring punts. The Steeler punter kept angling the ball

away from Ricky so that he could not get in a good runback.

In the fourth quarter, the Steelers still led, 14-7. Got to get a drive started, Ricky thought, as the Coalers took over on their twenty-yard line. With the Steelers in close, he gambled on a cross-over pass to tall Fetkowitz.

The end carried out to the forty-yard line. Walinchus picked up his usual yard butting into the pile at center. Nicolini notched three yards on a crossbuck. Now, Ricky thought.

He went in motion to the right, with Walinchus faking into the line. Bohunk flung an accurate, wide lateral to Ricky, who side-stepped the wingback, and drove to the Steeler's thirty-yard line.

It was clear to him, now. The other backs couldn't gain against the Steelers. It was up to him. He glanced at the clock. Three minutes. Plenty of time to score and tie up the game.

"I'll carry," he told them in the huddle. "Block."

Time and again, Ricky slammed into the line or raced wide around the ends for steady gains. They chugged past the twenty-yard line with the home fans chanting, "Hold 'em, hold 'em!"

The yards got tougher for Ricky. There was a savage drive to the Steelers, but Ricky pounded out another first down on the eight-yard line with a minute left to play.

"You better rest," Bohunk warned, shaking his head.

"That is what I t'ink," Shedloskie said.

"I—I can make it," Ricky panted, and Walinchus rumbled: "Hey, you want I should murder them dumb palookas, huh, Mr. Gravel?"

"Just keep—blocking!" Ricky said. "It's 32."

They held him to two yards. Again he carried, wide around end. Tacklers fought through, but Ricky blasted ahead for three more yards. He glanced at the clock. Twenty seconds left in the game, only three yards needed for the touchdown that would tie the score.

"48," Ricky told them. "No lateral, Walinchus."

He reeled into position. On the snapback, he crossed in front of Walinchus, who delayed. Ricky picked off the lateral,



sprinted wide. The snap had gone from his legs. Maybe, he thought, I should have let Walinchus carry.

Up ahead, Bohunk shouldered the end in. He caromed off into the close-playing Ricky tried to drive through. Then somebody caved in his legs from the side. He went down hard on the one-yard line and a second Steeler dropped on him to stop the bid for the score. The gun banged, ending the game, with the Steelers on top, 14-7.

A grinning Steeler passed Ricky as he stood up, called: "You just don't have it that last time, guy."

"Almost," Ricky panted, and flung the ball down.

He turned. In a group, the defeated Coalers strode towards the dressing room. Not a man turned to watch Ricky. Slowly, he followed them. Campbell Gravel, his uncle, and the super at Star Mines, a tall dour man, met him at mid-field.

"A great game, boy," the old man enthused. "You made monkeys out of them on that ninety-yard run for a score!"

"A great game, sure," the super chipped in. "If you had any help out there, Ricky, you'd have murdered them."

"Close, but we lost," Ricky said. "The close ones don't count."

"Forget it," the old man said, patting his shoulder. "Ricky, I was proud of you. Shows what an education can do. Gives you an edge over these lunkheads."

"That it does," the super said, nodding. "I know these men. They need a leader, Ricky. You'll start a winning streak next week against the Tigers. Mark my word, Ricky, you'll win."

"Take a shower," the old man said. "You don't have to ride back to town with the men. I've got the chauffeur and the sedan, Ricky."

Doesn't pay to get too close to the men," the super advised. "You give them an inch, and they'll take your watch. We'll wait."

Ricky went into the dressing room. The big, undressed Coalers eyed him impassively. Ricky said: "We'll get started next week, men. Just a few things to straighten out and we'll win."

"Sure," Walinchus rumbled, "only one or two things to straighten out, huh, Mr. Gravel?"

"Right," Ricky said.

"It is always good to use the brains, is it not, Mr. Gravel?" Bohunk asked softly.

It got too quiet in the room. Ricky said: "A break here and there and we'd have won this one. Uh, practice Tuesday night."

One by one, the men showered, dressed, and went out. Lastly, Ricky gathered up his things, turned. Only Bohunk was there. "You will be riding back with us, eh?" Bohunk asked.

"I'm going back with my uncle and the super," Ricky said.

"In the shiny black sedan that cost eight thousand dollars," Bohunk said, "and with a chauffeur at the wheel, eh?"

"There's nothing wrong with that."

"Nothing wrong with that," Bohunk repeated, and shrugging, went out into the night.

Now what got into him? Ricky thought.

TUESDAY night, and practice.

"Signal drill," Ricky ordered, after the blocking drill.

"You want us to practice what?" Walinchus rumbled.

"The plays," Ricky said.

"Maybe once or twice, huh, we can run with the ball?"

"You'll get your chance," Ricky said. "Let's get the old drive back, men. Make it 48."

"With or without the lateral to Walinchus?" Bohunk prodded.

"It's a good scoring play," Ricky said. "Always the best man carries in a pinch. Without the lateral."

"Always the best man carries in the pinch, you bet," Walinchus said slowly. "Like that last drive against the Steelers, huh?"

Ricky stared at the bigger man. "Anything on your mind?"

"I am learning how to play this new game of football, that is all," Walinchus said. "So we run 48—without the lateral, you bet!"

They ran 48 without the lateral to Walinchus. They ran every play in the T-repertoire that Bohunk had given the team. Then Ricky added a new play. "It's a scoring play," he told them. "Walinchus fakes into the left tackle slot, with Nico-



lini on his tail. The right guard delays a two-count, then pulls out and clips the defensive left end. Fetkowitz delays on a two-count, then hits the wingback. I hold my spot until the fake is under way. Then I follow the blockers and Bohunk feeds me the lateral. Got it?"

Walinchus grinned. "No, I ain't got it. You got it, Mr. Gravel!"

The men grinned. Fetkowitz laughed, and big Shedloskie spat on his hands and said: "That Walinchus! He makes with a joke, I t'ink."

"Sure," Walinchus rumbled, "always it is Mr. Gravel with the ball in his hands for the score. Sure, in the pinch he's got the ball, you bet!"

Ricky bristled. "Are you implying," he demanded, "that I hog the ball in the scoring zone?"

"You don't hog it," Walinchus spat out. "You eat it, you bet!"

"Maybe," Ricky said, "you'd better drop off the first team if you don't like the way I boss the offense."

For a moment, Walinchus stood there silently. Slowly, his big hands clenched. Bohunk said warningly: "Let's drive it." Walinchus took two quick steps, towered over Ricky. His big hands bit into Ricky's biceps. "I am catching on fast to this football business, you bet! Sure, you are the boss around the mines, Mr. Gravel."

Suddenly, Walinchus' eyes hardened. "But out here you ain't the boss and you ain't gonna boss us no more. Beat it, we don't want you around, you bet!" Walinchus shoved Ricky backward.

Ricky clenched his fists. He took a single step toward the waiting Walinchus. It wasn't Walinchus who stopped him. It was the concerted, sudden dislike that flared in the men's eyes. For me, Ricky thought. He turned to Bohunk. Was that a pleading look in Bohunk's eyes? He wondered. No, he wants me to go, like the rest.

"Okay," Ricky said quietly, and turned away.

He heard Walinchus rumble, "Grandstander, he is," and somebody else added, "He wants to star. The hell with that kind of a boss."

But he hadn't been trying to hog any glory, Ricky thought grimly. He'd been

trying to get the Coalers out of a losing streak. But they didn't want any of it. Let the Tigers wallop the Coalers and they'd come running to beg him to come out again!

But the Coalers didn't get licked by the Tigers on Sunday afternoon. They won, 14-7. On Monday, the tall dour super told Ricky, who had not seen the game: "Luckiest win I ever saw! The Tigers pushed 'em all over the gridiron. They scored once and then the luck started. Nicolini intercepted a pass and ran to the five-yard line. Of course, Walinchus bucked it over. Then the Tigers fumbled on their own eight-yard line in the fourth quarter and Walinchus butted over. So the Coalers didn't win that game, Ricky. The Tigers lost it. Wait until they hit the league leaders next Sunday! They'll get murdered!"

But Ricky wasn't listening. He'd had nearly a week to think over his situation. Little things, important now that he looked back at them objectively, came back to him.

That game against the Miners—hadn't Bohunk and Fetkowitz thought fast, the same as he had, on 48 and switched their blocking assignments? Against the Steelers, the nightmare loss—hadn't it been his own idea to shift Walinchus to safety? Hadn't Bohunk warned him about it? Hadn't that shift cost them two touchdowns?

And that last drive for a touchdown that would have tied the score—hadn't Bohunk warned that he was tired, that someone else should carry the ball?

"You made a mess of things, Mr. Big Shot Gravel," he told himself grimly. "You deserved to get kicked off the team. But you still want to play! How are you going to get back with the men?"

He could go to the men, tell them he had been wrong. No, he decided. His uncle would never stand for that! He could hear the old man exploding: "Lower yourself to those lunkheads! Ricky, you're the boss here. Someday you'll own this outfit. You can't—"

No, he decided, there was nothing he could do about it. He had thrown his weight around the gridiron and received what he merited. Why, even Walinchus had spotted his stupidity! And he had



thought that Walinchus was a flea-brain. Bohunk's words came back to him: "They're not dumb, Mr. Gravel. They've never had the advantage—or the disadvantage of a college education."

## IV

RICKY had had the day off, and driven to Scranton for some shopping. When he drove through town, the streets seemed strangely deserted. The car bumped along the rutted company street, climbed towards the breakers in the background and the company's office. Then he saw it.

He knew what it was the moment he spotted the hundreds of men, woman, and children clustered on the open space around Shaft Two. Terror had struck the Star Mines!

He braked the car to a halt, parked, and jumped out. As he ran towards the crowd, he called to an old man: "What happened?"

"Explosion in Lower Level," the old man said. "Five good boys trapped down there. Since morning, they been a-trying to—"

Ricky slowed down. Not a sound from the hundreds of people who waited for news of the trapped miners. Slowly, Ricky pushed through the crowd. His uncle and the super stood near the lift opening.

His uncle had aged since morning. "Ricky," he said quietly, "the first accident in eleven years. Back-damp explosion. One of the men must have broken a safety rule and lit a cigarette. They're—"

A dirty-faced miner turned, said simply: "Ud be no danger a-back damp if'n them engines 'ud work right. Bohunk Bedenk's told you a half-dozen times to get the air circulation right or there'd be trouble."

"You keep your mouth shut," the super blustered.

"I know what's what," the miner said.

Ricky asked softly: "The rescue team making any headway?"

"They got through a couple of hundred feet, Ricky," his uncle said, and shrugged.

The long, tense wait began to get Ricky's nerves. He moved off, finally

spotted Bohunk leaning against the lift near Shaft Three. "There anything we can do?" Ricky asked.

"What should have been done, like repairing those engines," Bohunk said, "is no use now, Mr. Gravel. It takes a calamity to open your uncle's eyes. Like the drainage and sewage in the company's town. If an epidemic should start—" his voice was bitter—"Then maybe some money would be spent to improve conditions. Yes, after some of my people had died!"

"Who's down in the mine?" Ricky asked.

"Fetkowitz, Walinchus, old Bernie Polk, my brother, and Jed Calicala," Bohunk said slowly. "Trapped in the extreme end of the lower level. They can't hold out much longer—if they're still alive." Bohunk shrugged. "If they die, it is blood on somebody's hands."

Slowly, Ricky turned the dread news over in his mind. He knew the location of the men because he had spent hours studying the maps and intricate blueprints of the digging operations. The lower levels from Shaft Three fanned out towards the spot where the men were.

In following the main seam, sappers fanned off on the laterals, often came close to where diggings were in the neighboring shafts. "Bohunk," Ricky said, thinking back, "a month ago I studied the blueprints. I spent days prowling around underneath. I got off on an abandoned lateral on Three one day, found a partially clogged hole that went up to another digging. There was some air coming through, I remember, but I didn't try to get up there. When I got back to the office, I tried to check my position underground. I—"

"Sometimes," Bohunk said sharply, "the men cut a hole into another digging for air circulation. You think that hole goes into Two?"

"We could check it inside fifteen minutes," Ricky said.

"Come," Bohunk said, grabbing Ricky's arm. "I have the flashlight. Maybe, maybe those men have a better chance."

The lift dropped them down Shaft Three. Ricky's legs went numb from the sudden drop. He felt light-headed. They



left the lift at the underground terminus. A broad, high cave had been quarried here. Electric lights burned feebly because the power was still on.

Bohunk snapped on the powerful flashlight, and they struck out along a narrow set of tracks. For fifty feet, the tunnel measured an easy eight-by-eight feet, then narrowed to a scant six feet so that they had to stoop while walking.

Deeper and deeper they went into the lower level. The air became warmer, damper, hushed. Here and there, spur tracks disappeared into the lateral passages. There was a strange, sulphurous smell here, despite the blowers.

"Left," Ricky said, and Bohunk turned into a lateral working.

A hundred feet in, and the tunnel widened into a cave. "Careful," Bohunk warned, and the funneled light picked up the black sheen of water. "You see, Mr. Gravel, the sump pumps don't work properly down there. It is those little things at Star Mines that someday may mean accidents and lost lives."

On they went. The tunnel narrowed to four feet. The tracks stopped abruptly. "Straight ahead," Ricky said, and they crawled forward. Over junk, fallen rock, they went, with sharp fragments of rock and coal cutting into their palms.

A hundred feet and Bohunk said, "I feel a little air, Mr. Gravel. Maybe you're right and this leads to where the men are trapped."

Then they reached the end of the tunnel, and stood erect in a narrow arch. Bohunk shone the light upward. In the blackness, they saw the narrowing hole, felt the tiny upward rush of air.

"I can make it if I stand on your shoulders," Bohunk said.

Ricky stepped forward. "I'm going up."

"It is not for you. It may be dangerous up there and—"

"That's why I'm going, Bohunk," Ricky said. "Maybe you've been right all along. Maybe we should do more to help the men."

He took the flashlight, stuffed it into one pocket. He found Bohunk's locked hands, stepped up. Bohunk steadied, his back braced against one wall. Carefully, Ricky climbed up on Bohunk's shoulders, stretched one hand high above his head.

His fingers found the lip of the upper part of the hole.

With both hands gripping the ledge, he called down: "I'll stand on your head and I can make it."

UP, up, slowly and carefully. Then he pulled himself up, used his knees and back to inch himself aloft. Sharp stones bit into his palms. Perspiration soaked his back. Then one elbow rested on the ledge, and he had the hole licked.

He peered down into the hole, called softly: "If I don't come back, Bohunk, remember one thing. I wasn't trying to be a ball hog."

"How's the air up there?" Bohunk asked.

"Bad," Ricky said, and Bohunk said: "Good luck, Ricky. Sure, you didn't try to hog the ball."

Ricky crawled ahead into the foul, tainted air. He found the five men sprawled in the lower level of Shaft Two. He shone the flashlight on a face. Eyes flickered, and Walinchus opened his eyes sleepily.

"It's Ricky Gravel," Ricky said. "You all right?"

"Take—old Bernie—first," Walinchus mumbled. "Hey—you carry—the ball, you bet."

One by one, Ricky lugged the men back to the hole, passed them carefully down to Bohunk. Last, big Walinchus . . .

## V

EIGHT thousand persons filled the stands around the home gridiron of the Colts, the perennial leaders in the Black Diamond Professional League. Time-out in the fourth quarter.

Ricky stood for a moment above the ring of kneeling Coalers, and loosening his helmet, let the cool October air fan his hot face. Colts 10, Coalers 7, he thought, and they had five minutes to pull the game out. Five minutes and forty-yards to travel against the hard-bitten Colts.

He stepped inside the huddle, knelt with his teammates. They stared at him stolidly, then big Shedloskie said gravely, "I t'ink we better score a touchdown, Ricky. You got an idea?"

"I murder them dumb palookas, you



bet," Walinchus rumbled, and grinned. "You want me to carry, Ricky?"

