

**3 ACTION-PACKED NOVELETS**

# **SPORTS FICTION**

SEPT.

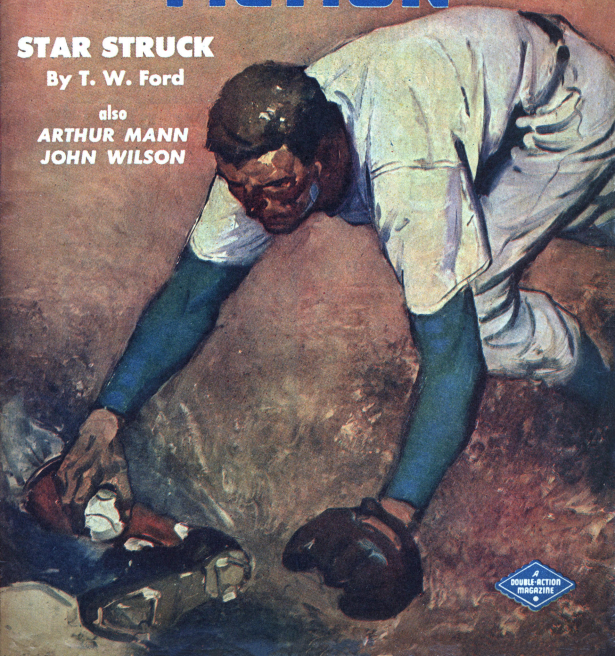
15¢

## **STAR STRUCK**

By T. W. Ford

also

**ARTHUR MANN  
JOHN WILSON**



# BE PROTECTED

*in case of*

## SICKNESS OR ACCIDENT

NEW SECURITY PLAN  
*Pays* HOSPITAL &  
 DOCTOR BILLS

SAFEGUARDS  
 ENTIRE FAMILY  
*for only*

**3**¢ **A DAY**  
 1½¢ FOR CHILDREN

**ANY HOSPITAL IN U. S.**  
**CHOOSE YOUR OWN DOCTOR**

It's New! It's Different! It's a real Security Plan . . . designed to give you the Protection you'll really need in case of Hospital confinement for sickness or accident. When misfortune strikes, you may go to any Hospital in the U. S. or Canada under any Doctor's care. WE PAY YOUR EXPENSES in full accordance with Policy provisions. You are assured of expert care and medical attention . . . without any worries whatever about heavy financial burden.

### Individual or Family Eligible

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You are not required to take a medical examination to get North American Hospitalization Protection. Already over 20 million persons in America have enrolled for this valuable kind of coverage . . . proving the practical common sense of protecting your savings from the onslaught of unexpected Hospital and Doctor bills. Send off at once for all the details about this Plan. No obligation. No Agent will call.

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**NORTH AMERICAN MUTUAL INSURANCE CO.**  
 Dept. D7-9, Wilmington, Del.

Please send me, without obligation, details about your "3¢ A Day Hospitalization Insurance Plan."

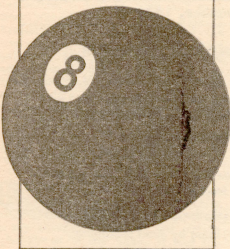
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading Structural Blueprints                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Flight Engineer                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Combustion Engineering                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Postal Service                                      |
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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Present Position \_\_\_\_\_

Working Hours \_\_\_\_\_ A. M. to \_\_\_\_\_ P. M. Length of Service in World War II \_\_\_\_\_

Special tuition rates to members of the Armed Forces. Enrollment under the G.I. Bill of Rights approved for War II Veterans. Canadian residents send coupon to International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Ltd., Montreal, Canada.

# SPORTS FICTION

Contents for September, 1947

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STAR STRUCK . . . (Baseball) . . . By T. W. Ford 10  
*Mel Sellers figured that he should pattern his private life after those of his baseball idols!*

THAT OLD GREY TRAIN (Fight)  
 . . . By John D. MacDonald 26  
*Singer Washburn was too old to fight, but not too old to lend a hand . . .*

BLIND BASKETS (Basketball) . . By Roe Richmond 46  
*Killmartin was winning by dead reckoning!*

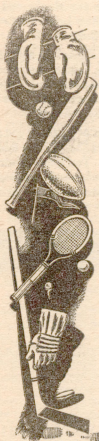
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*The kid could dish it out and take it, but . . .*

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ROBERT W. LOWNDES, Editor

SPORTS FICTION, published quarterly by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, INC., 1 Appleton Street, Holyoke, Mass. Editorial and executive offices at 241 Church Street, New York 13, New York. Application for entry as second class matter pending at the post office at Holyoke, Mass., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies 15c. yearly subscription 50c. Manuscripts must be accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelopes to insure return if not accepted; and while reasonable care is exercised in handling them, they are submitted at author's risk. Printed in U. S. A.

# I WILL SEND YOU BOTH FREE

**NEW 64 PAGE BOOK**

64-page Illustrated book describes many fascinating jobs Radio, Television, Electronics offer, shows big kits of Radio parts I send you, tells how I give you practical experience building real Radio circuits at home in spare time. how you make extra money fixing Radios while still learning; contains letters from many men I trained, telling what they are doing, earning.  
**FREE. Mail Coupon below!**

**SAMPLE RADIO LESSON**

I will also send you my Lesson, "Getting Acquainted With Receiver Servicing," FREE, to show you how practical it is to learn Radio at home in spare time. It's a valuable Lesson. Study it — keep it — use it — without obligation! Tells how "Superhet" Circuits work, gives hints on Receiver Servicing, Locating Defects, Repair of Loudspeaker, I.F. Transformer, etc. 31 Illustrations. Mail Coupon below!



GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH RECEIVER SERVICING



## SEE FOR YOURSELF HOW I TRAIN YOU AT HOME TO BE A RADIO TECHNICIAN

Do you want a good-pay job in the fast-growing Radio Industry—or your own Radio Shop? Mail the Coupon for a Sample Lesson and my 64-page book, "How to Be A Success in Radio — Television, Electronics," both FREE. See how I will train you at home—how you get practical Radio experience building, testing Radio circuits with BIG KITS OF PARTS I send!

### Many Beginners Soon Make Extra Money in Spare Time While Learning

The day you enroll I start sending EXTRA MONEY JOB SHEETS that show how to make EXTRA money fixing neighbors' Radios in spare time while still learning! It's probably easier to get started

now than ever before, because the Radio Repair Business is booming. Trained Radio Technicians also find profitable opportunities in Police, Aviation, Marine Radio, Broadcasting, Radio Manufacturing, Public Address work. Think of even greater opportunities as Television, FM, and Electronics devices become available to the public! Send for FREE books now!

### Find Out What NRI Can Do for You

Mail Coupon for Sample Lesson and my FREE 64-page book. Read the details about my Course; letters from men I trained; see how quickly, easily you can get started. No obligation! Just MAIL COUPON NOW in envelope or paste on penny postal. J. E. Smith, President 13, Dept. 7JAZ, National Radio Institute, Pioneer Home Study Radio School, Washington 9, D. C.

**VETERANS** You can get this training right in your own home under G. I. Bill. MAIL COUPON FOR FULL DETAILS.

### I TRAINED THESE MEN

AVERAGES BETTER THAN \$3,000 A YEAR

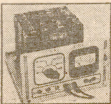
"I now have a shop and am doing fine. I average better than \$3,000 per year, and certainly give NRI much of the credit." — RAYMOND F. DAVIS, Ashburn, Georgia.



MADE \$612 IN 12 MONTHS, SPARE TIME

"Soon after I finished my experimental kits lesson I tackled my first Radio service job. The neighbors were very cooperative. I soon had all the repair jobs I could handle in spare time. I have made \$612 in the past 13 months in spare time." — J. W. CLARK, Wilmington, North Carolina.

### Build Radio Circuits Like These With Kits I Send



### Good for Both FREE

MR. J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 7JAZ  
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Mail me FREE, your sample lesson and 64-page book,  
(No salesman will call. Please write plainly).

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

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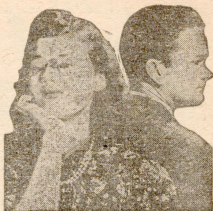
who are suffering the miseries of

# BAD SKIN

### Stop Worrying Now About Pimples and Blackheads

and other externally caused skin troubles

JUST FOLLOW SKIN DOCTOR'S  
SIMPLE DIRECTIONS



**S**QUEEZING pimples or blackheads to get rid of them is a nasty, messy business—but that isn't the worst of it. Because doing so may also be injurious and leave your skin with unsightly, embarrassing blemishes. There is, now, a much easier, safer, cleaner way to help you rid your face of ugly, offensive, externally caused skin troubles. You merely follow a doctor's simple directions.

#### Good-Looking Skin Is Not for Women Only

You—yes, you—can have the same healthy, normal complexion free from externally caused skin troubles simply by giving your skin the special care that handsome screen stars give theirs. There's almost nothing to it—it is just about as easy as washing your face. *The whole secret consists of washing your face in a way that thoroughly cleanses the pores of every last speck of dirt and grime—something that ordinary cleansing may not do.* In fact, examination after examination shows that, usually, it is not a case of "bad skin" so much as a case of incomplete or faulty cleansing. What you should use is a highly concentrated soap like Viderm Skin Cleanser which penetrates the pores and acts as an antiseptic. When followed by a quick application of Viderm Medicated Skin Cream, specks of irritating dirt and grime are quickly washed out, they dissolve and disappear, leaving your skin clean, clear and free of the specks that often bring out pimples, blackheads and other externally-caused skin troubles.

#### It's Foolish to Take Bad Skin for Granted

It doesn't pay to risk marred skin, blotches, blemishes. Your very success in business, love and social life may depend upon your looks. *Handsome and a good appearance usually start with the condition of your skin.* Nobody likes a skin that looks unhealthy, unclear, abused, and marked with blackheads or pimples. **WOMEN ARE ATTRACTED TO MEN WHO HAVE SMOOTH,**

**CLEAR, ROBUST-LOOKING SKIN** Business executives don't choose men who have a poor-looking complexion. Don't take chances with your success in life when this inexpensive Viderm formula may help you.

*Don't murder your skin!* Here's all you have to do to keep it smooth and clear. Use Viderm Skin Cleanser when you wash your face. Rub the rich lather of this highly-concentrated soap on your face for just a few seconds and then rinse it off. Then apply a little Viderm Medicated Skin Cream and that's all there is to it. Viderm Medicated Skin Cream quickly disappears, leaving your skin nice and smooth. This simple treatment, used after shaving, helps heal tiny nicks and cuts, relieves razor-burn and smarting; besides conditioning your skin.

#### Give Your Face This Treat for 7 Days

Stop worrying and being embarrassed over what may happen to your skin. Just send for your Viderm Double Treatment this minute, and be confident that you will keep a smooth and clear complexion. Follow the simple directions, written by a doctor, that you will get with your Viderm Double Treatment; then look in your mirror and listen to your friends admire your smooth, clear skin—the kind that women go for.

Just mail your name and address to The New York Skin Laboratory, 206 Division Street, Dept. 189, New York City 2, New York. By return mail you will receive both

of the Viderm formulas, complete with full directions, and packed in a safety-sealed carton. On delivery, pay two dollars plus postage. If you wish, you can save the postage fee by mailing the two dollars with your letter. Then, if you aren't thrilled with results, your money will be cheerfully refunded. Remember that both of the formulas you use have been fully tested and proven, and are reliable for you. If they don't help you, your treatments cost you nothing. After you have received your Viderm, if you have any questions to ask concerning abused skin, just send them in.

#### DON'T DO THIS!



*Don't murder your skin by squeezing it. Skin is delicate. When you break it, you leave yourself wide open to miseries. It's far easier, far safer, to let the Double Viderm treatment help you enjoy a handsome, clear and blemish-free complexion.*



# THOUSANDS NOW PLAY

## who never thought they could!



### Thrilled by Playing

I've had my lessons just a week. I think your course is super. I am more thrilled than words can express when I found I could actually play American, The Merry Widow Waltz and the others.

\*J. T. Mancoske, Mich.



### Wouldn't Take \$1000 for Course

The lessons are so simple that anyone can understand them. I have learned to play by note in a little more than a month. I wouldn't take a thousand dollars for my course.

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



### Shares Course With Sister

The teaching is so interesting and the pieces so beautiful I couldn't ask for anything better. I recommend your course highly. My sister shares it with me and feels the same way.

\*D. E. G., Wausau, Wis.



### Finding New Joy

I am finding a new joy for that I never experienced before, for I have always wanted to play, but had given up hope until I heard of your course.

\*C. S. Lusica, Okla.



### Plays After 2 Months

I hesitated before sending for your course because of an earlier experience I had with a course by ear from another company. I am playing pieces now I never dreamed I would play after only two months.

\*E. T. Prichard, Ala.

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

## You, too, can play any instrument By this EASY A-B-C Method

**YOU** think it's difficult to learn music? That's what thousands of others have thought! Just like you, they long to play some instrument — the piano, violin, guitar, saxophone or other favorites. But they denied themselves the pleasure — because they thought it took months and years of tedious study to learn.

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And then they made an amazing discovery! They learned about a wonderful way to learn music at home — without a private teacher — without tedious study — and in a surprisingly short time. They wrote to the U. S. School of Music for the facts about this remarkable short-cut method. And the facts opened their eyes! They were amazed to find how easy it was to learn.

The result? Over 850,000 men and women have studied music at home this simple, A-B-C way. Now, all over the world, enthusiastic music-lovers are enjoying the thrilling satisfaction of creating their own music. They have found the key to good time, popularity and profit.

### Costs only few cents a Day

And that's what you can do, right now. Get the proof that you, too, can learn to play your favorite instrument — quickly, easily, in spare

time at home for less than seven cents a day. Never mind if you have no musical knowledge, training or talent. Just read the fascinating booklet and Print and Picture sample that fully explain all about the famous U. S. School method. If interested tear out the coupon now, before you turn the page. U. S. School of Music, 1239 Brunswick Bldg., New York 10, N. Y. Largest school of its kind in the world. (49th year).

### FREE!

Print and Picture Sample

### NOTICE

Please don't confuse our method with any systems claiming to teach "without music" or "by ear." We teach you easily and quickly to play real music, any music, by standard notes... not by any trick or number system.

U. S. SCHOOL OF MUSIC,  
1239 Brunswick Bldg., New York 10, N. Y.

I am interested in music study, particularly in the instrument checked below. Please send me your free illustrated booklet "How to Learn Music at Home," and your free Print and Picture Sample.

Piano	Saxophone	Clarinet	Practical
Guitar	Trumpet, Cornet	Trombone	Finger
Hawaiian	Reed Organ	Flute	Central
Guitar	Tenor Sax	Modern	Piccolo
Violin	Piano Accordion	Elementary	Mandolin
Ukulele		Harmony	

Have you

Name ..... Instrument? .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....

NOTE: If you are under 16 years of age, parent must sign coupon.

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**FOOL YOUR FRIENDS — GIVE YOUR OWN RADIO SHOWS!**

**TALK - SING - PLAY THROUGH YOUR OWN RADIO**

# HOME RADIO MIKE

**ATTACHES  
TO ANY  
RADIO**



ATTACHES TO ANY RADIO. Amaze and mystify your friends by talking about them over your own radio. Create and broadcast shows, commercials and "news flashes." Just flick the button of this professional, studio-type "mike" and you cut in instantly on any program, make believe you are on with big stars. It's loads of fun, and good-training, too! This professional-looking switch-button "mike" comes complete with long insulated cord. Comes complete, ready to attach in minutes.