"I want you to carry Ricky, period," Ricky groaned, and felt the tired numbness run through his body. It had been a bruising game, and he had called the signals up to now.

He turned to Bohunk, said: "I'm no quarterback. It's up to you. I haven't had any ideas since the fourth quarter started."

Bohunk's dark eyes flashed. "It is your brains got us here," he said, and glanced at Walinchus and Fetkowitz. "Now we will win this game."

The whistle shrilled time in. The crowd came alive. The big confident Colts ranged along the line, waited while the Coalers huddled. "Walinchus on the delayed buck," Bohunk ordered crisply, and the men swung into position along the line.

Ricky and Nicolini criss-crossed. Walinchus powered into the line. Short of the pileup, he leaped upward, rolled down the far side of the pile for a six-yard gain.

"I murder you palookas," Walinchus boasted, and the Colts roared insults at him.

Again Walinchus carried, a savage belt off tackle that notched a first down through the compact Colts' line. The Colts held Nicolini to a yard, then Walinchus bored ahead for five long yards. Bohunk crossed the Colts with a jump pass to Fetkowitz, who drove to the eighteen-yard line.

Walinchus went to work. He drove his legs, slammed his body into the pile, got his four yards. The Colts punished him, but he came back again for three yards at left guard. They were in deep now, with the Colts massing to stop the thrusts.

Walinchus picked off two yards, then four yards. On the fourth down, he bored under the pile, tunneled his way to the seven-yard line and a first down.

"Ready?" Bohunk asked Ricky in the huddle, and Ricky nodded.

He carried on 32, the quick opener, while Walinchus and Nicolini faked. His legs were tired. His body ached. Colts clawed his jersey, slung him to the ground, and piled on top.

Big Shedloskie hauled Ricky to his feet, grinned. "I t'ink you hit 'em hard," he said. "You made two yards, Ricky."

In the huddle, Shedloskie said gravely, "Bohunk, I t'ink it is time you played smart, eh?"

"I will murder them dumb palookas," Walinchus said.

"It is time to go smart," Bohunk said, and gave the signal.

The teams faced each other. Walinchus reared up, shook his fist at the Colts, bel-lowed: "I come right up the middle, you dumb palookas!"

As he ran wide, Ricky's camera eyes picked up the developing defense of the Colts. Bohunk had gone down with the defensive end. Nicolini had hit the hole and stopped against a pileup. Fetkowitz couldn't get through on 48 to club the safety.

Suddenly, Walinchus yammered: "Come on, Ricky!"

Ricky turned. There was Walinchus out ahead, instead of trailing the play. Walinchus slammed into the wingback, bowled him over. Ricky followed, forcing his tired legs to move. But Walinchus wasn't finished. He headed for the safety, with Ricky on his heels.

Walinchus didn't throw a block on the Colts' safety man. On the three-yard line, Walinchus simply ran over the safety, knocked him down, and trampled on him. All Ricky had to do to win the game was stumble across the goal line . . .

Bedlam in the Coalers' locker room, with the game tucked in their pockets, 13-10.

Old Campbell Gravel came in, patted Ricky's bare shoulder, and said: "A fine game, boy." Then he turned to the others, said in the silence: "You all played well," and then asked Ricky: "You'll ride back to town with me and the super, boy?"

"No," Ricky said, "the bus is good enough for me."

"Bathrooms," Bohunk said softly, and turned to Ricky.

Bathrooms . . . why not?

"Someday things will be different around here," Ricky said.

"Sure, Ricky," they said, "you bet!"



# March of the Iron Helmets

By DUANE YARNELL

Every yard he gained was a rung in the ladder to glory. Every pass he threw was a short-cut bid to fame. But it all added up to zero unless hard-bucking Barney Clark could smash the double-cross Destiny that dogged his restless cleats.



BARNEY Clark hadn't expected much, but the locker room of the City College Indians was even less than he'd hoped for. He came in late and unannounced, one afternoon during the first week of the fall term.

Barney tossed his books onto a bench and looked around. The room was small. At one end was a row of spattered mirrors, at the other, a double row of small, wooden lockers. The cement floor was cracked and about the place there was an air of mustiness. The team had long since gone out to the practice field.

"Anybody home?" Barney said.

A face appeared through the opening in the far wall, an old face that bore a five o'clock shadow, a pair of watery eyes and an undisguised yawn.

"What's eatin' you, sonny?" the old man asked.

"Termites, probably," Barney Clark said, "if I hang around this fire trap much longer. Look, Pop, where do I get a suit?"

"You a football player?"

"Every man to his own opinion," Barney said. He began to strip, tossing his clothes onto the handiest bench. "Size nine shoe, a forty-one jersey. . ."

The old man blinked at him, scratched his gaunt jaw. "Danged if you ain't movin' faster 'n I ever seen anyone move around here. Except once in awhile when somebody gets a hotfoot." Then the old man sighed. "But won't last," he said wearily. "They come in new, breathin' fire like yourself. And in two, three weeks, they get like all the rest. . ."

As suddenly as it had appeared



the old man's face disappeared behind the wall. But he continued mumbling. And a moment later, a moth eaten uniform began to fly through the opening, one piece at a time. Then the face was back.

"Dunno what's happened around here," the old man sighed. "All this dressin' room needs is a couple of lilies and soft organ music. . ."

"If it's that bad," Barney Clark said, eyeing his moth eaten uniform distastefully, "how come you stick around?"

A far away look came into the old man's eyes and his voice was suddenly strident. "Once, way back yonder, the Indians had some real teams. Mebbe I'm just old enough and fool enough to think they might catch fire and have another . . ."

Barney said, "What's your name, Pop?"

"Pop," the old man said. "That ain't the sleeve you got your arm through, sonny. That's a hole. You oughta been here sooner. Now, you gotta take what's left. . ."

Barney Clark scowled, but the second time, he hit the sleeve. "Down in Georgia," he said, "the cotton pickers wear better stuff than this." Then he looked up swiftly, saw the interest in Pop's eyes.

"I got my own ideas, Pop," he said. "And you've got yours. Let's cross-check. For ten years, the Indians have had a sour team. I hear two reasons. One, they're in lousy financial shape and they can't afford coaches, scholarships, and the like. Two, they say that old Doc Mabry has lost his grip as a football coach. . ."

THE old locker room attendant jerked his bony body as if he'd just been slapped. "You got it wrong, sonny. It ain't Doc Mabry's fault we had so many losers. He can still coach. The trouble is the team's been losin' so long that a good football prospect don't waste his time



LOUIS RAYE 11-23



by checkin' out a suit. We got better kids playin' touch football in Physical Ed class than Doc Mabry's got on his varsity. That ain't Doc's fault, though. . ."

Barney Clark spoke softly, his dark young face covered with an expression of warm sincerity. "Just wanted to see if I could get a rise out of you, Pop. If I hadn't thought Doc Mabry was a potential winning coach, I wouldn't be around here."

The old man was suddenly alert and he studied Barney shrewdly. "You're up to something, sonny. What. . ."

"Maybe," Barney said, "all Doc Mabry needs is a little help. You want to lay a little bet that this won't be the year?"

Pop was running his eyes up and down Barney Clark's frame, taking in the six foot wedge of hard flesh that tapered from the shoulders into flat, compact hips. He looked at Barney Clark's big hands, at the long, smooth muscled legs. Then Pop began to grin.

"Dunno that I want that bet, sonny." His voice was filled with excitement and his adam's apple bobbed nervously. He shook his head. "I'll be ding-dinged," he muttered.

Barney Clark turned and hurried outside. He walked confidently, almost cockily. But when he reached the playing field, the confidence began to ebb out of him. And he told himself that he was being a fool.

Barney Clark's plan had seemed logical during the theory stage. But now, as he looked around him, he began to feel that it had been fantastic. Two teams were horsing around out in the center of the gridiron. And down in beyond one of the end zones, a gang of green kids were hitting the tackling dummy as if it might contain nitro-glycerine. There was an air of hopelessness about the squad that blended very well with the stadium itself. The stadium, built of wood and concrete, was in sad disrepair. And up atop the press coop at the west end, the flag of the once proud City College Indians hung limply on its staff. Barney Clark groaned. But it was too late to turn back.

Doc Mabry was out on the gridiron, watching the two teams. A tall, powerfully built man, Doc Mabry. His huge head sticking out of the neck of a sweat shirt, gave him the appearance of a bald

eagle. As Barney approached, Doc Mabry beat his temples with his hands and gave out with an anguished wail.

"Slim," Doc screamed at a disconsolate end who had just muffed a pass, "What in blazes were you tryin' to do?"

"Catch the ball, coach. But. . ."

"Gimme the ball," Doc Mabry said. Someone tossed it to him. He touched it gingerly, then scowled. "Nope. It ain't at all." He fixed Slim Jimson with a baleful glare. "For a minute, the way you were tossin' it around, I figured it must be red hot. You may not make the varsity, Slim. But I hear they could use jugglers at Barnum and Bailey. . ."

Barney Clark chose that moment to tap Doc Mabry on the shoulder. Doc whirled around, glowered at Barney. "Well," he demanded, "what do you do?"

"I'm a quarterback," Barney said.

Doc Mabry wiped a hand across his some circles, they call this gimmick an oblate spheroid, I think. Now what would you be callin' it?"

"Could it by any chance be a football?" Barney asked, trying very hard to repress a grin.

Doc Mabry wiped a hand across his tanned head. "That makes you as bright as the rest of these babies." Then Doc's eyes narrowed as he, too, took in Barney Clark's build. "You look to be in shape," he said. "Maybe you'd like to. . ."

"You've got it right," Barney said. "Which team?"

Doc Mabry looked at Barney shrewdly and something began to glow in his eyes. "Get with the scrubs. If you don't savvy the T-formation, don't let it worry you. They don't either."

Barney went over to the scrubs and he called a huddle. The scrubs were wearing moth eaten uniforms and they were studying him with curious interest.

He said, "Comin' out here, I noticed a soft spot in center. I'll take it through on a delayed sneak. Try to give me some blockin'. But if that's too big an order, just stay on your feet and keep millin' around. At least, it'll create some confusion."

A scrub tackle glowered at Barney. "You're a fast talkin' guy. But. . ."

"Save it," Barney said. "Right now, your job is to get into the varsity backfield



and take out their right halfback. Let's go, now. . ."

The scrubs lined up with slightly more precision than Barney had noted before. On the varsity side, there was a certain air of determination, of grimness. Barney Clark had enough sense to know that they resented his breeziness and that they resented, still more, the aspersions that Doc Mabry had cast upon them. In short, they were all set to give Barney Clark the sandbagging of his life.

**B**ARNEY leaned over back of the scrub center. He barked a few meaningless signals. The ball came back. He whirled, was mildly surprised when his left half made a perfect fake, then dived into the line. Barney completed the circle, feinted the ball to his other flanker. Then he followed the man through the soft spot in the center of the line.

Barney Clark was through before the varsity line could stop him. And once in the secondary, he went into high gear. A varsity back banged vigorously at Barney's thighs, but Barney shook himself free, stopped dead, then cut straight for the distant sideline. The varsity drifted with him, but Barney Clark was suddenly sprinting. He hit the sideline and his cleats held as he cut downfield again. Three tacklers lunged at him in a futile gesture. But he had already outrun them.

The safety man angled over. Barney kept to the sideline, watching the safety man. They closed fast. When he was but a yard away, Barney feinted to his left and the safety man went for it, which left him gravely in error. For Barney's hips switched again and his arm shot out. He catapulted himself over the prostrate tackler, using his stiffarm the way a vaulter uses his vaulting pole. The rest of the touchdown jaunt was a breeze.

It was suddenly very quiet upon the field of the City College Indians. Doc Mabry was the man who broke the spell. He came puffing up, his eyes wide, as if he'd just witnessed a vision.

He said, "When you said you were in shape, it was an understatement. You been workin' at least a month. . ."

"On the nose," Barney Clark said.

Doc Mabry pulled at his fat lower lip. "I could render all the lard on

this team of mine and have a ton of blubber for the fat drive. But even discountin' that, the fact remains that you can run. Now, tell me somethin' that is gonna break an old man's heart. Ain't you in the wrong place? This is the City College Indians. No guy who can pack the mail like that would. . ."

"I didn't make any mistake," Barney Clark said. "I'm enrolled as a Senior in the engineering department under Prof. Hensley. Does that answer your question?"

Doc Mabry's eyes were gleaming, now. "Leave us leave this place," Doc said softly. Then, turning to his squad, he yelled, "You guys take a few laps around the track before you go in."

A heavy, rotund lineman said, "How many, Doc?"

Doc Mabry looked at the blubbery waist and he spoke wryly. "Eight hundred and thirty six." Then he turned to Barney Clark. "Come on inside. I talk better with the weight off my arches. What'd you say your name was?"

"Clark," Barney said, watching Doc Mabry's expression. "Barney Clark. . ."

They took two or three steps toward the sideline. Then, abruptly, Doc Mabry whirled around, face red, his bland eyes bugging.

"No," he wailed. "It can't happen to me! I see a dream float through my team and I tell myself that here, at least, is the guy I've been waitin' on, the guy who can maybe give the Indians a winner again. And he turns out to be Barney Clark, the only guy ever to be kicked out of this conference." Doc Mabry's shoulders drooped. "Oh, well. Anyway, I got a kick out of it for a few minutes while it lasted. . ."

Barney Clark's dark eyes were sober now and his voice was grim. "Yeah, Doc. I got kicked out of the conference. And the ban was on me for three years. Remember?"

"Which means," Doc Mabry said dolefully, "that you can't play."

"That," Barney said, "is what they wanted it to mean. But it was a dirty deal and I outfoxed 'em. When it happened, Doc, I was just a country boy with hay in my hair. I thought college football was all sentiment and glory and dying



for dear old Mildew. But after it happened to me, I wised up fast."

"Considerable, I'd say," Doc muttered. "But you still ain't explained how you outfoxed 'em."

Barney said, "Count it on your fingers, Doc. I got kicked out at the first of my sophomore year. They made it for three years, to take care of my eligibility. But I used my head. I laid out a year. And in the meantime I kept in shape. The ban is off, Doc, and I've got one year left. One big year to pay off a lot of promises I made to a certain few guys."

Doc Mabry was excited again. "I don't get your angle. And I'm not sayin' that you've even got one. But you seem to want to play football. Even for the Indians. . ."

"Especially for the Indians," Barney said.

"Okay, Barney," Doc said. "Get out of that uniform, then come into my office. The least I can do is listen. But believe me, boy, the story'll have to be a good one."

"It's a good one," Barney Clark said. And even as he spoke, his voice was shaking with emotion. . .

## II

WHEN Barney reached the dressing room and began to strip, Pop, the attendant, stuck his head through the hole in the wall again.

Pop was smiling.

"I seen that run," Pop said. "All I can say is I'll be ding-dinged. While you're at it toss me that jersey. I'll get the old lady to sew up that big hole under the sleeve." Excitement was in the old man's voice, now. "We open in ten days against South-eastern. It's sure be a dinger if we could win that one. Football card gives nineteen points, though. . ."

"The football card could be wrong," Barney Clark said.

"I think I'll bring my old lady to that one," Pop said. "Which reminds me. Someone called up an' described you right down to toenails. Wanted to know if you were out for the team. Said to tell you she'd be waitin' for you, that you'd know who it was. Right purty voice she had. . ."

Barney Clark groaned. "That would be Janet Hawley. . ."

"You mean the one that's always in the papers? Old Andy Hawley's daughter. . ."

"That's the one," Barney said grimly. "Tell me, Pop. Has this joint got a back door?"

Pop eyed Barney suspiciously. "You wouldn't be figurin' to give her the slip now sonny? Why, the way the papers write it, she's got at least a zillion dollars. . ."

"Janet Hawley," Barney muttered, "is nuttier than a pet coon. . ."

"She's got a nice voice," Pop sighed. "You sure you ain't the nutty one?"

Barney was thinking of the year that had gone by since he'd seen Janet. She had promised to haunt him until he got some sense, but he hadn't believed her. But apparently, Janet had not forgotten. He began to perspire.