**\$198**

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Examine, use this wonderful microphone at home, without risk. Send no money. Just name and address. On arrival pay postage, or send \$2.00 with order and save postage. Order today! No C.O.D. outside U.S.A.



Guaranteed to work on any radio.

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City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

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AT LAST! A low priced electric hot water heater... quickly attached to any faucet... guaranteed to give running hot water instantly. Now you can actually have all the hot water you need the instant you need it... from your cold water faucet! Use in the basement, kitchen, garage, bathroom, factory, tourist cabin, store, etc. You regulate the temperature and quantity with your faucet handle. Just plug in any electric faucet and PRESTO—Hot water any time of day or night, as much and as hot as you want. Easy to install or detach, complete with 6 foot extension cord. Order today!

## SEND NO MONEY

Order today. Pay postman \$8.49 plus postage upon arrival, or send \$8.49 and receive postpaid. Guaranteed to give running hot water instantly or purchase price refunded.

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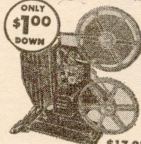
- ☐ Send heater C.O.D. for \$8.49 plus postage.  
☐ Send postpaid. I enclose \$8.49.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ Zone \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIL YOUR ORDERS**

## NOW! SHOW YOUR OWN HOME MOVIES

**16 MM MOVIE PROJECTOR**



**ALL This includes**

- All Metal Construction
- Patented Flickerless Shutter
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- 125 Watt Projection Lamp
- 6 Foot Extension Cord
- 400 Foot Reel Capacity

**\$17.95 COMPLETE**

Here's the professional-type home Movie Projector you've always wanted... complete with all modern improvements! The powerful silent bearing AC motor smoothly projects 400 foot 16mm. reels... projects bright, clear, life-like movies up to 200 feet away! Comes complete with 6-foot insulated extension cord, 400 Foot reel... and features a real built-in condenser and 2-inch focusing lens. Here's a lifetime of fun showing your own home movies, popular sports, comics, newsreels and other special films you can buy or rent.

## SEND ONLY \$1. NOW! RUSH COUPON.

Simply send \$1.00 deposit then pay postman the C.O.D. balance of \$16.95 on arrival. If not completely satisfied you may return the projector within 10 days for full purchase price refund.

ROLEY SALES CO., Inc., Dept. PK-101  
15 Spruce St., New York 7, N. Y.

- ☐ I enclose \$1.00 deposit. Rush my Rokey 16mm Home Movie Projector. On arrival I will pay C.O.D. balance of \$16.95. I must be delighted or may return within 10 days for full purchase refund.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_ ZONE \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_

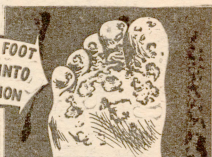
# Don't Neglect Foot Itch

## ATHLETE'S FOOT

... it may become DANGEROUS!



MILD ATHLETES FOOT  
MAY DEVELOP INTO  
SEVERE INFECTION



## PEDILIN - This Wonderful, Tested Discovery

### Paves The Way For New! Improved! Treatments!

Does your Athlete's Foot Itch drive you mad? Does that torturing itch compel you to hopelessly scratch away at your skin . . . only to find you have aggravated the condition? It has been estimated that anywhere from 50% to 90% of the people in this country are affected by this disease sometime during their lives. Now you, too, like thousands of other men and women may use PEDILIN — this amazing, new, scientific treatment for Athlete's Foot. You may not be aware that you are suffering from a mild case of Athlete's Foot at present.

**USE PEDILIN - The New Foot Medicine**

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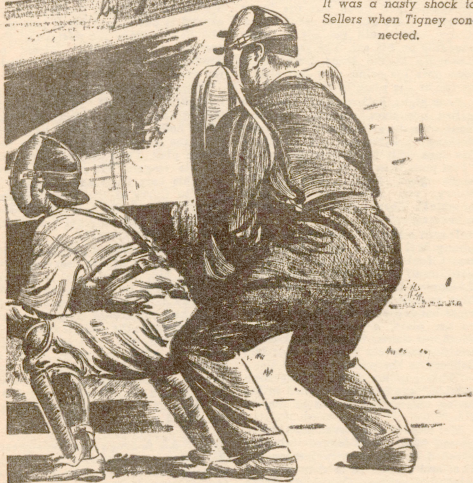
A Powerhouse Baseball Novelet



# STRUCK

by J. W. Ford

It was a nasty shock to Sellers when Tigney connected.



It was a wonderful thing to have a break like this and be playing with the men he'd admired so long — and Mel Sellers figured that what the stars did on the outside was right for him, too!

**Y**OU HAD to have strength down the middle. Mel Sellers had heard some of the old timers quote the famed Muggsy McGraw on that. Strength down the middle. That meant behind the bat, at short and second, and out in center field. Sellers dropped the rosin bag beside the mound, hitched at his pants on his big-boned rangy frame, and thought how lucky he was. With Ding Stoffer behind the bat he had solid defensive strength in that department; and there was the fancy veteran, Flash Curry, at second base. Curry who could get off a throw standing on his ear. The great Duke Lacagnio at the short field berth, was past his prime now but still a terror at the plate in the clutch.

"Aw right, Sellers boy!" Lacagnio called out then, running his bare hand over the crinkly coal-black hair, kicking up little dust puffs back of his legs with those nervous spikes. "Just pour it in there, keed! You got eight guys backin' you.... Don't worry, you didn't get into this trouble!" That last he added with a lowered voice.

It sent a little chill wobbling down young Mel Sellers' spine. Maybe he was a fool to do what he'd done, to get himself into this almost lost game. Lacagnio's last words had been a half hint at disaster, failure. He saw the right-handed pinch hitter moving up to the plate, a righty against his southpaw slants. Stocky, hawk-nosed Stoffer came out and Mel met him halfway to the plate.

"This guy murders anything high outside," the backstop warned in his husky voice. "Break 'em to the inside."

Mel nodded and moved back to the mound with a stiff-legged walk. He checked on the runners jerking off first and second as if they were on leashes of springs. One down. Score 4-4, the Cougars having lost the lead. And his light-hued long eyes switched on out to center field, to the lanky-legged red-headed George "Red" Dern out there. A taciturn man, mercurial in performance, a fly hawk who could snatch a drive practically out of a bleacher fan's teeth on

one of his hot days. There was the final piece of strength down the middle; a guy felt good with that kind of stuff behind him.

Going into the stretch, Mel came around in a sidearm motion snapped a half-speed curve into the plate; it hooked over at the hands for a strike. His next two offerings were balls as the hitter refused to bite. A foul back into the wire. Mel felt the good easy sweat working out of his hide inside his monkey shirt. He wanted to smoke his fireball in there. Stoffer finally okayed it but signed for it low, and Mel Sellers made the mistake of the average rookie hurler afraid of handing out a walk, made it a little too good.

There was the pistol crack of a hit. Lacagnio took off to his right, lunged, shot his glove across in front of his body. It seemed as if he'd flag it on the second hop, inaugurate the double play. Then the ball squirmed off his fingers. He snapped it up with his bare hand and whipped it back to Curry at the keystone; but the split second lost killed the chance of a twin killing, only got the runner at second on a forceout.

"Damn apple took a pebble hop and squinted away at the last moment, dammit, kid," he told Mel in a deep liquid voice as he ran into the mound. "I really didn't boot it! It was a tough try!" And the record would support him afterward; the official scorer had not credited him with an error, it came out after the game. When a shortstop with Duke Lacagnio's rep doesn't get one, they figure it must have been a hit. "Don't sweat, kid! We'll throttle the next guy!" Lacagnio added as he moved back.