"I'm not sure of anything, Pop. Here's the uniform."

Pop came out through the door, took the uniform. "Be seein' you, sonny. And while I'm at it, I think I'll pass judgment on this nutty female outside."

A few minutes later, Barney Clark went into Doc Mabry's office. Doc was sitting back in a battered chair, his face bearing a look of deep contentment as he stared at his wiggling toes, propped atop his desk in front of him. Barney sat down in the only other chair.

Doc Mabry said, "Let's start at the beginning. You were enrolled at Mulvane U. You were playin' for Pete Carradine's Raider football team, about the best in the Little Six conference. You carry the ball from there."

Barney Clark sighed. "It was right after the conference decided to clean house, right after they put on the purity drive. Too many guys were gettin' paid too much money just to play football."

"It was more than they could make in the coal mines," Doc observed wryly.

Barney said, "Pete Carradine was back of the clean-up move. Naturally, I figured he meant what he said. But I think I already told you, Doc. I was just a country boy. . ."

Doc's eyebrows went up. "You ain't castin' aspersions on the good name of Pete Carradine, are you? They love that man around this circuit."



Barney caught the inflection, smiled wryly. "We're thinkin' alike," he said. "But here's the real pitch. Pete Carradine was and is a hypocrite. While he was preaching purity for football, he was stacking the deck with some of the best footballers available. Only he was sharp enough to keep his tracks covered. One minute I'm fat, dumb and happy and filled with spirit. And the next, I find that Pete Carradine's payroll is loaded . . ."

Doc Mabry nodded grimly. "So how did you get caught in the middle?"

Barney Clark's eyes grew bleak. "I got the brilliant idea of showing Pete Carradine up for what he was. I figured too many kids were worshipping him. Too many people were regarding him as Mr. Football himself. Where I'm from, we like to see people practice what they preach. So I tried to give Pete Carradine the business. First, I asked Pete for a salary on the side. He agreed to pay me. . ."

Doc Mabry looked puzzled, now. "That's exactly the way I read it. I don't follow you, Barney. Not at all."

Barney said, "I wanted to trap him. He promised to have the dough that night. Next, I called a sports writer from the Mulvane paper. I told him what was up and what a story he'd have when he got the evidence that Pete Carradine, the great purifier, was the dirtiest sock in the washing." Barney frowned as he recalled the rest of it. "Unfortunately, this reporter and Pete Carradine were as close as that. Before I could even try to spring the trap, Pete Carradine and the reporter ganged me. They got the conference clean-up committee, and when I asked Pete for the dough, the committee pounced on me with both feet."

Doc Mabry had been listening attentively. He shook his head sadly. "I can see Pete Carradine's point. He knew you were a hot potato, too hot to handle. So he tossed you to the dogs, right when they were achin' to make an example of someone. They banned you for three years and it made Pete Carradine a kind of hero. . ."

Barney said, "It also did something else. Pete knew what I could do. . .and he didn't want me playin' against him. He

had the press behind him and nobody would listen to my side of it . . ."

Doc said, "The ban is off. But what do you expect to accomplish?"

BARNEY shrugged. "I want to be an engineer. There's a guy named Andrew Hawley who is about the biggest engineer in the country. He is also a very strong believer in football in general and in Pete Carradine in particular. . ."

"I remember, now," Doc Mabry recalled. "At the time of this ruckus, you were engaged to Andrew Hawley's daughter."

"That," Barney muttered, "is something we won't talk about. But to get back to the point. Andrew Hawley can be a very righteous, a very indignant gent. He thinks he owes his success to the clean life he led while carrying a football for Mulvane Raiders. When the conference kicked me out, Andrew Hawley read the riot act to me. Among other things, he told me that his influence, among the engineering firms, was pretty great."

Barney sighed as he recalled the year he had been out of school. "It was an understatement," he admitted. "When the word gets around that you've been a bad boy, it's pretty hard to get and hold a job. . ."

Doc nodded understandingly. "I begin to see," Doc said. "Pete Carradine gave you the works and now you're tryin' to get out from under. But I still don't see how. . ."

Barney said, "The word's around that I play football only for money. Pete Carradine is responsible for that. Somehow, before I die, I want to settle accounts with Carradine. It's a little promise I made him. I came here for two reasons. The first, everybody knows that the Indians can't afford to pay anyone. So if I play my guts out for you, it's pretty obvious that I'm doing it completely for free."

"Gimme another reason," Doc said, his eyes glowing.

"Okay," Barney said. "I know that, as a senior, I wouldn't get a chance anywhere else, because the boys concentrate on undergrad talent. But here, if I deliver, I'll get a chance. And I keep thinking that if someone can create a spark, the Indians might get a hot streak. There's



still one more reason: Right now, the Indians are the breather boys of the circuit. The soft spot on every team's schedule. If the Indians should suddenly start knocking the big boys over, Pete Carradine wouldn't like it. You follow me, Doc?"

"Like a shadow," Doc said. "Carradine is used to winning. If our team got hot, if we should turn the conference race upside down. Pete might get good and worried . . ."

"Which," Barney said, "is where I came in. Carradine is capable of anything. Give us a hot club and a chance to upset his winning appiecart and he'll try to do something to stop us. In short Doc, I want to bait him. I want to get him so worried that he'll try something that may not be exactly legal. But when he moves in, I want to nail him. I want a lot of people to see the Pete Carradine behind the smiling mask. . ."

Doc Mabry leaned back, emitted a long sigh. "You're takin' on a big assignment," he admitted. "But if we can get going, it might work out. I've got half dozen guys who might come out for football if they thought we had a chance. Maybe I can convince 'em. At least, I can work on 'em."

THEY dropped it there. Barney Clark started outside, then remembered. Janet Hawley was waiting and at the moment, he had no desire to see her. Or so he told himself. He went out the side door and kept going. He did not see her . . .

The next day, Barney Clark discovered that the football world was quick to forget. The news was out that Barney had returned to uniform after his three year suspension. A couple of bored reporters showed up to interview him, but from their lackadaisical questions, he knew they were no longer very interested. They would give him three, four sticks of type in their papers, then forget him.

Meanwhile, Doc Mabry was true to his word. He talked five potential footballers into reporting for the team. Three of them, already training for cross country, were in shape. The others would be partially ready in time for the Southeastern game.

In the days that followed, Doc drove

his charges hard and Barney Clark was the first to admit that the team showed possibilities. The team itself regarded Barney variously as a crusader, a holler guy, a publicity seeker and a plain nut. But the cohesive spirit for which he had been hoping was not there. He could only hope that it would jell during the South-eastern game.

Then suddenly it was the day of the game. As Barney dressed, he sensed someone near him. Turning, he saw Pop, the clubhouse attendant, studying him.

Pop said, "That Hawley girl, sonny. She ain't as nutty as you claim."

Barney reddened. "Now wait a minute, Pop."

"Been waitin' every night for you. But you keep goin' out the back door. Seemed kind of lonesome, so I stopped to talk to her."

"That's the same mistake I once made. Yeah, Pop, she's got a way about her. But eventually. . . ."

"She seems to think you're sore because she didn't just up and leave home when her old man lit into you. But remember, sonny, blood's thicker'n water sometimes. . . ."

Barney said, "My mother quit a finishing school to help my old man plow corn in Iowa. She wasn't too good . . ."

"You're on the defensive," Pop said, chuckling as he moved away. "You think a lot more of that girl than you're willin' to admit. You got too much pride, sonny, and that ain't good."

Barney Clark was breathing fast. Then he remembered his resolutions. Andrew Hawley had told him, in no uncertain terms, that he considered Barney not remotely good enough to associate with his daughter. Barney had made a few cracks himself. He had assured Andrew Hawley that his daughter was spoiled, self-centered, and that she would be no bargain as a prospective wife. And, in the three years that had gone by, Barney had constantly reassured himself on those same points, despite frequent phone calls, telegrams and even personal appearances on the part of the girl. To date, however, he had successfully avoided all of them. Therefore, as Barney now moved toward the field, he wondered what he was worrying about . . .



III

THE stadium of the City College Indians, built to hold 25,000 fans during the era of Indian champions, was holding up remarkably well under the combined weight of at least 2,000 persons as the Indians took the field.

There was no applause. Barney Clark looked upon this as a treasonable thing and he turned to Doc Mabry beside him. "From the lack of racket," he complained, "you'd think they were sittin' on their hands."

"They are," Doc said sagely. "They started doin' that ten years ago. It keeps 'em from throwin' things." The team had gathered around the Indian bench, now. Doc said, "I'm makin' Barney the team captain today. Give him some support and we'll see if we can't surprise a few people."

The Indians took the announcement in stride, visibly unaffected. Barney tugged at his lip and wondered what it would take to shake them out of it. Then he took the first string out and began to push them through a signal session. He had to admit that they were looking better. But there was still no spark.

Another thousand fans came in before kickoff time. Then the referee called the two captains together. The Southeastern captain made the call, elected to kick. The teams lined up and as the kickoff came, the Indian band played one brave chorus of the Indian victory march.

Barney Clark watched the ball boom deep. He settled back, took it behind the goal line. He faded toward the left sideline, but the Southeasterners were well coached. They refused to be decoyed. At the ten, Barney Clark cut back toward center, began to drive toward a broken field that was developing upfield.

He reached the twenty, found himself blocked off. A tackler slammed at him, but Barney rolled with the tackle, bounced a palm off a golden helmet, spun away and kept going. He shook his hips at another man and he was now crossing the thirty.

For a split second, he saw an opening. Two enemy tacklers were converging upon him, but Barney's blocking back, Tex Pinkerton, had a chance to split them

long enough to let Barney through, to shake him loose into the clear field ahead.

Barney Clark grinned as he eased in back of the rampaging Tex. The big blocking back got one man with his hip, but missed the second. Barney was in no position to go around. He was in mid-stride when the second tackler hit him in the gut. Up in the stands, the guy playing the oom-pah-pah horn hit a sour note and the fans groaned.

Barney picked himself up, studied Tex Pinkerton. The blocking back was a big, red faced character with an angle-iron jaw. He did not look to be the saffron streak type. But still, you could never tell.

Barney spoke softly. "Tex, we could have been on the way if you'd dropped that other guy."

Tex looked at him, grinned, not in the least upset. "Aw, hell, Barney. I was off balance. I'd have had to use my shoulder to get the other guy. It could have cost me a busted collar bone . . ."

Barney was getting hot at the man's indifference.

"This is a rough game, Tex. Once in awhile, you've got to take a chance . . ."

Tex still grinned. "When it's worth it, I'll take my chances along with the rest. But why bust a collar bone when we're nineteen points worse than this outfit? We're gonna take it on the chin anyway, no matter what happens. Now . . ."

Barney tried to keep his temper cooled. But he was only partially successful. "I'm just about," he said, "ready to tell you to forget that attitude — or go fly a kite."

"A kite would be easy enough to fly," Tex said. "You're blowin' up enough wind . . ." And Tex Pinkerton was suddenly mad himself. He jabbed a big finger into Barney's chest. "Now, I'll tell you something. I like football or I wouldn't play it. But I'm not sap enough to think we can beat Southeastern . . . or even come close. I got a wife and a kid and we live in a trailer. I work twenty extra hours a week tendin' furnace in the gym. I need the job and I'm gonna keep it. But I wouldn't have it ten minutes if I cracked up a shoulder blade. Now, I reckon you know where I stand."

The referee came in. "That'll be five yards for delaying the game."

Barney sighed as the ball was brought



back to the twenty nine. The Indians had been losing so long that they had a defeatist complex. Shaking them loose from it wasn't going to be easy. It would take something startling.

He called a play, then eased in behind Ed Travis, the center. The ball came back. Barney feinted to both flankers, then hid the ball back of his body as he eased lazily into the line.

His deception was flawless. He was in the enemy secondary before the visitors spotted him. He picked up ten quick ones, then slowed abruptly. Whirling, he spotted Sammy Layne, his left half, who was trailing the play on schedule.

Barney grinned as he tossed an easy lateral. But the grin was immediately wiped away. Sammy Layne over-ran the ball, had to stop, reach back. He succeeded only in batting it into the air. Then, off balance, Sammy went down. Meanwhile, Barney had tossed a body block and was down on the ground himself. But an alert enemy back swooped in to scoop the bounding ball out of the air. He was out in front all by himself and the touchdown that he racked up could have been accomplished, almost as easily, by a guy on a pogo stick. It was a touchdown for Southeastern. Dutifully, the Indian band turned to their souped up version of "Block that Kick."

Barney Clark, playing back of his eight man line, hurdled a pair of fallen antagonists to get into the Southeastern backfield. Three blockers took their turns at him. But he fought his way through them just in time to catch a football in his upturned face. The ball plumped away harmlessly. Barney got a puffy nose for his effort, plus the satisfaction of seeing a big 6 beneath the visitors' score where a 7 might have been.

The visitors prepared to kick again. This time, they kicked short and it was Bronc Bestor, the Indian fullback, who caught the ball. Bronc powered his way up to the twenty-five before they dropped him flat.

In the huddle, Barney tried to get some urgency into his voice. But if it was there, it did not catch hold of the Indians. They listened, matter of factly, as he made his pitch, then moved into position in the tail-back slot.

BARNEY took the pass from center, whirled and lobbed the ball to fullback Bronc Bestor. He completed the turn, then knifed in between guard and center on the weak side. The defensive fullback came in to plug the hole. But Barney went under him, powered him aside. Meanwhile, Bronc Bestor was driving through behind him. Bronc got through the line, went for six before they nailed him.

Barney picked him up, grinned at him. "Glad you don't read the papers," he said. "Glad you don't know we haven't got a chance against them."

"Confidentially," Bronc admitted, "my girl put a couple of bobs on the Indians, with that nineteen point differential. I'm figurin' on the loot bein' enough to pay for a couple of prom tickets."

Barney said, "A noble thought. But don't let the purity boys hear about it. They'll string you up by the heels."

"I'm too sharp for that," Bronc said. "And as long as it's my girl's dough, how about leavin' me try that play again."

"You have spoken," Barney said. He felt immeasurably better. Bronc Bestor talked his language. And Bronc, a senior, was naturally tired of losing. If he could get a few more of them on the ball, it would help the cause along.

Bronc Bestor tried the same play and it picked up five for a first down. Barney Clark picked up a bump on the side of his nose. But the first down was worth it.

Barney was aware of the soft spot in the Southeastern line. He began to hammer it. A quarterback sneak picked up six. A straight line play was stopped cold by the enemy center. But Bronc Bestor piled into the soft spot again and this time he went all the way to the midfield stripe.

Up in the stands, the Indian band went to work again, and with slightly more gusto. The Southeastern coach sent in a replacement for the soft guard.

Barney Clark knew the old axiom about a quarterback usually running the play over a new lineman, to test him out. He hoped the Southeasterners were figuring him for that angle.

The play started the same. Barney took the ball, whirled, tossed it to Bronc Bestor behind him. As before, Barney went into



the line, feeling out the substitute guard. But it was a solid wall. Barney bounced off the man, then eased into the flat as a hole closed behind him. Four Southeastern linemen were waiting for Bronc Bestor to come through. But Bronc crossed them.

He stopped, whirled, then leaped high to toss a wobbly pass.

Barney took it on the dead run and he was moving toward the sideline. He shot past two startled tacklers, then cut toward the distant goal line. The enemy safety man came up slowly, his eyes glued to Barney's weaving hips.

Barney Clark feinted left, but the man wasn't fooled. With a sigh, Barney ducked his head, banged straight ahead. He hit the safety man with a driving shoulder. Arms circled his body, but Barney powered straight ahead, kicking his knees high. For an awful moment, he was off balance, falling. But he got his left leg loose, got it beneath him. Then he shook free and he was back in stride. Three seconds later, it was a touchdown.

The Indian fans were almost too startled to cheer. But when Sammy Layne split the uprights with a perfect placement to move the Indians into a 7 to 6 lead, the fans let loose. Barney listened and he found himself hoping that some of the varsity would catch the same kind of fire. But he quickly saw that it was not to be. Half the team, and Tex Pinkerton in particular, seemed resigned to the feeling that within a matter of time, the visitors would come swarming back to go into the lead again.

The visitors pulled the plug. A power team, the Southeasterners, they quickly began to move upfield. From his safety spot, Barney Clark called out encouragement. But his line was slowly giving ground.

Bronc Bestor, roving in the secondary, was in on every play. Halfback Sammy Layne was doing his share. But Tex Pinkerton was being taken out too often. Barney wondered why Doc Mabry didn't substitute, then remembered. Doc had no adequate replacement for the big redhead.

The visitors increased the pace. Five through tackle. Three through the middle. Six over guard. Midfield was passed, then the forty, the thirty. In desperation,

Barney Clark moved in closer. But that was his undoing.

**A**N ENEMY halfback broke through the line. Barney raced up to cover. But the other halfback broke wide and the lateral caught Barney by surprise. Bronc Bestor made a brave attempt to haul down the man. But all he got for his pains was a mouth full of grass. The enemy runner pounded over and it was a score. An instant later, goal was again missed. But the visitors were leading 12 to 7.

It was that way at the half. The Southeastern coach, with a big one coming up next week, sent in his seconds. And the seconds seemed content to wear down the undermanned Indians.

During the halftime, Doc Mabry didn't say much. He just let the team rest. But as they were going out, Doc got Barney to one side. "If we can take this one," he said, "I think it'll convince a few of 'em that we've got a chance."

"Just one break," Barney said. "Just one."

The break was a long time coming. For twenty-nine minutes, the teams banged away at each other. Two fumbles cost the visitors probable scores. Twice, Barney almost got away, but was pulled down, thanks to lousy blocking. Half a dozen times, with the chips down, he came up from safety position to make last ditch tackles. But the clock was running out.

Then, with a minute left, the Southeasterners elected to try to stall it out. Three plays later, they were in midfield with six yards to go. And fifteen seconds. Barney knew they'd kick for the coffin corner. Desperately, he called time.

In the huddle, he said, "Bronc, drop back with me. It'll be X-79. And let me not have to remind you that this one's the payoff."

"Gotcha," Bronc Bestor muttered grimly.

They were dropping back and the fans were very quiet. The ball went back. The lines charged. Then it came booming. It was close to the right sideline. Barney Clark raced over, leaped high. He took it a yard inside the sideline, his foot a few inches from the goal line. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see Bronc



Bestor far to his left. Bronc, moving up-field in search of blockers.

Barney hung close to the sideline. And this time, the defense sucked over. He crossed the twenty as the gun went off. A tackler banged at his knees, but he pulled them away. Abruptly, Barney whirled and cut to his left. At the same time, Bronc began to race toward him and as they crossed paths, Barney gave it to Bronc on a handoff.

The criss-cross was perfect. The entire enemy team was in hot pursuit of Barney Clark, knowing that when they brought him down, the game was over. Before they could reverse themselves, Bronc Bestor was circling around them and only three men were waiting for him.

Barney outran most of the pack, got an enemy fullback. One down, two to go. He rolled over, watched the play progress. The enemy quarterback set himself. But Sammy Layne came out of nowhere to let loose a rolling block. Two down. And the rest was up to Bronc Bestor.

Bronc was a big man and he put his weight to work. He feinted his tackler crazy, then ran straight over him. A driving stiffarm, a shake of the hips, and Bronc was away. He lumbered on, with half a dozen Southeasterners in futile pursuit. Suddenly he was over. The Indians, breather boys of the conference, had won themselves a ball game.

Barney Clark was feeling very fine indeed. He greeted Bronc was his hand outstretched. "Imagine them guys," he said. "Spotting Southeastern 19 points..."

"What a bunch of dopes," Bronc grinned. "They got rocks in their heads."

Barney listened to the baying of the fans and his plan no longer seemed quite so hopeless after all . . .

#### IV

THE few fans who had turned out now swarmed down to have their inning with Barney and big Bronc Bestor. Barney was considerably delayed and among the last to leave for the dressing room. As he reached the ramp, the soft whistle died upon his lips and his dark face stiffened.

A man was standing in front of him.

Medium build, graying temples. A thin, somewhat angular face and a pair of cool gray eyes whose lids seemed to hang at half mast. Zeke Lawford, football writer for the *Mulvane Times*. The same gent to whom Barney had once turned for help, only to find himself thoroughly hem-stitched when Zeke Lawford and Pete Carradine got through with him. At the moment, Zeke Lawford was blocking Barney's path and his eyes were definitely unamused.

"Slumming?" Barney asked, his voice tight. "Or did Pete Carradine just send you over to see what I was up to."

Zeke Lawford said, "You're making a lot of trouble for yourself. With the *Mulvane Raiders*, you had a chance to make a nice deal. But you got cute. Now, if you're thinking of doing something about it, which is pretty obvious, you're wasting your time."

"Then why," Barney demanded, "are you so interested?"

The *Times* man frowned. "Okay, I'll lay it on the line. Your outfit hasn't a prayer of stopping the *Mulvane Raiders*. But with you in the lineup, Pete Carradine knows he'd have to keep the pressure on all the way. Frankly, he wants the game to be a breather. He wants to take no chances of getting any of his boys hurt. Because when it's over, he's expecting a bowl bid. Do we understand each other?"

Barney said, "The only thing I understand about you, Zeke, is that you're a hell of a poor ad for a newspaperman. Pete Carradine gives you a few quarts of booze, slips you a few bucks now and then and he carries you in his pocket."

Zeke Lawford was sore, but he tried to cover it with a smile. "You can't help your team. But with you in there, feeling as you do, you could give the *Raiders* a workout—which Pete don't want at that stage of the season. So here's my deal. Drop out of the lineup. Tell the boys the long layoff was too much for you. In return, I'll . . ."

"You'll what?" Barney demanded angrily. "Cut me in on your blackmailing concession?" He reached out swiftly, grabbed the reporter by the lapels. He jerked the man close to him, shook him hard.



"Until right now," he flared, "I wondered about Pete Carradine. But the fact that he sent you here, proves that he's already beginning to worry. So tell him for me that I want no part of his offer. Tell him I'll meet his club on the football field, come Thanksgiving."

Barney Clark gave the reporter one last tooth-rattling shake, then let go. He had learned once that Zeke Lawford was a rough customer to do business with and in a saner moment, he might have been worried by the look in the man's eyes as he stalked away. But right now, he had no time to worry. Pete Carradine was after him, which was exactly what he wanted.

BARNEY continued on toward the dressing room. At the door, however, he found Doc Mabry with his ear against the crack, a dark scowl upon his face.

Barney said, "Doc, you've ruined my illusions. Imagine you turning out to be an eavesdropper."

Doc turned quickly, flashing a pained look in his eyes. "Shhh, dammit," he said hoarsely. "And listen."

"It's against my principles," Barney said. "But if it's an order, okay." He bent an eager ear toward the door. The voice that came from within was easily identifiable by the brassy wheeze.

"So why should we have stars in our eyes?" Tex Pinkerton was saying. "Hell, I'll admit Barney Clark's good. But not good enough to be gettin' Orange Bowl ideas. We won today because we were lucky, plain and simple. It couldn't happen again in a dozen seasons . . ."

"Yeah," Slim Jimson muttered. "Maybe it is kind of silly to get so worked up . . ."

"Barney Clark's a slave driver," Tex Pinkerton said. "I don't mind puttin' out . . . but damned if I'm gonna kill myself, just because he's nuts enough to think we can win all of 'em. The team we beat today ain't within three touchdowns of the Mulvane Raiders. And we barely squeaked through . . ."

Barney Clark, listening, felt his fists double at his sides. Then, Doc Mabry was whispering again. "See what I mean? Tex is a senior and the younger guys have got a lot of faith in him. He

thinks we can't win and for five minutes, he's been tellin' 'em they're nuts to kill themselves trying."

Barney said, "What's the scoop, Doc?"

"We need him," Doc said. "But we don't need the kind of tripe he's dishin' out. I'd rather have ten guys so dumb they *think* we can win 'em all than one guy so smart he knows we can't."

Barney's eyebrows went up. "You, too, Doc?"

"Hell," Doc said. "I can afford to have my doubts. I'm only the coach." He sighed, heavily, then said, "Barney, tell that fathead to stop off at my office. If I feel the way I do now, by the time he gets there, he'll get his walkin' papers."

Barney thought of something. "If he feels that way, why does he bother about playing?"

Doc said, "The head of the athletic department is partial to footballers. He handed Tex a pretty good job—which Tex needs to stay in school. It's more than just shovelin' coal. It's an engineering job and it pays fairly well. Tex knows that if he stays on the team, he'll probably keep the job. It's the nearest thing we've got to athletic scholarships."

Barney said, "Well, maybe you can work out something with him. We could really use his blocking."

He went on inside. When Tex Pinkerton saw him, Tex grinned. He also stopped talking. But Barney wasn't fooled. Tex had already done his damage and it was evident in the way the team was acting. They should have been keyed. But they weren't.

After Barney finished dressing, he said, "Tex, Doc wants to see you."

"Oke," Tex said.

Barney started to leave, but Pop stopped him. Pop seemed nervous, ill at ease. "That girl," Pop said. "Remember the night I said I was gonna take a look at her?"

"Sure," Barney admitted. "I remem-ber."

"Well," Pop said, looking at the floor, "we got to talking. Wound up ridin' home with her. She's a nice gal, sonny."

Barney Clark colored. "I told you, Pop—she's got a way with her."

"That why you keep duckin' her?" Pop demanded. "You afraid of what she



might talk you into?"

"Hah," Barney said. "That's a hot one . . ."

Pop observed him shrewdly. "Mom likes her too, sonny. Matter of fact, Janet, Mom and me watched the game together. Janet's comin' over tonight for supper. We'd be right honored if you'd make it four."

Barney Clark scowled, felt himself flushing. Then his eyes went bleak. "Some other time, Pop. When there'll be just the three of us. But thanks, anyway."

"Sometimes you can be awful sap, Barney."

Barney shrugged but made no comment. He went outside. It was growing dark and the street was almost empty. Then he saw the roadster at the curb, the girl behind the wheel. The window was down.

"Hello, Barney," Janet Hawley said. Her smile was red lipped, tentative. "Nice game out there today . . ."

She was small and fine featured. Her hair was red gold, her eyes a nicely matching shade of green. Her coat was of mink and it was gathered close about her throat. She was, he had to admit, disconcertingly lovely. Barney looked at her, decided in that moment, to get it over with.

He said, "Janet, why don't you grow up?" and his tone was belligerent.

She said, "And be an old fuddy-duddy like you? Barney, what's happened to us?"

He glowered. "Pop's a good friend of mine. You've been working on his sympathy."

"He's a friend of mine, too," Janet Hawley challenged. "Besides, what of it? I'm free, white and twenty-one. . ."

"Twenty," Barney corrected. He walked to the roadster, gripped the top of the door where the glass had been rolled down. He said, "Let's settle this thing, once and for all. Three years ago, we said a lot of things that we didn't mean. . ."

"I meant them, Barney," the girl said brightly.

"Harrumph!" Barney Clark said.

"Would you repeat that question," Janet said, wrinkling her uptilted nose at him. He was tired of stalling. He looked into the girl's eyes and he was upset because his gaze wavered. He said, "I came to

City College to do a job."

Janey said, "Yes, I know. You want to do a job that will take care of Pete Carradine for what he did to you. And at the same time, you want to show my father how blind he is."

"Why," Barney flared, "should I care about your father?"

The girl looked queerly at him. "Why," she said, "so that father won't get out his shooting irons the next time you come calling on me."

Barney was exasperated. He started to make a crack, but when he looked at the girl, he realized that she was serious. It did something to him, unnerved him.

HIS voice softened. "Look, Janet," he said slowly. "That chapter of my life is over. Your father thinks I'm an eight ball. And the feeling, believe me, is mutual. Four times I've tried to hold a job. And four times I've been politely told that my services were no longer needed. Since Andrew Hawley is about the biggest engineer in the country, I've had no trouble making it add. And even when I do prove to him what a sucker he's been, it wouldn't be very comfortable calling on him again. Do you understand that? Do you follow me?"

"No, I don't understand," the girl said. "And yes, I follow you. I'll keep following you, Barney, until you start making sense."

His knuckles, against the door, were suddenly white. And Janet Hawley's parted lips were very, very red. For no reason at all, something that Pop had told him now came through his consciousness like an accusing whisper. *Sonny, maybe you're the fool.....*

The he looked at the mink coat. If he was lucky, he'd earn almost enough in his first two years as an engineer to buy a coat like that. And in two more years he could pay for the roadster. Once, he'd been engaged to this girl, but he'd acted like the sophomore that he was.

Barney sighed, and when he spoke again, it was with firm resolution. "This," he said, "had gone too far. I came here to do a job and I'm going to do it alone. Goodbye, Janet."

Janet Hawley's eyes were filling and her lovely red mouth was trembling. He



turned away swiftly and he began to walk. He waited for the sound of the roadster's motor, but no sound came. Then he remembered. The girl was probably waiting for Pop. It gave him a funny feeling, one that he could not classify, but one which, nevertheless, left him all unwound inside. . .

V.

BARNEY cut across the park. He was walking down a gravel path beside the dark waters of the lagoon when, from back of him, there came the sound of hurrying footsteps. He turned. Far up the street, to the left of the path, a pair of car lights came up bright and in the reflected glare, he made out the shape of the man rushing toward him. It was Tex Pinkerton. Hatless, coatless, and striding purposefully.

Barney said, "What's the hurry, Tex?"

The big blocking back drew closer. His fists were doubled along his sides. The car lights went out, but not before Barney caught a glimpse of the big man's expression. Tex Pinkerton was burning with anger.

"I just talked to Doc Mabry," Tex flared. "But that's no news to you. Between you, everything was arranged very nicely."

"I don't get it," Barney said, scowling.

"The hell you don't!" Tex roared. "Who was it that told me Doc wanted to see me? Who was it that was bending Doc's ear right after the game?"

Barney said, "What'd he tell you, Tex?"

"You know damned well what he told me. He fired me off the team."

Barney frowned. He'd known that Doc Mabry was upset, but he hadn't thought it had gone so far. Still, if Doc was playing it that way, then Barney was going to back him.

Barney said, "I didn't have anything to do with it." "You're a liar," Tex rasped.

"I'll let that ride for a minute," Barney said. "But as I was saying—if I'd been in Doc's place, I'd have done the same thing. You're no good to yourself and no good to the team. . ."

"That," Tex Pinkerton said, "Is *your* opinion. Look, Clark, I like football as

well as the next guy. But I'm smart enough to know what can and can't be done. For instance, if we win two more games this year, we'll be having a hot season. All the yammering and screaming you can do won't change things. . ."

"And that," Barney muttered, "is only *your* opinion!"

"Once," Tim Pinkerton said hoarsely, "I told you that I had a wife and kid—that I needed a certain job. Well, without your meddlin' around, I'd have that job through the rest of the season. Now, thanks to you, I'll lose it. And I'm not the kind of guy who loses easily."

Instinct alone saved Barney Clark from being knocked into the lagoon. He saw the fury in Tex Pinkerton's eyes, saw the doubled fists come up. He stepped back quickly. But even then, the looping left grazed his head, sent him staggering.

Barney was off balance when Tex roared into him again, fists driving with all the fury of a Texas hurricane. A blow banged into Barney's mouth, crushing his lips against his teeth. Another caught him over the ear. He knew, then, that he was fighting for his very life.

A blow was coming at him again. Backed to the edge of the lagoon, Barney Clark was forced to stand his ground. He ducked the blow, feinted a left, then found himself in close. Barney chopped a short right into the solar plexus. Tex Pinkerton gave ground, his hands dropping involuntarily. Barney moved in fast, smashed a left to the face. Tex rocked back, tripped, went down.