**I**T WAS A tough one for a green hurler to swallow. His stomach was jumping now with the dangerous leadoff man facing him. The pinch hitter had gone in for the Bull hurler, and the Bulls believed in their lucky seventh inning. They laid down a verbal barrage as one of Mel Sellers' hooks got away from him and Ding Stoffer had to dive frantically to mitt it.

"Looka the rook blow! There he

goes, the poor busher!...Take a shower on the way back to the sandlots, kid!...Hey, Barnell, you got a boy on a man's job!" they foghorned.

Mel cut his eyes to the Cougar dugout, wondering if the dynamic little firecracker of a Cougar pilot, Pep Barnell, would order an intentional pass. But, no soap. Sock Paspare, dangerous Number Two man of the Bulls, was up next. Besides, the leadoff had yet to connect safely that day. Mel went back to work, slipped over a strike. Another ball. A long foul into the left field stands that paralyzed the kid's heart with a chill. Ding called for an inside pitch to drive the hitter back from the plate. The leadoff man waited till the last instant for it to hook over, then twisted and dropped to a knee, bat still on his shoulder.

That did it, one of those freaks of the game. The fast ball hit his bat, bloopered up over, just over, leaping third baseman Slim Attell's up-flung glove. The runner streaked in from third. Mel raced to the hot corner to hold the runner from first on second, but the tie-breaking run was in. His infield talked it up to steady him. He saw Ding look at the bench for orders, to see if Mel was to be yanked. But Barnell sat calmly fanning himself with a scorecard.

The sensitive Mel figured the skipper was conceding the game, didn't give a hang any more, meant to leave him in to take it. It started the adrenalin shooting through Mel's bloodstream. Angered, he toed the rubber with his toe plate, bore down, and whiffed tough Sock Paspare on five pitches to end the top of the inning.

"Keep that ball behind you, Sellers till you go into the stretch! Then, keep it behind your glove; less they see of it till it comes in the better," snapped Barnell as Mel dropped down into the dugout.

"Don't worry, kid, we'll get it back," Duke Lacagnio assured him with a slap on the back of the windbreaker and a flash of teeth.

But with two on and two down when he stepped up—the clutch spot—the best the Duke could do was a high fly to left. Mel shrugged off

his disappointment as he went out to work the eighth. If Duke Lacagnio couldn't bang one out, he guessed, that Bull relief man must have a lot of dippy-do on the soft stuff he chucked up. The rookie kid wanted this one. Sharper now, he tagged the corners and set down the side in order. Again the Cougars threatened in their half; but a fast double play by the Bulls extinguished the uprisings after Mel himself got a scratch single off the shortstop's glove.

**H**E BEGAN to work the ninth. He got another tough break when Stoffer let a swinging third strike get away from him and the hitter scampered up to first. Another pinch hitter stepped in there, a new man on the Bull club. The public address system gave his name as Tigney. Ding Stoffer came out as the Duke hopped in to the mound.

"I knew Tigney down on the Richmond Colts. Don't pitch him anything around the knees—or you can kiss the ball goodbye," Duke said.

Keeping it up, Mel pitched a ball, cut a hook in at the chin for a strike. He came in with a change-of-pace curve on the outside. There was a sickening crack that was like a blow to the rookie's heart. Climbing, climbing, it soared into center. Dern was on his bicycle lank legs flashing as he went back, back. Then he twisted, shot up against the bleacher barrier, stabbed. He landed on his knees on the carom, but when he came up, he held the ball in his glove for the out.

That was all Mel Sellers needed. He got the next man to pop out off a curve ball, whiffed a sharp-hooking third strike past the following hitter. Pep Barnell was talking it up to get a rally started, thumping a club on the bench.

With one down, there was a smashing double. Loucks, a stocky, pinch hitter built like Hack Wilson, tagged one on the nose; but the Bull second sacker made a dive to his left, a miraculous stab of the bulleting liner travelling just a foot from the ground. Then he flipped to second to

double off the base runner and the ball game was on its way into the record books. Mel Sellers felt all washed out inside. It would not be recorded as his defeat. The pitcher preceding him had put on the runner who'd come across with the big tally. But he had wanted badly to put out the fire, hold the opposition till his club could push one or two over. He'd wanted to prove to Pep Barnell that he had iron in his soul.

"Tough luck, Mel," the Duke told him as they quitted the dugout. "But forget it, chum, it was lost before you came in. Doesn't do any good to take those things too seriously. Maybe we'll have a few beers later, huh?"

Some of Mel's gloom lifted at being invited out by the great star. They went along the tunnel beneath the stands to the clubhouse. Then Mel felt eyes burning into him and saw Flash Curry the second baseman moving beside him, staring with eyes that were squeezed-up bits of icy hostility.

"Well, Mr. Showoff, ya sure did it, didn't you? Trying to play teacher's pet and then hadda kick the game away! Ya damnbusher!"

Mel was surprised at the second sacker's ferocity. Flash was one of those stars he admired so much he was awed by them. But the last epithet caused the tall kid's babyish face to jerk into a tough mold. "I got a tough break on that fluke hit! Were you asleep?" he came back, referring to the blooper when that hitter had tried to fall away from the pitch.

"Yeah? And if Red Dern hadn't made a circus catch in the ninth, you're ears'd really been pinned back!"

Up ahead, red-haired Dern turned his head over a shoulder. He said nothing, seldom did. He had a rocky jaw, looked like one of those strait-laced guys who stuck strictly to business.

Then they were in the clubhouse. Little intense Pep Barnell, coming barely to Mel's shoulder, appeared suddenly. His fingers clamped on the southpaw's right arm and the glassy blue eyes bit into the kid.

"You got things to learn, Sellers,"

he snapped in a trigger-quick voice. "But you showed some nice pitching out there!"

## CHAPTER II

**D**UKE LACAGNIO had called Mel in his hotel room, made it definite to have a few after dinner, saying he wanted Mel to meet some friends of his. Before he went down to meet Duke at seven-thirty in the lobby, the big boyish hurler tried once more to tame that persistent cowlick in his yellow hair, double-checked himself in the mirror. He hoped he didn't look like a kid from a small town in the backwoods.

There was the sports jacket, a conservative gray tweed. Most everybody on the club wore jackets with loud patterns, big plaids. But he'd noticed that the Duke, one of his idols, had one in a quiet gray pattern. So Mel had picked up one on the same style. He banged at the cowlick again, put a cigaret in his mouth, tongued it carefully to the center before he applied a match to it. Actually he didn't particularly care about smoking. But that was the way—right in the middle of his lips—the slick way Flash Curry smoked a cigaret. He was only half conscious he was imitating them, those two of his trio of idolized stars. He was just using them to pattern himself after them because, he told himself, they were big leaguers and knew how to act.

Downstairs, he waited as Lacagnio was some ten minutes late. A good-looking blonde, headed for the dining room with her escort, sighted him and crossed over the huge carpet. She drew a little address book from her handbag and cooed:

"Oh, Mr. Sellers! I recognized you right away. Would you mind giving me your autograph? I—"

Flushing, the shy good-lucking rookie, gulped and backed. "Uh—miss, seems to me I saw Sellers getting off the elevator a few minutes ago and—" He nodded toward the main entrance of the hotel. He wasn't being high-hatted; this kind of public attention scared him. He'd rather have



faced a cleanup hitter with the sacks packed.

The blonde said she was sorry but he did look like the newspaper photos of Mel Sellers. She and her escort left. Mel ran a finger around the collar of his sports shirt. Then Thor Jenson of the *Chronicle* sports staff, bald fat and asthmatic but dean of the city baseball writers, wandered up. He smiled around his big cigar, said Mel had had plenty of stuff today.

"But you were foolish to pitch 'em up high to that Tigney, Sellers. He—" Then somebody hailed Jenson and he went off.

**F**OOLISH. That was the word that stuck in Mel's mind. Some of the reporters and some of his teammates had gotten the impression right from the start that he was stuck up, conceited, because he was too scared to talk much. And the fact that he'd gotten himself a nice chunk of mazzuma for signing, after the commissioner's office had declared him a free agent from the Class-B club of that farm chain for covering him up, hadn't helped matters any. A ten thousand dollar bonus plus another ten grand in salary for a rook who'd never been up in the majors before wasn't potato chips. Some of the regulars had resented it. What nobody else knew was that a big chunk of that bonus had gone to start an elder brother through engineering school. That another chunk had gone for a little house for his married sister with her children and invalid husband.

But after today, some of them might think he was more conceited than ever, for he hadn't had to go into that game as a relief man. He'd watched Freddy Berry take over in the sixth, realized the guy wasn't right the way he was forcing the ball up to the plate. And as the seventh started, acting on his own initiative, he'd picked up his glove, sidled out of the dugout, and headed for the bullpen in right field. Flash Curry had seen him go without any orders from Barnell. It had just been a hunch, that plus a craving to get back and flip-

ping in there after having been on the shelf some nine days after a batted ball had smashed him on the knee-cap.

He'd gone into the bullpen and begun to throw quickly. The hunch was good. Berry flipped up five straight called balls. Barnell had replaced him with the veteran Wasche. Wasche was no better, wild-pitching once, throwing two more balls to walk the next man. Stoffer had picked the runner off second with a great peg. But Wasche had walked another man. While he'd been doing it, the bullpen phone had tinkled. Barnell had wanted to know who it was throwing out there with Emery and Paltz. Old Chuck Young, the bullpen catcher who'd answered had told him it was Sellers. A pause.

Then: "Send the kid in!" Barnell had barked on the wire.

So that was how it had been. Only he'd lost the game. And — then the handsome Duke was striding up, thin-lipped mouth in that crooked grin.

"Kid, you look sharp. Let's shake a hoof."

**M**EL was a little surprised when the first spot they hit was a smart bristo up in the theatre sector. He'd figured they'd go around the corner and have a few beers and barber about baseball. "Don't act like a small-time busher, Mel," Duke told him. "A smart guy's seen in the smart places, gets to know bigshots. Never hurts, kid." Then they were at the bar, the Duke calling out to friends, giving them a casual salute. Mel checked that last and wished it was a gesture that belonged to him.

Duke Lacagnio lifted a highball, cocked a supercilious eyebrow at the beer Mel had ordered. "Next time, pally, get off the piker stuff. Order a real drink. You're a major leaguer now. That stuff might look okay out in Broken Back."

"But—well—I thought—"

"I know the ropes, Mel. 'Sides, beer slows up your legs. Beer legs, they call it, in the business. Drink or two of the hard stuff won't hurt you.... Oh, hello, Tommy. Hey, meet Mel Sellers. You've been telling me you

wanted to. Mel, Tommy Sanders. Big sportsman. Liquor salesman too."

Sanders insisted on buying a drink. Mel took a highball that time, figuring not to finish it anyway. Then Duke bought a round, then two other friends of his joined them. Mel figured if it was all right for the famous Duke, it was all right for him. One of the newcomers, a theatrical agent, said Mel would be a good bet for the films with his cleancut looks. Mel felt sheepish at first. Soon, he felt very good. Then Duke said they had to leave.

Mel thought it would be back to the hotel, but the Duke gave an East Side address. A short time later, Mel found himself in one of those small intimate nightclubs. He had the feeling of being carried by a tide. He just took a sip of his drink in the dimness. Duke went away from the table. A couple of minutes after he returned two girls came over and sat down. The one on Mel's right was named Lois, a little pert-faced brunette with a soft gurgly laugh and nice eyes. Mel tautened up. A couple of wise little hostesses, he thought right away.

Then Lois said, "Duke's talked about you a lot. I saw you pitch once. Duke says you're going to be great."

Mel started to thaw despite himself. And when she told him Duke had caught her at the bar just as her escort, a musician with a radio audition engagement, had been about to leave, his opinion began to shift. They danced twice. The way her tiny hands gripped his big hand with the corded fingers and the shoulder gave him a funny feeling. A nice one. Back at the table, Mel was just glancing at his wrist watch, noting that it was within fifteen minutes of curfew time. Almost at once, Duke spoke up and said it was time they were getting between the sheets.

They took the two girls to their apartment further up on the East Side. When they got back into the cab, Mel hoped Duke hadn't noticed him jotting down Lois' telephone number as they parted. And there was something else. Mel started hesitantly.

"Say, Duke, when we were leaving that club—"

"Yeah?" Duke said, lounging in the other corner of the seat and drawing on a cigaret.

"Well, maybe you didn't notice. But when we were going through the foyer where that bar is—well, Red Dern was there with a girl. He—"

"Yeah," drawled Duke. "Saw him. The gal was a redhead. Dern trots around with her quite often. That guy is crazy over dames. You got no idea, pally. He's always chasing 'em, the dope. Me, I believe in letting 'em chase me. Stick with the Duke, pally, and you'll be one of the star starting pitchers of the Cougars!"

Mel didn't get the significance of it then. Duke just seemed a swell guy. "Sure, Duke."

"I mean it. Never forget that Pep Barnell, the little hunk of hot-stuff faker, is banking on you to save him his job...."

### CHAPTER III

**T**HREE DAYS later young Sellers went to the hill as a starter. He felt fresh and eager to go. For four innings he was tighter than a miser with his hits, busting the hook past them, mixing it up with the change-up sweeping curve. The Cougars had picked up a couple of tallies off the Bison hurler and the world looked very pretty.

With one down in the fifth, he gave up a walk. The next Bison pulled a handle hit off a hook to short, a tricky bounding ball. It looked like a two-ply killing. But Light, the youngster in there that day for Lacagnio, let the ball handcuff him. By the time he'd tamed it they were safe all around. Mel bit off some ugly words under his breath. The Duke would have gobbled that one with his eyes closed, but he'd been out for the last two days, not even appearing in the clubhouse. It was one of those dizzy spells, they said, that he got very occasionally since being beamed several years ago.

Bearing down with all his stuff, Mel got out of the hole, but that previously injured right knee pained

him on the last few deliveries. He gave up a walk to open the sixth, got the next two to fly out, then fell as he fielded a swinging bunt. That put two on. And then a change-up ball got away from him, floated up there as fat as a pumpkin; it was lashed for a double and two runs come over to knot it up. He got the third out. But when it came his turn to bat in the sixth, Pep Barnell waved him back.

"No, Sellers. Hey, Ike!" he called to the huge, aging but hard-clouting second-string catcher. Sent him in to pinch hit.

Mel felt low about it. It seemed as if little Barnell lacked faith in him. But the kid didn't leave for the showers. With his windbreaker on and a sweater around his neck, he sat alone down at the end of the bench and watched the remainder of the game—watched the Cougars lose it when the relief man gave up a run in the eighth. Pep Barnell was silent as they entered the clubhouse. The dynamic little pilot hated to drop one; and Flash Curry seemed buried in gloom too.

When he was on the rubbing table with a violet ray lamp on his knee, Mel noticed Curry again. The second sacker was over by the radio on a nearby window sill. He changed the program from the station giving out dance music, dialed another and the latest racing results from several tracks came over the air. Curry listened, then heeled out his cigaret as if it were a living hateful thing when he turned away.