Barney stood over him, panting hard. He said, "Tex you're a fool. We could have a football team with your help. A team can only use eleven men at a time. It isn't the uniform. . . it's what's inside the uniform that counts. You think you're protectin' your wife and kid. But if they knew what an easy loser you were, they'd be ashamed of you."

Tex Pinkerton came back onto his feet. Even then, Barney knew he'd have been better off to leave out the crack about Tex's wife and kid. For the same fury was in the man's eyes.

This time, the bigger man was more cagey. He feinted Barney off balance, then slammed him with a straight, hard left to the heart. Barney dropped to his



knees, unable to breathe. Then, suddenly, car lights came on, and both fighters were outlined in the bright glare. Barney half expected Tex to leap on his back. But Tex held his fire. Barney shook his head, got up.

Then, swiftly, Tex was driving in again, fists pumping in an effort to end it. Barney Clark took them on the elbows, upon the shoulders, and he was too busy to land a blow of his own. He felt the blood begin to flow upon his face, felt his left eye begin to close. Steadily, he was being backed toward the lagoon again.

He knew, then, that he couldn't take much more. If Tex Pinkerton whipped him, the word would get around that Tex was the better man. And that wouldn't help him, nor would it help the team. He had to do something quickly.

Barney Clark stepped into the edge of the lagoon, felt the water come up around his ankles. Suddenly, he dropped his arms. The movement caught Tex Pinkerton by surprise. Tex looked at him, then brought his right arm back fast, ready to end it with a one-punch round-house.

That was Tex Pinkerton's one big mistake.

The instant the arm went all the way back. Barney jabbed with his left. Tex rocked off balance, his precision destroyed. He swung the right, but it whistled harmlessly over Barney's shoulder. And at that instant, Tex Pinkerton's jaw was wide open. Barney didn't wait. He smashed with his right, caught the jaw at the tip. And Tex Pinkerton folded like an accordion. Gasping, now, Barney stared down at his handiwork. Tex was breathing unevenly. He was out, cold, but it wouldn't last long. Up ahead, the car lights were still bright. Someone had watched the fight. Someone, in fact, was opening a car door. Barney Clark was suddenly weary. He turned, hurried off the path and through the trees. He did not look back.

Barney sat down to eat his dinner at his boarding house. The landlady looked at him, clucked her tongue reprovingly. "This football," she said. "It ain't right for young people to half kill themselves that way. That face, Barney. . ."

Someone else said, "Funny. From the

stands, you didn't look like you had a mark on you, Barney."

HE took a bite of mashed potatoes. But his mouth still hurt. He got up. He didn't feel like eating just then. "See you all later," he said. He laid his napkin beside his plate, started upstairs to his room. He was halfway up the steps when the doorbell rang. An instant later, he heard the front door open, heard someone shout, "It's for you, Barney. . ."

Puzzled, he went downstairs. He saw Pop's skinny frame outlined in the doorway. Pop said softly, "Step outside a minute, sonny."

Barney stepped outside. He was somewhat surprised to see Tex Pinkerton on the porch beside Pop. Instinctively, he knotted his fists. But there was no cause for it. Tex Pinkerton was in a state of repose. Barney reached back, closed the door behind him.

Pop said, "I . . . I seen that fight. Wanted to stop it, but Janet wouldn't let me."

"Janet?" Barney said hollowly.

"We were in the car," Pop said. "Come up right after it was over. But you'd already lit out. . ."

Now, Tex Pinkerton spoke. His voice was somewhat sheepish. Tex said, "When you wake up with your skull half caved in, you're too worried about yourself to stay mad at anyone. At least, you can think straight, can listen to reason. . ."

"It was Janet," Pop said. "She made him see that you're a scrapper, Barney. That the only thing you want to do for the Indians is help 'em win."

"She can really talk your leg off," Tex said wonderingly.

"And I convinced Tex that if Doc fired him from the team, it was Doc's own idea. Doc don't take any advice from nobody," Pop said.

"What I'm tryin' to say," Tex muttered, "is that you had it right when you said my wife and kid would be ashamed of me. I jumped the gun on you, Barney. Maybe we haven't got a chance this year. But at least, I can't blame you for trying. I had you figured for a popoff guy, for a headline hunter. But you backed your argument with fists—which is something



I can understand. It was my idea to come over here."

"I've got a hunch," Pop interrupted, "that when Doc hears how things are going, he'll want Tex back on the team again."

Barney Clark looked at Tex Pinkerton and he was suddenly warm inside. "If he doesn't," Barney said, "then there'll be another guy checkin' in his suit." He thrust out his hand. "What do you say, Tex?"

They shook solemnly. Then Tex said, "I'm makin' only one promise, Barney. Maybe it'll be like bustin' my head against a stone wall. But from now on out, you'll get your blockin'. If you can't shake loose, that'll be your fault, not mine."

"What else could a man want?" Barney demanded, glowing.

"A woman, you lug!"

He whirled. Janet Hawley was standing at the foot of the front steps, her eyes turned appealingly toward him. Mesmerized, he walked toward her. Back of him, Pop said, "Give her credit, Barney. She made me let you fight it out. Then she went to bat for you."

Barney said, "Maybe Pop's right. Maybe I'm the nutty one."

"Do I detect a weakening of the iron Clark will?" Janet demanded.

It was a cool night, but Barney Clark was perspiring. He reached for her, then paused. "It's . . . awful crowded out here," he said.

"Aw, hell," Pop said. "Me and Tex are married men ourselves. We're leavin', ain't we Tex?"

The invitation was upon the girl's red mouth and he accepted it with alacrity. The result was highly satisfactory. The red gold hair was soft against his aching face. Then he drew away abruptly, startled at what he had done.

Janet Hawley shook her head reprovingly. "Don't you know, darling, that a man hasn't got a chance during Leap Year?"

He bent forward once more. Again, the experience was satisfactory. Then he said, "I wonder if Pop's invitation still holds? About tonight, I mean."

"Naturally," the girl said. "Get your coat, Barney."

Barney spent the week-end resting. And

when on Monday he reported to the team, something had changed. Tex Pinkerton had done some talking. And he was in uniform.

The Indians were scheduled to meet the Gaylord *Owls* in their second conference game, the following Saturday. Doc impressed upon them the fact that they were up against a hard charging powerhouse team. And he drilled them accordingly. The Indians were rated as a four touchdown underdog. And the moment they took the field they understood why.

The Owls opened with their power attack and in the first quarter, they marched the length of the field for a touchdown. On defense, they were as formidable as Gibraltar. Again, late in the second period, the Owls repeated their touchdown march. And the Indians went to the dressing room trailing by 13 points.

The third quarter was scoreless. But in the last, the *Indians* shot the works. Tex Pinkerton started it by crashing through to block a punt on the *Owl* goal line. Slim Jimson fell on it for a score. Sammy Layne added the extra point to make it 7 to 13.

The Owls tried to stall. But with two minutes left, with the Indians deep in their own territory, Barney Clark pulled the rabbit out of his hat. He feinted a pass, then cut in behind perfect interference. Sammy Layne got one man, Bronc Bestor another. But it was Tex Pinkerton who got the big one, the safety man. And Barney Clark racked up eighty yards for the second touchdown. The crowd went wild as Sammy Layne made it 14 to 13 with a perfect placement. And they were wilder, still, when the gun sounded a moment later. The Indians had won their second. And as Barney walked off, he knew that they'd keep going. They were a definite threat, now, to the *Mulvane Raiders*. And if he knew Pete Carradine, things would soon start happening. But this time, Barney Clark hoped to be ready.

## VI

THE campus of the City College Indians was stirring with a victory feeling. The breather boys were back in the saddle and talk of a championship for the Indians boomed from every dormitory and



every fraternity house on campus.

Barney Clark watched Zeke Lawford's sports column in the *Mulvane Times*. Zeke admitted, in print, that Barney Clark had greatly aided the *Indians*, but Zeke added that the *Mulvane Raiders* would take the *Indians* in stride. This, Barney could understand. Zeke Lawford and Pete Carradine were as thick as glue, and were capable of doing anything to protect themselves, as Barney had already discovered. Therefore, if they were planning something now, Zeke Lawford would be the last man to point to it.

Barney knew why Pete Carradine was worried. *Mulvane U.* was a wealthy school and football was king of the campus. With a winner every year, Pete Carradine was the man of the moment—and particularly, the pride of the rich alumnae group. By operating shrewdly, Pete had jockeyed himself into a position of high favor among these well heeled gentry, not the least of whom was Janet's father, Andrew Hawley. And with Zeke Lawford, the sports writer running interference for him, it was a setup that could hardly be improved upon. Only one thing would upset the applecart. A bad season for the *Raiders*, which wasn't likely. Or for a few of the alumnae group to discover what a sharp operator Pete Carradine really was. . .

The *Indians* followed their second win with still another, this one against the Texas Terrors, a strong, non-conference foe. And after that important victory, the sports writers cancelled all their former reservations, established the *Indians* as the only team in the Little Six conference with a chance to upset the *Raiders* for the title.

Doc Mabry, whose cynicism had once been sharp enough to curl hair, was now his smiling self again. And Pop, the clubhouse attendant, began to move around briskly, a bright glow in his rheumy old eyes.

The *Indians* took the field on Monday following their victory over the *Terrors* and Doc immediately called them to the center of the field.

Doc said, "I've been wishin' for another good guard. And maybe I've got him. Gents, meet Ike Malone. Played three years with a service team and he thinks maybe he can help us."

Ike Malone was a big, rangy guy with closely cropped blond hair. He grinned self-consciously. "Would of been out before," he said. "But I didn't want to waste my time. Didn't think the *Indians* were goin' anywhere. But brother, was I wrong. . ."

Barney took a long look, liked what he saw. Malone appeared to be a man who knew the score. Give him a guard who could open a quick hole, give him a man like Tex Pinkerton to block for him, and there would be some touchdowns.

Doc said, "You sure you're ready for heavy contact, Ike?"

Ike Malone said, "I should be. I've been workin' out with the wrestling team."

"Take right guard on the scrubs," Doc ordered. "And Barney, you run a few plays over him. Start kind of easy until he gets the feel of it."

Barney nodded to his varsity, huddled them. "Let's see if he's jumpy," Barney said. "Curly, let him through. Tex, you see if you can take him from the side. Okay. Let's go."

They snapped into position. The ball came back. Barney feinted a shot at Sammy Layne, then moved in behind his interference. But that was as far as he got. Ike Malone refused to be rat-trapped. He held his drive until the interference banged into the line. Nimbly stepping aside, he let the interference spill through. Then, legs driving hard, he hit Barney from the side. Rockets went off in Barney's skull as he hit the dirt. But when he got shakily to his feet, his own grin matched the easy grin on Ike Malone's face.

At the edge of the field, Doc Mabry stood with stars in his eyes. "He's in shape," Doc yelled. "Open up. . ."

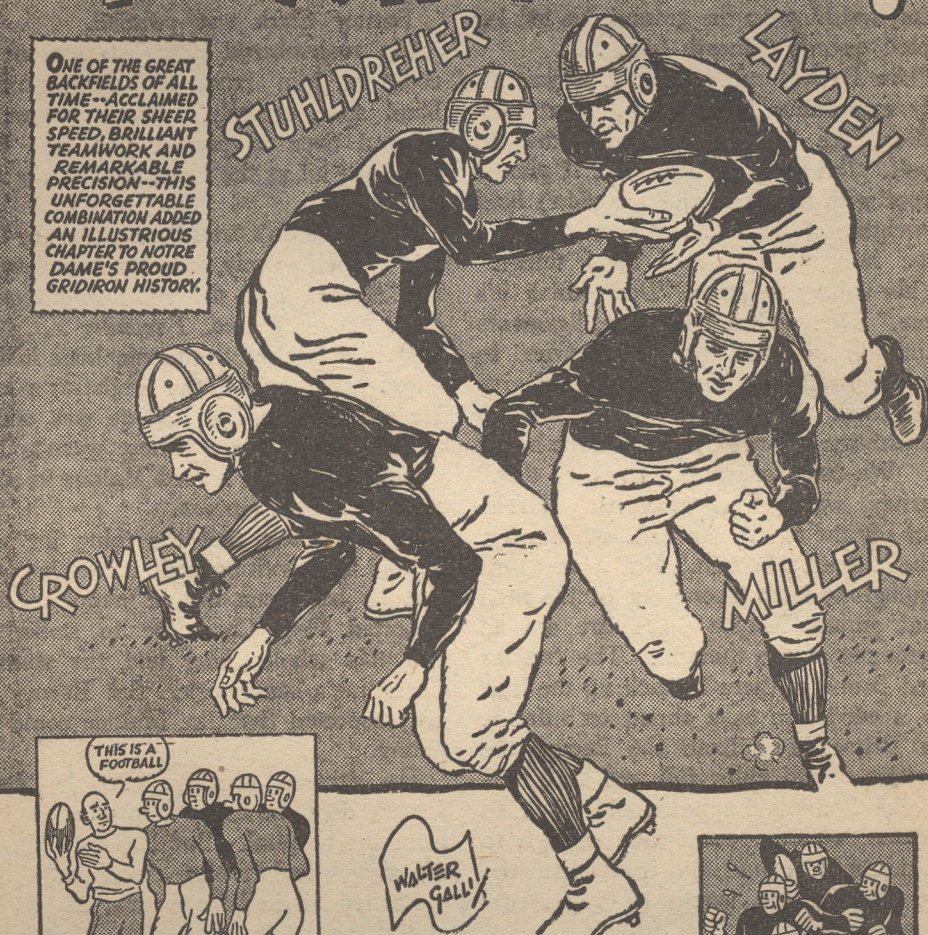
Barney called a spinner. It started with Sammy Layne. Sammy cut far to his left, started to circle end. But Tex Pinkerton, playing wide, took the ball on a hand off, brought it back three strides, then chucked it to Barney who was driving in over guard.

Bronc Bestor was a stride in front, running interference. They reached the hole in the line, started through. Then, out of nowhere, Ike Malone appeared. Swiftly, Bronc Bestor stepped over to protect. But before Bronc could throw



# the FOUR HORSEMEN!

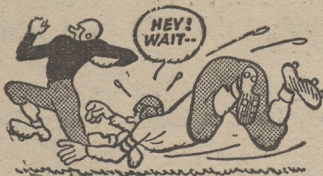
ONE OF THE GREAT BACKFIELDS OF ALL TIME--ACCLAIMED FOR THEIR SHEER SPEED, BRILLIANT TEAMWORK AND REMARKABLE PRECISION--THIS UNFORGETTABLE COMBINATION ADDED AN ILLUSTRIOUS CHAPTER TO NOTRE DAME'S PROUD GRIDIRON HISTORY.



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a block, Ike Malone was submarining under him. Bronc went down, but Barney was free. He started to open up a gap. But he stopped when he heard the shrill blast from Doc Mabry's whistle. And as he turned around, he saw Bronc Bestor, writhing on the ground, his left leg doubled queerly beneath him. . . .

When Barney raced back, Doc was already examining Bronc's leg. And back of Doc, Ike Malone was muttering to himself. "I'm sorry as hell. I . . . I pinned his foot with my knee and I couldn't hold my weight off his leg. . . ."

Doc said, "It's one of them things." But his voice was grim. "Don't think it's broken," Doc added. "But the ligaments around the knee are torn." He turned to three scrubs beside him. "Come on, give me a hand. We've got to get him to the infirmary. Barney, knock off the heavy drill. We can't stand any more of this."

Barney watched them carting Bronc Bestor off the field. He had seen the leg. Maybe it wasn't broken. But it was torn up enough to keep Bronc out of the next several games. Maybe the entire season. He groaned at the thought. The *Indians* needed Bronc in there to back up the line. They needed him as a threat on offense. With Bronc gone from the lineup, the opposition would know full well that Barney and Sammy Layne would have to alternate. Neither was heavy enough to ram the middle and do it consistently. Thus, the *Indians* would be immeasurably weakened.