**T**HAT EVENING, Mel had a date with Lois, the little cuddly brunette. Mel's conscience jabbed him slightly as he rode the self service elevator up to the apartment. There was Anna back in Red Bluffs where he'd been with that Class-B farm club. They weren't officially engaged but there was sort of an understanding between them. Then he told himself seeing Lois really meant nothing, that nobody could expect a guy to live like a monk. He had been looking forward, though, to walking in tonight as a winner. If Duke Lacag-

nio had only been in the lineup.

The Duke was in the apartment with Lois' friend, Alva, the tall blonde. Duke looked very pale, haggard. Mel greeted him warmly, felt like cheering when Duke said the dizziness attacks had cleared up. That would mean Duke would be behind him the next time he pitched.

"Pep sure used ya as the goat today," Duke told him. "Yanked you as if it was your fault! And it was his for putting Light in there. The meathead shoulda used Flash at short and put old Charlie Flynn at second. But Barnell's got a thick skull!"

Mel felt embarrassed about criticizing the skipper before outsiders. Then Duke was his usual breezy personality-radiating self again, suggesting they drop down to that little club for a few drinks. His sleek convertible was downstairs at the curb. Mel eyed it with envy. They went downtown, stopped at the foyer bar of the club where the night's sultriness seemed less oppressive. Down at the back end was Dern with that same redhead again. To Mel, he seemed bleak and unhappy for a Joe out with a date. The kid noted that when the ball hawk ordered another drink, he took mineral water, straight and with nothing else.

"Shucks, it's as dead as a non-alcoholic wake here!" And the Duke had another idea. Let's go out to the Woodstead Inn on the parkway. Mel was dubious, worrying about keeping training, but Duke assured him they'd get back early. Asked him if he wanted to spoil the party. Mel gave in and they glided out of the city and up the parkway through the summer night in Duke's powerful job.

It was fun out there. They danced on a pavillon over a running brook with the whispering of the leaves blending into the soft music. Mel thought once or twice about the number of drinks he was having. But he stopped worrying as Duke drank right along with everybody else. If a big star like Duke did it, it was okay, Mel figured. They cruised back to the city with Lois' head on Mel's shoulder.

"I could ride all night like this," she murmured once. "The Duke sure is a big shot. He smashed up his Buick this spring and bobbed right up with this job."

MEL felt a twinge of jealousy. After they dropped the girls off, he spoke about the car to Duke. "You ought to have a car, Mel. Gives you a rating. You can really get around."

Mel said a job like Duke's was expensive. And you had to get on a waiting list to procure one. Duke chuckled easily.

"Boy, you sure are a hick. Bet you believe everything you read in the papers too, eh?" He said the company put out a smaller model more modest in price. And that he could pull a few strings and probably get Mel one in a matter of days.

"Hey—" Mel had just noticed they were headed over for the West Side but cutting uptown. "We gotta get back and—"

Duke reassured him. Said if they were an hour or so late he could get them in unseen. He knew the night man on the service elevator. They could just slip in the employee's entrance unnoticed. "There's a fella—important guy, too—I gotta see, Kid."

They stopped at a small residential hotel over near the river. Went up to the sixth floor without announcing themselves. When the Duke knocked, the door of a suite was cautiously opened an inch at first. Then they were admitted to a big living room blurred by layers of blue smoke. After a moment, blinking against the smoke, Mel saw a poker game was in progress. Saw, too, Flash Curry at one end of the oval table.

Duke introduced him all around, touting him as the boy who would be the sensation of the mound staff "when we get a real pilot." Mel shook hands, expanding under the flattery several of them piled on him. Then one of the men asked him if he would like to sit in. When Mel hesitated, Duke pushed him surreptitiously toward the chair one of the players was vacating.

"Show 'em the way they do it back

in Leapfrog Junction!"

"Sure," said Flash Curry with sudden cordiality. "Come in for a few hands. You might as well get some of my dough too."

Not wanting to appear gauche, Mel sat down. Got a little scare when the dealer pushed a pile of chips his way and said there were fifty dollars worth there. He started to dig in a pocket.

"Forget it, Mel," Duke told him with that easy sophistication that made Mel feel so childish. "Write 'em a check when you leave."

MEL played an hour without realizing, paled when he spied the time on his wristwatch. But he felt pretty good, being an even forty bucks ahead when he rose. They slapped his back and told him to drop around again any time. Curry didn't come. Outside in the car the kid pitcher's head began to bang from those last two drinks he'd had up there. He got a worried feeling. Duke Lacagnio seemed to read his mind.

"Notice that big dark guy with the pointed nose, Hentz?"

Mel had. At the time of introduction he'd thought Hentz looked a lot like the picture of a bookmaker he'd seen in the paper last week.

"Important guy, Hentz," Duke went on as he guided the big car expertly. "Close pal of young Jim Fletcher." Jim Fletcher was the son of the president of the Cougars. "Jim thinks a lot of Hentz. Takes his—uh—advice, too. . . . You see, up here in the majors, Mel, you gotta be smart and play politics. The trick is to know influential guys. Hentz is one of 'em. It isn't just what you do on the field. There are outside influences, angles, Kid. See?"

Mel guessed he did. The pangs of conscience died away. If a star like the Duke said it was smart business to knock around like that at night, it must be. Mel spoke about something else, politics too perhaps, that had stuck in his mind. "Say, Duke, the other night you said something about Pep Barnell banking on me to save his job. I don't catch."

The Duke horned a milk delivery



truck before answering. "Well, maybe I was exaggerating a little, kid. But—well, don't pay too much attention to Barnell because—and this is a damn big because—he is on his way out as boss of the Cougars! Take my word for it, pally...."

## CHAPTER IV

**I**F THE NEXT day's game hadn't been rained out, perhaps it wouldn't have happened. Mel was lounging around the hotel room when Duke phoned him in the afternoon. "Got that car all set for you, kid."

Mel started to pull back. He wasn't sure he wanted to put out that kind of money. Duke sounded hurt at the other end. "Gees, kid, I pulled a lot of wires. Even told 'em it would be good advertising to have a coming star hurler driving one of their hacks."

"Well, Duke, let me think it—"

"Don't be small-time, Mel! If you don't snap it up, it'll be gone by to-morra. You can grab it this afternoon, kid. Only a coupla hundred over the regular price too. Well, maybe I was too hasty. Told the girls Mel was getting himself a job like mine, only a smaller model. So-o—"

That clinched it for Mel Sellers. He met Duke, went up to a car dealer's off the Main Stem. Everything went off as smooth as grease. His check for the down payment. An hour for the finance company to investigate his bank references. And then he was driving away in his new doveskin gray job, feeling like a man of the world. No question about it, Duke was right. You had to act like a big timer up in the majors.

His next start was against the Braves. At first, he was worried. His hook was refusing to break off sharply enough. He had to strain a little to bust the high hard one through. They kept touching him, but he managed to keep the hits scattered enough. That and a sharp defense held the Boston bunch scoreless. And the Cougars really had their hitting clothes on. With the aid of two homers, they piled up a six run lead in the first three frames.

Then Billy Southworth's gang began to nibble on that lead. A run back in the fourth. Two more in the sixth when the Duke, taking a wide flip from Curry on an attempted double play, failed to keep his toe on the keystone sack as he reached for it. He bawled the ears off the silent Curry. Of course, if a star like Duke couldn't mitt the ball and hold the bag, the fault must have been with Flash Curry's toss. Then in the seventh, Attell on third messed up two balls in a row. Before the third man was out, three runs had come over to knot up the score.

"Let's wake up and get back into this ball game!" Pep Barnell barked in the dugout. "Can't you guys protect a six-run lead? Fry, get out to the bullpen! Now let's put the wood to that Mosher out there, gang!"

**I** LUNCHED ON the bench, Mel Sellers did some mental sweating. Maybe he was running around too much. He'd been seeing a lot of Lois. Well, it was fun shooting along under the summer stars in the new job with a cute baby cuddling up next to him. And then he had dropped up to that poker game with Duke again. Dropped thirty odd dollars. Of course, it didn't seem like much at the time because the Duke went in the hole for over seventy. And Flash Curry had written four I.O.U.'s during the proceedings. But financial worries had been preying on his mind somewhat. Especially since that letter from his brother at engineering school telling him that he had to have his tonsils out. That means extra expense. And maybe he should not have picked up that car. It had depleted his bank account so that his balance was now well under a hundred dollars.

"For gossakes, you dummies, make some noise!" Barnell's voice, harsh with excitement, shattered his meditations.

Two Cougars were roosting on the sacks and the dangerous Duke Lacagnio at bat. But Lacagnio grounded into a double play and the score remained 6-6 as Mel went to the mound again. He got through the

eighth but he was tiring fast. Mosher set down the Cougars in the home half. Mel got the first man in the top of the ninth, but then walked a pinch hitter around to third. Then Ding Stoffer made a daring throw to pick the runner off first. Two down.

Mel, snapping his elbow hard behind his stuff, worked the count to 2 and 2 on the next hitter. The last pitch was a called ball, a tough one that Stoffer protested over. Duke trotted in from short.

"Ease up, Mel. We'll get these bums! Loosen up, kid.... Say, maybe we'll drop around to the game tonight, huh? Our luck oughta turn. I aim to get my dough back.... Okay, Kid!"

It appeared as if Lacagnio had shifted talk from the game at hand to ease Mel's tension, but Mel thought about hitting that game again. His luck had been sour last time up there; couldn't get a decent card. A neat little cleanup would bolster that bank account. But—His attitude switched. Maybe he should cut out the running around. He sure felt awfully tired right now. Then he realized Dink was flashing the sign for a second time, frowning behind the steel lattice of his mask.

Mel nodded, determined to whip that hook in there just below the knees like a striking snake. He went into his big windup—and the runner from third grabbed at the opportunity of the boner and streaked into the plate to score.

It was the big run of the game as Lacagnio fled to left in the last of the ninth for the final out. The Duke's stickwork had become very spasmodic of late as he beat the ball hard one day, went hitless the next. They were a depressed club as they scraped their spikes along the concrete tunnel, well aware they were on the verge of flopping into the second division. In the clubhouse, brow black with anger, little Barnell stood back to his office door a moment. Then he jabbed a finger in Mel Sellers' direction.

"Sellers, you're fined a hundred dollars for breaking training!"

MEL WENT up to the stud game with the Duke that night. A little scared about his physical condition, he had decided not to go, to cut out running around for a week at least. But the injustice of that fine had angered him, made him rebellious. Fighting down his shyness, he'd gone into the skipper's office after showering. But the crisp, now calm Barnell had backed him against a wall right off, figuratively.

He'd offered to give Mel a list of places and exact times where he'd been evenings for the last week. When, bridling, Mel had accused the club of spying on him with detectives, Barnell had shrugged.

"Suppose we just say we had some—uh—friends looking around. It is our privilege, you know. We invested a nice hunk of cabbage in you, Sellers. We've got to try to protect our investment. Get wise to yourself!"

But Mel was still boiling when he stalked out, feeling like an unjustly spanked child. Barnell hadn't slapped a fine on the Duke. Nor on Flash Curry either, who, from what he'd heard up at that hotel suite, gambled there four and five nights a week.

When he left the game at the hotel that night, he wasn't boiling. He'd just felt drained, completely whipped, and a double damfool in the bargain. At first, he'd won some. Had even chuckled at poor Duke when he threw in his cards and quit after losing a mere twenty. But now, as they drove downtown, Mel was thinking of that fresh stub in his checkbook. When he'd paid off his losses, it had about wiped out his balance at the bank.

They turned into the hotel lobby just behind Red Dern. "Probably been out with a skirt again," Duke said. "That guy is like somebody looking for something he's lost and knows he'll never find.... Say, speaking of dames, you got a date with Lois tomorrow night?"

Mel shook his head. He had about determined to cut out the night life. Maybe he ought to take a good look at himself.

"Well, why not ring her tomorrow, kid?" Duke went on. "I got a date with Alva and she's worried about

Lois. The kid is sorta depressed. So Alva doesn't want to leave her alone. What the hell, Mel, scared of Pep Barnell? Tomorrow is an open date, anyway."

"I don't know, Duke. I—"

"I catch." Then in the elevator, Duke slipped him a little roll of bills. It was fifty dollars. Mel started to protest. But Duke said not to worry, he could return it on payday.

**M**EL MADE THE date. But the next evening, driving out the parkway to the Woodstead Inn, nothing felt right. He even hated the gleaming car. He answered Lois in curt monosyllables. They started to dance after dinner but he stopped in the middle of the first number, said he didn't feel like it. He hated himself for his attitude. Lois was a good kid. But it seemed as if everything in his life had abruptly soured.

"Have another drink, Mel," she suggested.

He downed one, then excused himself and went upstairs to the men's room. He passed along a corridor to the rear of the building just as a waiter came out from one of the private dining rooms upstairs. Through the partially opened door he glimpsed Red Dern inside. The same red-headed girl with him. And two men. But the thing that surprised him was that Dern was slouched behind the table, head wobbling, eyes bloodshot. He was loaded.

Mel went into the men's room the next door down. He was just slicking water on that darned cowlick when he heard the mutter of voices through the slots of the door.

"—can't pour much more liquor into him or he'll pass out and then the whole thing'll be off," one man outside was saying. "Still, if we rush him he might get balky."

"Eve can handle him. Leave it to her. The thing to do now is to get him into the car. Then we shoot over the state line and get a Justice of the Peace to hitch 'em—and we're set. He'll pay off to get outa the thing. He's just woozy enough now."

"And we got a bottle in the car to keep him fired up. Okay, Joe." There

was the carpet-muffled sound of their feet as they moved off.

When Mel came out into the hall he saw the back of one man through the closing slit of the door of the private room where Red Dern had been. Then it flashed on Mel Sellers. This was a frameup, a frameup to get Dern hooked into a marriage with the red-haired dame. Dern who was pretty drunk. Mel cat-footed it down to the door, put his ear against it.

"Come on, honey," the woman was saying. "We're all going for a little ride, Red! Why we might even get married! He-he! Red—"

**M**EL WRENCHED open the door without even thinking. One of the two other men, a big thick-bodied guy with a mouth that barely moved when he spoke, slid over in front of him. "Wrong pew, buddy," he said. "Scram!"

"Just wanta speak to my friend, Dern, a moment," Mel gulped, scared of his own temerity now.

The thinner tall one slid around the table to come over. "He's busy now, Joe. Don't wanta see nobody. Put an egg in your shoe and start walking, huh."

"Scram, pal," repeated the burly one.

"Okay. But tell Red I'll be downstairs when he gets time, will you?" He managed a smile, started to turn. And he kept right on around, making a complete about-face. As the husky one started a hand to a back pocket, Mel's bunched-up right hand swished around and up, nailed the man flush on the chin. There was a crash of china and glassware as he slumped back against the table.

It was a beautiful Donnybrook while it lasted. Mel took a whack on the side of the head from the tall one but managed to jab him in the eye with a finger. Then the first of the burly one, recovering, smacked into the rookie hurler's mouth. All the time the dame was screaming. Dern had half risen but swayed uselessly. Mel went backward, half-way over a chair. Then he grabbed up a napkin from the table and flung it in the big guy's face when he

rushed him. He let two glasses fly at the thin one when he charged. The woman clawed at Mel's face, almost got a grip in his yellow hair.