Barney looked at Ike Malone. He said heavily, "It was a tough break. But maybe you can make up for it. . . ."

The big man looked sad. "It . . . sort of upset me. If nobody minds, I think I'll call it a day."

"Nobody minds," Barney said. "But stick around. I'll want to have a skull session with you after practice."

"I'll be around," Ike promised.

**B**UT, when the session ended, Ike Malone wasn't around. Barney asked Pop. The old man rubbed his cadaverous chin thoughtfully. "Yeah," he said. "I remember, now. The guy come in right after the ambulance left with Doc and Bronc. So upset, I almost forgot it. Dressed in a hell of a hurry. Like he was

headed for a hot date, now that I recall it. . . ."

Barney said, "He didn't mention that he'd come back?"

"He didn't say nothing like that," Pop said.

Barney Clark was puzzled.

He remembered how Ike Malone had come at him from the flank, from a blind spot, actually. Bronc Bestor had stepped over to protect him and Bronc had been hit at the knee, against the hinged joint.

*But if it hadn't been Bronc, Barney Clark told himself grimly, it might have been me. Ike Malone had the same angle on me as he had on Bronc. I wonder . . .*

Barney hurried to the telephone in Pop's office. He called the registrar's office. He asked if an Ike Malone was enrolled at the City College. There wasn't. There were two persons named Malone in school. And both were women.

Barney knew that the thing for which he had been waiting had already happened. But he had been caught napping. He'd expected Pete Carradine to strike back and this whole thing had the stamp of Carradine's handiwork. But Barney had not suspected that Ike Malone could be a phony.

He dressed quickly. As he started for the door, he asked Pop what was new from the hospital. But Pop told him that the x-rays hadn't been developed.

Barney checked his watch. It had been almost an hour since Ike Malone had left the field. He went outside, started to look for a taxi. But there was no need for it. A roadster was standing at the curb and the girl at the wheel had red gold hair.

"Hi ya," Janet Hawley said. Then her eyes searched his face and her expression sobered. "Barney. . . what is it?"

"How fast can you drive this crate?" he demanded.

"Eighty," the girl said, "and I can prove it by a certain motorcycle cop named O'Malley."

"Get me to the railroad station," Barney said. "And don't meet any cops named O'Malley."

The railroad station, however, produced no direct results. Ike Malone was not in the station, nor had anyone of his des-





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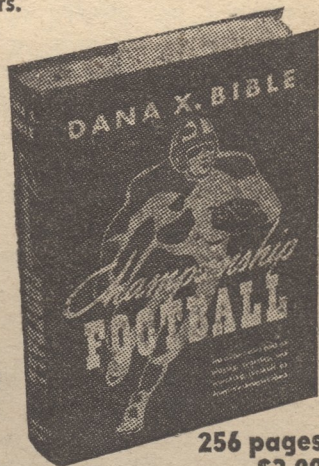
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cription bought a ticket. The bus station drew a blank, as did the airport. Finally, in desperation, Barney had the girl drive him out along the highway leading toward Mulvane. For more than two hours, he stopped in filling stations and restaurants to ask questions. Then at last he struck pay dirt. A guy answering Ike Malone's description had gone through there almost three hours earlier. But when Barney checked his watch, when he considered that Mulvane was only two hours distant, he knew it would be impossible to corner the man while he was still on the road.

Wearily he said, "Okay, Janet. Drive me back to Doc Mabry's."

When they reached the little bungalow, they found Doc about to blow his top. Doc said, "Bronc will be out for the next three games. And with Tech coming up Saturday."

Barney said, "Wait'll you hear the real lowdown." Quickly, he explained what he'd learned about the very phony Ike Malone. "It's ten to one that Pete Carradine hired Malone to do the job," Barney continued. "He was after me, but he got Bronc instead. But it all adds up to the same—for it weakened us. Carradine is too smart to use one of his own boys to do the dirty work. I've got a hunch this Malone character is a semi-pro, probably from across the country, where we could never hope to trace him."

Doc Mabry's eyes were bleak. "It looks," he said, "like Pete Carradine's done it again. And this time, he done it up brown. Only we can't prove it. . ."

"Maybe," Barney said hopefully, "something will happen."

"It's done happened," Doc mourned. "And now, if you don't mind, I think I'll hit the hay. I'm not doin' so good."

Barney left on that sour note. But once outside, he found that there was still more to come. Janet started to drive, then turned to him. "Trouble," she said, "comes in bunches."

"Now what?" he asked wearily.

"Father was just made head of the Mulvane alumni group. He's campaigning now for a new contract for his little hero, Pete Carradine. He doesn't seem to realize that Pete is wrapping him around his little finger. . ."

"Brains seem to run in your family," Barney said.

"I get it," Janet said. "But don't you worry, darling. I—I've a wonderful plan that will solve everything. . ."

"As easy as that," Barney said.

The girl ignored his sarcasm. "If the plan works," the girl said, "father will see what a louse Pete Carradine really is, and what strength of character you have."

Barney groaned, recalling some of the many plans that had backfired upon this girl of his. He said, suspiciously, "But what if it doesn't work, Janet?"

"In that case," the girl said, "I'm afraid you'd be a corpse."

"Is that supposed to make me happy?"

"Don't worry," Janet said brightly. "If anything happened to you, I'd never marry."

## VII

THE appearance of a man who called himself Ike Malone, plus the subsequent injury of Bronc Bestor, was not a thing that could be ignored. When the word got out that Ike Malone had been an interloper, the sports writers descended upon City College in a cloud. Among them was one Zeke Lawford, looking not too unhappy with himself.

The writers swarmed around the field at the beginning of Tuesday's practice session. But it was Zeke Lawford who took the lead in pinning down Doc Mabry.

"Just what's your theory?" Zeke demanded.

Doc Mabry said, "Have you got to have a theory when one of your best players gets hurt by a complete outsider? Did you ever hear of dirty work at the cross-roads?"

Zeke Lawford said, "Well—I've got a theory. You're meeting several non-conference teams this year. You've got a hot club. So why wouldn't some non-conference coach send one of his scouts in for a closeup glimpse of you? The accident of course could have just happened."

Barney Clark couldn't take much more of that. He saw that the other scribes were agreeing with such a theory and it burned him raw. He said, "Why suggest non-conference meddling, Zeke?"



Zeke Lawford assumed an air of injured dignity. "I'm certain that no conference coach would stoop that low. We tried to clean up football. Remember?"

Some of the scribes laughed. Barney felt the barbed crack sink into him and he lost his temper. "Yeah, I remember. I remember how Pete Carradine gave me the business."

Zeke Lawford looked shocked. "I'd expect something like that from you! Carradine got you banned for three years. Naturally, you'd like to see him blamed for this. . ."

The rest of the scribes chimed in. "Knock off with that stuff," one of them warned. "Pete Carradine's done more for football than any man in this conference."

Doc Mabry said, "Break it up. Print what you want. But remember, we lost a man and we didn't ask for it. That's one thing you can't blame us for. Now clear out of here."

When they were gone, Barney Clark knew that the damage was done. He'd made a crack against Mr. Football, one which he couldn't substantiate.

He knew that the sports writers weren't dumb. But he knew, too, that Pete Carradine had a way of covering his tracks. When Pete hired a key player, he paid the man well. . .and he saw to it that the man was entertained by the influential alumni. The man certainly wouldn't squawk. Therefore, there was no way for the press to sense what was going on. Pete Carradine had a way about him, a way of staying on top of the football pile. But Pete was getting cocky. And that was Barney's sole remaining hope. With cockiness might come foolhardiness.

The press, with Zeke Lawford leading the way, made full use of Barney Clark's charge that Pete Carradine had been behind the injury of Bronc Bestor. The tempest that followed was one that Barney had expected. The fans, all over the circuit, were indignant. They wrote letters to their papers. They even petitioned the conference leaders for the removal of Barney Clark from the lineup. But Pete Carradine stepped into the breach.

"I fight my battles on the gridiron," Pete said piously. "I'd like to see Clark

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in there when we meet the Indians on Thanksgiving. I want there to be no doubts."

When Doc Mabry read that statement, his eyes began to glow. "Carradine had to say something," he told Barney, "or it wouldn't have looked right. He wants you out of there, but he doesn't dare let the conference remove you. So what does that mean?"

"It means," Barney said, "that I'd better stay out of dark alleys."

"Check," Doc said. "But it also means something else. Carradine knows the fans will be riding you hard—and he hopes you'll come apart at the seams. If that happens, the Indians will be a soft touch for the Raiders, whether you're in the lineup or not."

"That," Barney muttered, "is where Carradine is wrong. Let 'em ride me with spurs if they want. It won't do any good."

The Indians, instead of being demoralized by the loss of Bronc Bestor, were visibly strengthened by their anger. They practiced hard during the rest of the week and when they went to Tech for their next big test, they were at a physical and mental peak.

But the moment Barney Clark took the field, the rhubarb began. The capacity crowd stood up, began to boo. Programs, newspapers bottles and cushions rained down upon the field. The insults and the epithets grew stronger and a cordon of cops gathered nervously around the playing field ready to ward off any spontaneous assault upon Barney Clark's person.

Barney could stand the booing, but he didn't like what it portended. With the fans wanting him out of there, the Tech club might get ideas.

**B**ARNEY called his shot. Tech elected to kick. And when the kick came, it was squarely in Barney's arms. He drove straight up to the twenty, eased in back of Tex Pinkerton. They romped the five more, then a wave of green swept over them. Tex was shunted aside. Then three men hit Barney Clark. The first got him high, around the neck, twisted him off balance. The second and the third hit together, one at the loins, the other at the knees. The crash that follow-

ed sounded like a body hitting a car top after a ten story fall.

Barney Clark went down, pain boring into his stomach, pinwheels racing through his head. Then came the nausea, and finally, the blanket of blackness. His last conscious thought was of the ball. But when he gripped it to his body, it wasn't there. . .

How long he was out, he didn't know. But when he came back to consciousness, he was in the Indian dressing room and the club medico was peering down at him.

"You'll be okay," the medico said. "The necktie tackle twisted your helmet loose and someone clipped you with a knee. The lump on your skull is not an egg, in case you're wondering. . ."

Barney sat up, felt his head, groaned. "Those babies meant business," he muttered. "I've been hit before. But never like that." Then he thought of something. "How long have I been out? And what happened?"

"Ten minutes. And they recovered and scored. . ."

Barney said, "I'm wasting time, here."

"You're gaining time," the medico countered. "If you stay out until the half, the shock will wear off and maybe you can play out the rest of it. If you went in now, they'd make mincemeat of you."

Barney sighed, then lay back on the rubbing table. His head ached and before he knew it, he was dozing. It seemed hardly five minutes before he came out of it. The Indians were trooping in, their faces tired, their eyes solemn. Doc Mabry came over where Barney was lying.

"Will you be ready for the second half?"

"Yeah," Barney said. "How is it out there?"

"They win thirteen zero to date," Doc said. "Nothin' that a couple of touchdowns won't cure. . ."

"Dirty football?" Barney asked.

"Rugged," Doc said. "But not dirty."

Barney rested it out and when he got to his feet again, the wooziness left him. He was ready. But was it too late? Two touchdowns was a big deficit.

The fans eased up on Barney when he went back out, their thirst for blood having been slaked, somewhat, by his injury.



Barney looked at the scoreboard, decided that the time had come to gamble. He had a play upon which he had been working. A dangerous play to be sure, but one which would pay off if it clicked.

The *Indians* received and Sammy Layne ran the ball back to the twenty-four. Barney sent his sub fullback into the line two times, picked up exactly nothing. Then, on third down, he dropped back in to punt formation.

His ends were wide, ready to rush down. But the Tech defense was watching them guardedly, as if half expecting a trick. Then the ball shot back. Barney Clark reached for it, but let it slip through his fingers. It went over his head and he turned, raced after it. He had a ten-yard jump and if the ball bounced right, there would be no need for too much hurry.

But it bounced wrong. It hit on the nine, rolled crazily to one side. Barney changed direction, reached for the ball, missed it. Back of him, he could hear cleats pounding. Desperately, he lunged again, and this time he caught it.

Turning, he saw that he was almost surrounded. But out of the corner of his eye, he saw something else. The instant the enemy had spotted the fumble, they had drifted from their defensive positions, hoping that Barney would be bottled.

Slim Jimson was racing down the left sideline, not a man within twenty yards of him. Rusty Ryerson, the right end, was booming down the middle.

Barney Clark ducked as one tackler slammed at him. Then he took two quick steps, rifled the pass with everything he had. The ball soared out toward Slim Jimson, settled into his arms. The Tech safety tried to race over to make the tackle, but Rusty Ryerson was in there with a jolting block. Slim went the rest of the distance without a hand being laid upon him.

An instant later, Sammy Layne booted the placement and it was 13 to 7 against the *Indians*. The team was jubilant. They gathered around Barney, pounded his back.

Tex Pinkerton said, "We'll never be able to get away with that one again. And they're gonna be rugged the rest of the

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way in. But I'll tell you this much—we'll hold 'em. It's up to you to ram over another score."

The Tech club, sorely wounded by the tricky score, came banging back. But the Indians gave ground stubbornly. Time and again, Tex Pinkerton or Sammy Layne dragged down the ball carrier as he was breaking through the line and into the secondary. Time and again, Slim Jimson would race in from end to break up plays before they could unwind.

But the Tech club had power and kept racking up first downs. Then they were inside the ten-yard line with first and goal to go. Three times they smashed. And three times they failed to gain. On fourth down, they set up for a placement. But Mike Majeski smashed through, blocked the attempt. And Slim Jimson dropped on it for the recovery.

Barney went to work. He opened with a wide end sweep that was good for eight and another bump on his head. But he got up, shook himself, and tried it again. This time, it was good for three and a first down.

A PASS to Slim hit for six. But a quarterback sneak lost four. A spinner was stopped cold and Barney dropped back to kick again. This time, he kicked for the sideline, sent the ball out of bounds on the enemy forty.

Again, the battle of lines was begun. Again, the Indians gave ground grudgingly, only to hold once their ten-yard line had been breached. Tech sent in fresh reserves. But Doc Mabry left his varsity in, willing to go down with them.

The third period found no more scoring. It was still 13 to 7 against the Indians as the teams changed goals. Barney Clark knew that his Indians were slowing down. He decided to gamble again, to play for a break. When the Indians got the ball again, Barney kicked on first down. He kicked away from the Tech safety man, hoping the man would fumble, hoping for a recovery, deep in Tech territory.

But it was not to be. Tech did not fumble. Not that time, nor the next three times Barney kicked on first down. And suddenly, Barney knew that his gamble was not paying off. The clock was mov-

ing toward zero. And the enemy was driving.

The Indians tried to stem the drive. But it kept adding up yardage. At one minute, the enemy was on the ten. The Indians shifted to an eight man line. Somehow, they stopped the drive short of its mark. At fourth and three, Bill Coyle crashed through to spill the ball carrier. The Indians had taken over. But the clock said thirteen seconds.

Barney called time. Grimly, he said, "They've stopped us every time we've tried to run it. They know I won't use Benny Branson, because Benny hasn't been clicking..."

Benny Branson, who had taken over Bronco's spot, looked up dolefully. "You needn't rub it in," he said.

Barney grinned. "You've lost a lot of yardage today. But you've got one slim chance to be a hero. We've got time for one more play and they're expecting a pass. You're the last man they'd figure on carrying the ball."

The sub fullback turned pale. A few of the others started to protest. But Barney cut them off. "It's our only chance," he said. "And it's not a very good one. R-38 is the play. Let's go."

The Indians lined up and the stands grew quiet. Barney got the ball from center. He hid it with his body, handed it to the sub fullback. At the same time, he began to fade back. Half the Tech line came after him. Then, at the last minute, he turned around, revealed that the ball was not in his possession. At the same time, he began to circle wide around the end.

Upfield, Benny Branson had broken through, with Tex Pinkerton shielding him. But now the enemy discovered him, took out after him. Barney Clark was far out to the right, far behind the play. But no one was paying any attention to him.

He watched a tackler hit the sub fullback hard. But Benny was inspired, shook away. Another tackler came in. But at that instant, the sub fullback whirled and tossed a long backward pass to Barney who was trailing the play.

For an instant, Barney thought he couldn't reach it. But one last desperate dive and he had his fingers on it, held it.



He broke stride, staggered, then recovered. He was on the sideline, now, crossing the thirty. He raced straight ahead to the fifty before the Tech safety man caught up with him. The man slammed into Barney's side and his arms went around Barney's legs. But the *Indian* quarterback spun desperately, banged his stiffarm, twisted, then broke free. The gun sounded as he crossed the enemy forty. But it didn't matter. He was loose and he was opening up a gap. He went over as the fans sat in stunned silence...

The score was tied. But the Indians still had a chance to finish it right. They lined up slowly, made ready for the attempt at conversion. The ball came back and it was a bad pass. Barney reached for it, pulled it down.

He touched it to earth and Sammy Layne rushed in, leg swinging. But the kick was hurried. It went wide of the mark and the game was ended in a tie.

Ed Travis came back from center, his face sober. "I . . . I'm sorry I cheesed the pass," he began. "I . . .

Barney looked down at Ed's left hand, swollen to almost twice its normal size. "Forget it," he said. "A tie today is better than a loss. If we win the rest, then take the Raiders, we can still win the conference title . . ."

"That's a lot of wishing," Ed Travis said.

Barney's eyes were bleak. "Yeah," he said softly, "it is."

# VIII

**F**OLLOWING the tie with Tech, the Indians limped home to try to get in shape for the big non-conference game against the nearby Marine base, a classy service team.

They got in early Sunday morning and when Barney reached his room, he found a note on the door. He frowned as he read: "Call operator 31 at Mulvane."

Wearily, he placed the call. A few moments later, he heard a girl's voice on the wire. It sounded strained, worried. Barney—I've been sitting here since midnight waiting for your call."

Barney said, "We didn't leave until eleven last night."

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Janet's voice softened. "I heard the game over the radio. It was wonderful."

He said, "But it was still a tie. We wanted a win."

"What matter?" the girl asked. "You're still undefeated. If you beat the Raiders, you'll still win the title."

He sensed the urgency in her voice. "Look, baby," he said. "You didn't sit up all night just to tell me all that. What gives?"

"I—I was getting to that." There was a short pause. Then the girl's voice came in a rush. "I know why Pete Carradine is so desperate to keep his applecart from being upset. I know why he'll do most anything to keep winning."

"What're you waiting for?" Barney demanded.

The girl said, "Pete's also director of athletics. Remember? He handles the ticket arrangement for home games. Each game, he has a block of one thousand tickets set aside for Very Important People who turn up at the last minute and need tickets."

Barney frowned. "So what? Almost every school operates that way. I don't see."

"Yesterday," the girl said, "I put on my colored glasses and I bought ten tickets from the scalpers outside the Raider stadium. They cost me thirty dollars apiece. And darling, six of those ten tickets were in the section that Pete Carradine keeps reserved for important visitors!"

When the full impact of what the girl had told him hit Barney, his head began to spin. If Pete Carradine was holding out at least four hundred tickets from the thousand, his profits would run to ten thousand dollars per game.

And so long as the *Raiders* kept winning, the demand for tickets would keep growing. It was the old law of supply and demand. But let the *Raiders* get knocked off by a team of breather boys and their aura of invincibility would be shattered. This would lessen the desire of the fans to see future *Raider* games. It would knock the props out from under the asking price for scalped tickets. And it would also bestir the alumnae boys who, at the moment were being lulled by the long *Raider* winning streak.

Then, suddenly, Barney Clark thought

of something. His skin began to crawl. He said, "Janet—how'd you get onto it?"

"You always told me I had a way with people," the girl said. "Besides, I like to play girl detective!"

"Listen," he said desperately. "Take it easy, will you? When Pete Carradine's playing for those stakes, he won't stop at anything. I know . . ."

The girl said, "Yes, and so do I." She took a deep breath. "Barney, I hear father getting up. I can't talk much longer. But right now, I can tell you this much. Pete Carradine knows that you're trying to show him up for what he really is. And he's worried. Be careful, Barney. And whatever you do . . . don't go out alone. Stay with the boys on the team. Get a couple of room mates, if you have to. But don't let yourself be caught alone!"

"Carradine's crazy," Barney said. "But not *that* crazy . . ."

"Read Zeke Lawford's column," the girl said urgently. "I think you'll see what I mean. And in the meantime, don't worry. I . . . I have a plan that will solve everything . . ."

Barney said, "I think you told me about it. The plan that if it backfires, I'll wind up a corpse, and you a spinster . . ."

Suddenly, the wire went dead. Barney sat there, staring at the black mouthpiece of the phone, an uneasy frown upon his dark face. Then he remembered what the girl had told him. He sighed, then walked out of his room toward the nearby drug store. The Sunday papers were stacked out in front. Barney dropped a dime, picked up the Mulvane paper, opened it to the sports page.

What he saw there, in Zeke Lawford's column, made his hair go prickly. He read one significant line: ". . . and the way we hear it, fans everywhere, are so incensed by Barney Clark's attack upon the good name of Pete Carradine, that it wouldn't be at all surprising to see a gang of them rise up to put Clark in his place."

**D**URING the rest of the week, Barney Clark was on his toes. He moved into a larger room, invited Bronc Bestor and Sammy Layne to share it with him. He wasn't afraid exactly. But he wanted to be ready for the opening kickoff when



the *Indians* met the *Raiders*. And Janet had warned him.

That was an angle that wasn't too hard to figure. Janet had told her father that she was through with Barney. And since Andrew Hawley and Pete Carradine were friendly, the word had probably carried to Pete. Thus, it was quite possible that the girl had wormed her way into Pete's confidence and that one of her carefully calculated, but seemingly innocent remarks, had drawn some kind of admission from Pete as to what was stirring. If so, it further bothered Barney. For he sensed that Janet Hawley was playing with dynamite. But he was afraid to try to talk to her again, for fear he would upset whatever plans she had made.

Then he tried to forget everything but the Marine game ahead. It wasn't important in the conference standings. But Barney wanted the win to preserve the Indian record.

And the Indians got it.

They met the strongly rated Marines on a muddy field. They were outweighed and outmanned. But Barney Clark adopted the policy of kicking on first down, waiting for a break. The *Marines* fumbled three times and the *Indians* capitalized on one of them. Sammy Layne recovered a fumbled punt on the Marine three. And on the next play, Barney drifted around right end for a score. Meanwhile, the *Indians* held every time the Marines penetrated their ten yard line and they won a hard fought ball game, 6 to 0.

When the game was over, the City College fans swarmed down onto the field. And among them, were several gentlemen of the press. Zeke Lawford, too.

Zeke said, "How about it, Clark? Any of the fans made any moves against you for the crack at Pete Carradine?"

Barney's temper flared. "What're you trying to do, Zeke? Set the stage?"

Zeke shrugged, then moved away. Barney watched him leave. He wasn't fooled by Zeke's appearance. The man knew football and he hadn't come here today just to get column material. He had come to see what he could learn about the *Indian* offense. And from what he had seen, he had no cause to be happy.

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Once again, following the victory over the Marines, the City College campus began to seethe with victory talk. And the talk grew sharper when the Indians ran wild against the Highland Mountaineers, to rack up another win. The score was 21 to 3 and Barney Clark racked up three runs of more than fifty yards to lead the attack.

ONE more big game remained before the season finale against the Raiders. It was the *Indians* against State.

During the first half, the *Indians* were jumpy and one of Sammy Layne's fumbles set up a State touchdown. The try for goal, however, was blocked.

In the second half, they settled down. But State held them whenever they came within striking distance of the goal line. The third quarter ebbed away. Then ten minutes of the fourth. For Barney Clark, it was beginning to look like curtains. But suddenly, a cry went up from the Indian fans as a big, grinning guy came lumbering out onto the field. It was Bronc Bestor, whose knee was still taped.

They had the ball on their own thirty. The Staters knew that both Barney and Sammy Layne were too light to hit the line repeatedly. Thus, they had been able to spread their defenses. But Bronc Bestor would change the complexion of things.

On the next play Barney fainted to Bronc, then whirled around, faded back. Slim Jimson cut out into the flat where the roving fullback had been playing. Barney cocked his arm, rifled a bullet pass that hit Slim on the hands. Slim ducked and squirmed to the fifty. And up in the stands, the Indian fans were going wild.

Once again the Staters shifted their defense, weakening the line to protect against passes. So it was Bronc over the middle again, this time on a delayed buck. And it was a first and ten.

From the bench came a flock of fresh State substitutes, with new instructions. But before they could get acclimated, Barney Clark pitched a lateral to Sammy Layne. Sammy had good blocking from Tex Pinkerton and he was chased out of bounds on the enemy thirty-eight.

The Indians were moving. They were moving as they had been designed to move.

Their backfield was well balanced again. They had Bronc to smack the line, as a diversionary threat for their big gun, Barney Clark.

Barney gave it to Bronc. The play went for three. He made a quick sneak through the middle, picked up eight. Then it was Bronc Bestor, four times in a row, and the Indians were knocking at the gate.

In desperation, the Staters condensed their line to hold off the attack. And when Barney caught the move, he faded all the way back to his twenty, feinted a pass at Slim Jimson, then turned and rifled a sharp one to Sammy Layne who was all by himself in the far corner of the end zone. It was a perfect pass and the score was tied at 6 all.

An instant later, Sammy Layne connected with a placement to move the *Indians* into a 7 to 6 lead. The clock showed one minute left. That's all they needed . . .

## IX

AS the big game against the Raiders approached, Barney Clark had the uneasy feeling that he was being followed, that all of his moves were being watched. But he never let himself be alone for a single moment and nothing happened.

On the day before Thanksgiving, the Indians took the short train trip to Mulvane. That night, Barney didn't even leave the hotel. He ate a late meal, bought a Mulvane paper, then went back upstairs with his room mates.

Opening the paper, he turned to Zeke Lawford's column. As he read he began to frown. Zeke had written:

"... and the rumor still persists that Barney Clark, having attacked the integrity of the Raider football coach, is now fearful of what will happen once he goes into the game against the incensed Raiders. This writer offers a long shot bet that at the last minute, Clark might be so green with fear that he'll find some way to sit this big one out. Meanwhile, Pete Carradine has warned his squad that he will jerk the first man who plays anything but clean, hard football . . ."

Barney Clark found cause to worry after reading that paragraph. Too much importance was being attached to the crack he'd made about Pete Carradine. And he sensed Zeke Lawford's angle. Zeke was



simply preparing the stage for something. If Barney failed to show up for the game it would be simple to say that he'd gotten scared, that he'd run out. That night before going to bed, Barney Clark put a chair against the door.

From the beginning, Barney had wanted to give Pete Carradine a chance to move in against him. But Janet had talked him out of it. He began to wish, now that he had gone ahead with his own plans instead of following Janet's lead. But it was too late to turn back. He would have to trust her.

Daylight found the chair still in its accustomed place. And as Barney returned to the room after a late breakfast, the daylight did much to dispell his feeling of impending disaster.

Once Pop stuck his head into the room. He said, "You okay, Barney?" were starting downstairs for lunch, the "Yeah," Barney said. "Don't be so jumpy!"

At noon, just as Barney and his pals phone rang. A feeling of premonition gripped Barney as he picked up the phone. "Six thirty two," Barney said guardedly.

"Barney." It was Janet Hawley's voice and she sounded breathless. "Listen carefully, darling. I've got to see you at once."

His temples began to pound. "I'm listening," he said.

"I—I'm at my home, Barney. Come on out. And darling, whatever happens, don't worry. It's all a part of my plan. Good-bye for now. And Barney, be sure to come alone!"

"Wait a minute!" Barney shouted. But his shout was in vain. For the wire was dead.

He stood there, his breath coming fast. For weeks he had been careful never to be alone. Now, however, Janet had stipulated that he come alone. He began to perspire. He knew, that this was it. Janet's trap was ready. But would Pete Carradine spring it?

He looked at Sammy Layne and he said, "I'm going out for awhile. I may not be back for an hour or so. But don't worry . . ."

Sammy looked at him, grinned wryly.

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"This ain't the runout that Zeke Lawford has been forecasting, is it?"

"Nuts," Barney muttered.

Barney went downstairs by the back elevator. He moved through the lobby, saw no one he recognized. He pulled his hat low over his face, stepped out to the curb. A car eased up before him and the cardboard sign against the windshield proclaimed it to be a taxi. The driver appeared half asleep.

Barney eased in beside the driver and said, "Andrew Hawley's place. On the double."

The driver nodded, eased away from the curb. He drove down the all but deserted one-way street, taking his time. Suddenly he glanced into the rear vision mirror, stiffened. Almost at once, he jammed the accelerator down hard. Just ahead, the light at the intersection was turning amber. The taxi plunged through the changing light. Then the heavy traffic began to flow up the boulevard as the light turned. Barney whirled around. He saw the roadster that had been following him. Back of the windshield, he recognized the frantic face of a girl with red gold hair, and the blurred outline of a man beside her, as the roadster was cut off by the quick flow of traffic.

Barney turned to the driver. "What is this?" he demanded, his pulse pounding.

THE driver reached for the cardboard sign on the windshield, took it down. "It ain't no taxi, bub," he said grinning. Quickly, he drove through another light on the one way street, then turned off into a side street where the traffic was heavier.

From the back seat, there came a shuffling movement. Barney whirled. A man had been hiding behind the seat. Barney had no time to duck. The flat palm hit him against the side of the neck.

Blackness swirled before his eyes. Through a dizzy mist he saw that the man was big and blond. The same guy who called himself Ike Malone, the time he'd showed up at City College.

Barney's next impression was one of being whirled around in a vacuum, of dizziness, of an intensely aching head. Then he opened his eyes. At first, he thought that he was in darkness. But as his eyes became accustomed to the surroundings, he

saw that he was in a small, bare room. The walls were of unplastered cement. There were three small windows, all of them curtained by heavy blankets. A finger of light crept in under the bottom of one blanket and the wind rustled it. There were several empty packing cases around and Barney realized that he was in some kind of deserted warehouse.

He was lying down and as he started to move, he made another discovery. His arms were tied behind him and his legs were also bound. With an effort, Barney twisted his head around. Two men were watching him from atop a packing box. One was the so-called taxi driver. The other was a man Barney knew only as Ike Malone.

Ike Malone said, "Our pal seems to be awake, Al."

"Yeah," Al said. "He does at that."

Barney said, "What'll this get you?"

"What do you think?" Ike Malone said, grinning.

"About twenty years," Barney suggested.

"Funny boy," Ike Malone said. Then he turned to Al, his taxi-driving compatriot. "Imagine it," he said. "For three weeks, we wait for him to get off alone. And right when we figure we'll have to find some way to go into that hotel to get him, he walks right into our arms. Nice, huh?"

Suddenly, Barney Clark had a queer feeling. He sensed that he knew Janet's plan, now. And he knew, too, where her plan had backfired.

Barney groaned. This was his reward for trusting Janet. Her heart was in the right place, but he should have known that her plan might boomerang as it had done now. Before long—if it hadn't already—a game would be starting. And Barney Clark would not be among those present.

He said, "Just what are you bananas planning?"

"Nothing," Ike Malone grinned. "We'll just keep you until the game is over. Then you'll be turned loose. I think the fans will be ready to believe that you staged a runout."

Suddenly, Ike Malone stopped talking. The blanket over one of the windows had moved. Ike whirled frantically, pointed.



Al slipped over to the window, jerked the blanket aside. There, framed in the open window was a tall, skinny old man with surprise written all over him.

"Pop," Barney warned. "Watch out!"

But Pop was too slow. Al reached, grabbed the old man, hauled him bodily over the low sill. He backhanded Pop across the mouth while Barney frantically strained at the bonds that held him. Pop was driven back against the wall, stood there, dazedly.

"Where'd you come from?" Ike Malone demanded threateningly.

Pop shrugged. "I . . . I seen the cab parked outside the hotel. But it was turnin' away passengers. It looked phony to me. I had the idea maybe you were waitin' for Barney to show . . ."

"Then what?" Ike Malone demanded, menacingly.

"So I rented me a car," Pop said. "And I drove it up to the end of the one-way street where I knew you'd have to turn off. And when you come by, with Barney in the front seat, I lit in after you. But you were too busy lookin' for someone else to pay any attention to me . . ."

Ike Malone looked at Al, began to frown. "This kind of changes things. I wasn't figurin' on a witness. Now, if we turn Clark loose, he'll have someone to support his story . . ."

Pop's adam's apple bobbed nervously. "You aimin' to maybe change your plans. Such as seein' to it that I don't talk?"

"You got a better suggestion?" Ike Malone muttered.

Pop said, "Pete Carradine wouldn't like it. He wouldn't want to go *that* far, now would he?"

"Just what do you know about Pete Carradine?" Ike Malone demanded.

Pop said, "Lots of things. About his little racket of scalpin' tickets, for instance. And how he uses a part of the dough to pay the salaries of goons like you."

**I**KE Malone's face showed complete surprise. But so, too, did Barney Clark's. Something was buzzing at the edge of his mind, as persistent as a mosquito. This was information that Pop wasn't supposed to have. Yet he had it. Barney Clark's temples began to beat like kettle drums,

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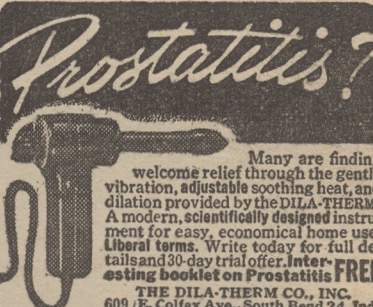
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for suddenly he thought he knew . . .

He said, "Ike, you were figurin' on lettin' me go. But now, you can't very well, because of Pop. What do you plan to do with us? Put us in the car that Pop rented, then shove it off a cliff someplace?"

Ike Malone's eyes were narrowed. "It's an idea," he said.

Barney said, "Doesn't it occur to you that you can get Pete Carradine into a lot of trouble—forgetting about yourself, of course."

"Listen," Ike roared. "If Pete couldn't trust me, he wouldn't have sent me, would he?"

Barney said, "Something tells me, pal, that you've just put your foot right in the old bucket!"

Pop was grinning. "Me, too!"

Ike Malone jerked convulsively. "Just what're you drivin' at?" he demanded with fear in his eyes.

Pop said, "Well, when I seen you drive in here, I figured you'd stay awhile. So I went hell bent for the police. And who's there but Janet and Andy Hawley. Seems Janet had it all doped out that you'd move in on Barney, once he got alone. So she phoned him to give you a clean shot at him. But you shook her off in traffic. So she went to the cops for help."

Ike and Al exchanged significant glances. Then Al said, "You're tryin' to kid us, Pop . . ."

"On the way over here," Pop said, chuckling, "we planned it. Me, Janet, her old man and the cops. My job was to come snoopin', to get caught. And after I got in here, I was supposed to pump you dry, which, by ding-ding, I reckon I done."

"You're just shootin' off your face, Pop." Ike Malone was talking loudly, but his words lacked conviction.

Then, suddenly, the blankets disappeared from three windows and into the room swarmed a flurry of guys with big feet and cannons in their fists.

Ike Malone made a leap for the door, but something caught him over the back of his ear. He went down on his knees, shook his head, then began to blubber. "Get me a lawyer. I ain't talkin' until I see my lawyer."

Then Barney was looking at Janet. At

the slender dignified and very red faced man beside her. Janet moved toward him, her eyes bright.

"We haven't got much time," she said. "You've got to get there in a hurry if you expect to start the game." She turned to the man beside her. "Wouldn't you say so, father?"

Andrew Hawley swallowed hard and his face was almost purple, now. He said, "At the moment, I could say ten thousand words and they'd be inadequate. But to condense it, I'm telling you this much, Barney: Get out there and try to win yourself a ball game. You've got a lot to make up for."

They had taken Al and Ike out to a squad car. But one of the cops had remained. Barney was puzzled. He said, "With Pete Carradine out of there, the Raiders shouldn't be too much of a puzzle. Pete does their thinking for them. But somehow, that'll take a lot of joy out of it for me."

"Just what do you mean?" Andrew Hawley demanded slowly.

Barney said, "Tomorrow, a lot of people are going to know Pete Carradine for the louse he is. But right now, they don't know; nor does Pete realize what's about to happen to him. I've been looking forward to this game for a long time. If I can't help beat Pete Carradine's club today, with him in there coaching, I'll never get another chance . . ."

Andrew Hawley's eyes brightened. "I think I see your point." He turned to the cop. "So long as you know where to find Carradine, why not hold off until after the game?"

"Why Not?" the cop echoed. "And now, if you want a quick ride over to the stadium . . ."

Pop said, "I'll go too."

Barney grinned at him. "You might as well. You've been following me for at least a month. I underestimated you, Pop."

"Well, I'll be ding-dinged," Pop said. "And all the time, I figured you knew I was takin' care of you." His faded eyes beamed.

Barney turned, looked sternly at Janet. When he spoke, his voice was acid tinged. "As a matter of fact," he said pointedly, "I thought Janet was taking care of me."



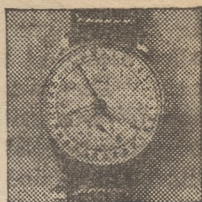
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## X

THE team had taken the field when Barney got to the stadium. Doc Mabry looked at him, sank slowly to the bench. "They were beginnin' to say you skipped," Doc said. "And I was darned near ready to believe 'em."

Barney explained a lot of things as he changed clothes. Then he said, "We could get Pete Carradine out of there and it would make it easier for us to win . . ."

"The hell with that," Doc muttered. "I want him in there. You're not the only guy who wants to humiliate him."

Barney said, "I can't wait to see his face when I get out there. He'll wonder what happened, but he'll be afraid to ask."

Barney and Doc went out. A low buzzing began to go through the stands. The referee spotted them, waved them toward the center of the field. Then he turned, waved to Pete Carradine and the captain of the *Raider* team. The five men met in the center.

Pete Carradine was a big man, tall and solidly built. He looked at Barney, his eyes puzzled at first, then hard. If he was upset, he covered himself well.

The referee said, "Now there have been some hard feelings because of a few cracks that have been made." He was looking squarely at Barney as he spoke. "I don't want any trouble."

Pete turned, spoke to his own captain. "I want you fellows to forget anything detrimental that has been said against me. I want a clean game. I want the fans to see that college spirit, infused into a team of free men, is the most powerful force in sports . . ."

Barney said, "Shall we have the benediction now? The sermon seems to be over."

Pete Carradine's eyes held mute appeal as he looked piously at the referee. "I think you see why I didn't want him on my team."

Doc Mabry said, "If you don't get off that soap box, Carradine, you're gonna be wearin' that nose on the back of your head."

"Just like I was tellin' my wife last night," the referee said acidly. "I don't stay in this racket for the money, but because it gets me out in the open air where

it's calm, peaceful and serene. Now shut up, all of you. And the first time I see anything funny goin' on, I'm gonna signal the dressing room to get the water hot. Okay. Call the coin, City College."

Barney said, "Heads," and it was. Then, "We'll kick."

The teams lined up. The fans in the stands at the end zone began to ride Barney hard. But he could expect nothing else. Zeke Lawford had subtly kept them inflamed against him. Barney had attacked the sanctified name of Pete Carradine, Mr. Football, and Zeke had not let them forget it . . .

The kick went deep, but the Raiders brought it back to their own thirty-five before Tex Pinkerton could make the tackle. The Raiders were big, they were well coached, and they had a tricky offensive that was compounded of part razzle-dazzle and part power.

They opened with a spinner. The ball was well hidden behind a screen of interference. Then the hole in the line widened and the play poured through. Bronc Bestor had to move in from behind to make the stop on the forty-seven. It was first and ten and the Raiders were moving.

The *Raider* fullback dropped back and Barney moved up closer, expecting a pass. When the ball went to the short man, he was sure of it. Both Raider ends were driving down and he moved closer to them. A backfield lateral went to the fullback who took one step, then sent a low punt booming far over Barney Clark's head.

Barney whirled, raced back. The ball hit on the twenty, skittered crazily. Back of him, he could hear the Raider ends digging toward him. At the ten, Barney made a stab at the ball. He was balancing it on his left hand, trying desperately to make the turn back upfield when the first man hit him. It was a smashing tackle, one that drove him down hard. A shoulder rammed into the small of his back, then the ball squirted away from him. He reached for it, but was pinned. The remaining Raider end dropped on it for the recovery. It was the Raiders again, thanks to a quick kick, and it was first and goal on the seven.

The Raider fans were screaming for a touchdown and the Raiders didn't disap-



point them. They bunched their power through the center. Three times they hit the line hard. The third time, they powered it over. And in the process, they sent right tackle Lon Decker to the sidelines with a deep cut over the eye.

The conversion followed. It was 7 to 0 for the Raiders. Barney Clark felt partially responsible. He'd gambled on being able to recover the bounding punt, but the Raiders had outmaneuvered him.

The Raiders kicked and Barney took it on the goal line. He followed his interference to the twenty, then it melted under the wave of enemy jerseys. A man flung himself at Barney. He whirled, twisted away. But three others slammed into him, drove him down. His head hit first, then the weight of the tacklers smashed down upon him.

**A** GAIN, Barney called signals. This time, he took the ball, faded. He went back deeper, deeper, searching for an eligible receiver. Slim Jimson was racing up the left sideline and Barney drew a bead. But even as he threw, the Raider safety ran over. The two men went into the air together, but it was the Raider who brought the ball down, who raced it back to the Indian twenty before Bronc Bestor dropped him. And on the play, another Indian lineman, Curly Logan, went out of the ball game, this time with an injured leg.

The Raiders banged the center, but Ed Travis spilled the play from behind, held it to a two yard gain. A pass followed, but Tex Pinkerton knocked it down. On an end around, Bronc Bestor slammed into the enemy ball carrier, dropped him three yards back of the scrimmage line. It was fourth and eleven and the Raiders were in the middle of the field.

They set the play for a field goal attempt. Barney was half looking for a fake. But the ball went booming above the frantically outstretched hands of the Indian blockers. Barney stood helplessly by as the placement split the uprights. The Raiders were now leading by a big 10 to 0 score.

When the half ended, the Indians limped off, battered, bruised, but not beaten. They moved quietly into their dressing room, took seats on benches. Two

trainers went quickly to work tending to their bruises and injuries.

Doc Mabry stood watching them. Softly, he began to speak. "For years," he said, "I've always contended that a footballer was a footballer, whether he was being paid, or whether he was playing just for the hell of it. Now, however, I'm beginnin' to wonder. . ." Doc looked at Barney. He said, "Tell 'em your story, Barney. . ."

So Barney Clark told them. He told them about the dirty deal he had gotten from Pete Carradine. And of the attempt that Pete had made to get him out of there today.

"Even if they put Pete in the sneezer for twenty years," Barney concluded, "a lot of people will say that he had the right idea—that to give a school a winner, you've got to dig up your men from every section of the country, then pay 'em. It'll give coaches an idea. The only thing that can prevent all that is for us to get out there and show the world that a team of breather boys can be just as sharp as a Carradine coached team."

The Indians listened attentively. Tex Pinkerton looked up. He said, "I told you once I've got a wife and kid. I'm tryin' to protect 'em. But believe me, during this second half, I'm gonna play as if I had no responsibilities at all. And if they have to cart me off on a stretcher, it's something I can worry about later."

Barney studied the faces. He saw the same grim intent in the eyes of all of them. "Just one more thing," he said. "They have tried to carve us down to size. During this last half, we're going to have to shoot the works. We'll have to gamble. In the end, it may cost us the ball game. But it's our only chance. . ."

As the third quarter opened, both sides failed to gain during the first five minutes. They exchanged kicks, but no advantage was apparent. On the fourth down, Barney dropped back to his own twenty yard line to kick.

Barney had every intention of kicking. But as he caught the ball, he saw his ends drive down toward the Raider safety man. An impulse hit him. Slim Jimson was running wide, far outside the play. Slim glanced back to see if Barney was getting the kick away. Barney screamed Slim's



name, saw the startled end check his stride. Then, as enemy tacklers swarmed in around him, he cocked his arm, fired a long pass.

Slim's grin was from ear to ear as he gathered in the ball. Rusty Ryerson, the other end, cut over sharply. He got the safety man with a crashing body block and suddenly, Slim was out in the open. He pounded over standing up and the Raider fans sat stunned and unmoving.

As Barney raced up, Slim looked at him. "That," he said, "was the dumbest piece of quarterbacking I've ever seen." Then Slim grinned again. "But we forgive you, since it worked."

The Indians lined up for the conversion. With Barney holding, Sammy Layne boot-ed a perfect one. The score changed again. It was Raiders, 10; Indians, 7.

A new team came in for the Raiders. And it was soon evident that they were under instructions from the bench. They concentrated on Barney Clark. Once, Barney went down under a crashing tackle, a knee in his back, a heavy body upon his head chopping fist into the side of his face. It was too flagrant for the officials to miss. They banished the offending player, racked up a fifteen yard penalty against the Raiders.

The Raider crowd began to boo as the banished player left the field, for even the crowd had noted it. The Indians had the ball on their own forty three.

Again, Barney called the same play. A delayed sneak over tackle. Again he broke into the enemy secondary. But two men came at him, one from either side. They hit him, one high, the other low. And as they went down in a pile, two others leaped onto him, knees driving. Barney felt agonizing pain as the field began to sway before his vision. But some how, he managed to hold to the ball. The referee reached down, helped him up. He was groggy. Then the referee turned to one of the offending players, waved him off the field. The crowd, thoroughly aroused, now, stood up, began to boo again. The referee walked over to the Raider bench. He said, grimly, "Carradine. . . if you can't control these guys, I can. I'll bench 'em as fast as they keep pullin' stuff like that. . ."

THE penalty took the ball to the enemy thirty five. Barney was weary. But something was blazing inside of him. He lined up his team, called the play.

The ball shot back to Barney. He turned, pitched a lateral to Bronc, then drove through a hole in the line. Barney feinted a block at a defending halfback, then cut out to the right. Turning, he looked over his shoulder and the ball was waiting. He pulled it down, kept going.

A Raider halfback drove at him. Barney whirled, kicked hard, broke free. Then it was the safety man and Barney gave him a leg, jerked it away, spun once more and shook loose. He sprinted over an instant later and the Indians were out in front.

The goal attempt was good and the score went to 14 to 10.

The Raiders began to wilt. Barney glanced toward the bench. Two beefy men in civilian clothes had eased behind it, one on either side of a long faced Pete Carradine.

The game was a rout from then on. When ended, the Indians were leading 27 to 10 and the Raider fans were cheering them on.

The fans swarmed down onto the field. They lifted Barney Clark, paraded him around. Finally, he was beside his girl. Janet's eyes were brimming. She nodded toward the ramp, where two plain clothesmen were escorting Pete Carradine away.

Janet said, "You see, darling. My plan worked perfectly. And you tried to tell me I wasn't a girl detective. . ."

Pop was standing there, too. Pop whose fast thinking had been responsible for everything. He looked owlishly at Barney, winked.

Barney glanced at the heavens. "You hear that?" he demanded. "Now what're you going to do with a crazy woman like that?"

Janet said, brightly, "You might marry her, darling, if you think she needs protection."

Pop said, "Maybe, sonny, she ain't as nutty as you thought. You oughta take her up on that."

Barney looked at Andrew Hawley, who seemed very satisfied with himself. "Maybe," he said, grinning, "I oughta."



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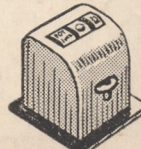
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