But Mel wriggled away, launched a short sharp kick that brought the big guy up short when it caught him in the shin. And the big guy dropped to his knees as Mel teed off and belted him another one to the whiskers. Then Mel himself was sinking down on the edge of the table from a kick by the tall man that had just missed his groin. Clawing around as the tall one closed, Mel's hand fastened on a position of roast chicken on a plate. He ground it into the tall man's face and the latter reeled back as he never would have from a blow. The door burst open and the manager with three waiters piled in.

"Just trying to get my pal outa here," Mel said with a calmness that surprised him.

And befuddled Dern gave him a break by pushing hair out of his eyes, recognizing him, and saying, "Let's get the hell home, Mel."

The two gorillas with the red-headed dame were in a bad spot and knew it. One of them threw some bills at the waiter. Then they took the girl and dusted. Mel poured some ice water over Red Dern's head, helped him downstairs and out a side door into his car. Then Mel went back to explain to Lois they'd have to leave. She was at the bar with a little sleek man with patent leather hair. She introduced him. But when Mel said they'd have to leave, that he had a sick friend outside, she decided to stay on with her friend. Mel left her, surprised to find he didn't have a single twinge of jealousy.

With Dern slumped beside him, Mel drove back to the city. The fresh night air revived Dern somewhat. And by the time Mel had worked a couple of cups of coffee into him at an uptown lunch counter, Dern was practically out of the fog. He wanted to know what had happened.

Mel told him briefly.

Pale, Red Dern pounded his own head. "Gees, am I a fool! That babe's been hinting at marriage for weeks. So tonight they kid me into taking a

few drinks—and I can't handle the stuff—never touch it ordinarily. So they were going to hook me into—" He cursed with a dry sob, then clutched Mel's arm. "I swear to gawd, kid, I'll never forget this. You don't know what it means to me." He gulped half a glass of water, went on:

"My ex-wife is coming into town in a couple of days! We—we're going to talk over a reconciliation. I'm crazy about that girl, always have been. . . . That's—that's why I've been chasing around with dames so much—trying to forget her. Now, she's coming here. And wouldn't it have been just swell if that red-headed hooker had trapped me into marriage! Gees, Mel! Gees, I wish I could do something for you!"

It popped out of Mel before he thought about it. "Tell me how to get back into a winning stride, Red!" And he knew then that was the thing beneath all the bitterness and discontent brewing in him.

"Get wise to yourself, Mel! 'S the answer!"

## CHAPTER V

"**T**O CLICK in the majors, when you're just a rook trying to make the grade, you got to play and eat and think and sleep baseball, I tell you," Red Dern preached huskily after Mel had protested about the last remark.

They had fresh coffee in front of them. Dern snapped his lighter to their cigarettes. Mel winced, said he'd been trying hard.

"A rook's gotta try with all he's got!" Dern told him. "All he's got. Specially a hurler. Because certain breaks are going to go against a green raw pitcher anyway. Do you see? I mean like the day you come in as a relief man, and that Tigney come up to the plate as a pinch hitter. You kept working him with high stuff. And he banged one I was lucky enough to haul down. See?"

"No."

"You couldn't know it. But I knew Tigney in the minors. He's been around a long time. And the guy's



big weakness is low stuff, at the knees. You can murder him with a low curve!"

Mel's eyes slitted. "But Duke Lacagnio told me he knew him at Richmond. And that Tigney murdered low stuff. So—"

"Duke told you that, huh? Yeah. Duke introduced you to that brunette, Lois, you been bouncing around with too, I bet. Uh-huh," he said when Mel Sellers nodded. "And did Duke take you around to one of Al Hentz' poker parties? Thought so."

"What do you mean, Red? Duke's a nice guy. He's tried to help me a lot. He's smart and—"

"Duke's smart all right, Mel. And he only cares for one guy in the world. Duke Lacagnio. Loves himself—and money. Know who Hentz' is? Well, he's a bookie and a gambler and operates in the black market. A sweet, sweet character, kid. Say, did Duke have a hand in getting that car for you?"

Mel nodded dumbly as his eyes began to open.

"Might've known it," Dern said, putting down his coffee. "You can bet Duke got his cut on that deal. Kid, listen, Duke never does anybody any favors—for nothing! He isn't out to help you. Duke'd like to see you flop in a great big way!"

"Why?"

"Because he wants to name the next manager of the club. I mean he wants Barnell out because, then, he knows who the next manager will be."

"You mean, Duke hopes to be manager?"

Dern shook his head. "He couldn't be. They know he's a periodical drunkard. Goes off on a toot about once a month or so. That's when they give out word he's suffering from some of his dizzy spells. No. Not him. Listen, Innocence, and try to understand! Pep Barnell has a lot riding on you..."

**I**N A LOW quickening voice as his head cleared, the red-haired center fielder presented the situation. There was a bloc of stockhold-

ers who'd be after Barnell's scalp if he didn't bring the club home well up in the standings. On the other hand, faced with that demand, the smart Barnell was trying to build for next year when he had a flock of hot hand-picked youngsters coming up from the farm system.

"Barnell fought to buy you when you were declared a free agent. Mel, Pep believes in you." Dern had overheard Pep arguing with the club officials on the deal. Dern told how the other day, when Mel had been yanked for a pinch hitter, it was because Pep with his eagle eyes had seen Mel's knee was bothering him. "You shoulda heard him bawling out Ding Stoffer because he hadn't spotted it. Pep's all behind you, kid."

"But he fined me for breaking training—and not Duke!"

"Because Duke doesn't fit into his plans—and you do."

Mel rubbed at the frown on his forehead. "How does the Duke fit into the picture?"

"He wants to make Barnell look sad because he knows Pep is going to clean house, and Duke will go. He's on the downgrade, slowed up bad. He's got a nice trick of making chances look hard, kid. I know." And, Dern went on, Duke knew if Barnell were forced out, Flash Curry would be top man for the skipper's post. Curry was a smart ball player and, in the bargain, married to the owner's niece.

"What the hell, Red, does Duke love Curry?"

"No. But he's got something on him. Curry's deep in debt from gambling. And in debt, especially to Duke Lacagnio. If Flash becomes manager, Duke knows he'll stay up with the club. And that's the biggest thing in his life. Duke's got plenty of dough tucked away. Ya see, kid, it's a matter of pride. Duke wouldn't be a thing the day he's finished as a big leaguer! And he knows it. So—he's out to get Barnell. You flop—you, Pep's big bet—and the club staggers back into the second division—and—" He finished it with a snap of his fingers. "See?"

Mel nodded slowly. "It seems im-

possible though. Why he's really been trying to ruin me, I—I guess."

**D**ERN SMACKED THE counter. "Open your eyes! Duke just don't seem to come up with the difficult key plays behind you. He's smart. He makes it look like it couldn't be helped. Then, there was the wrong dope he gave you in Tigney. And—kid, haven't you noticed Duke has a bad day at the plate when you're hurling?"

That was the clincher. Driving on downtown, Mel Sellers did some hard thinking. And it went on the next day as he faced himself and realized what a fool he'd been. In the forenoon he dropped around to an automobile agency and told them his job was for sale. That night, he slept little, haunted by dreams of how close to the tobaggan he'd been. The next day at the ball park, as they prepared to open a series with the league leading Crimsons, Mel felt a twinge of envy when little Barnell named Doc Greener as his starting pitcher. Mel couldn't understand it at first. Then he realized he was wildly eager to work, to get out on that hill and redeem himself. Barnell dispatched him to the bullpen before the game started. But something in the pilot's manner told Mel he wouldn't be used.

Out on the bullpen bench he thought of Red Dern's parting words the other night. "That's the layout about Duke, kid," Dern had said. "I don't know how you can use it, though."

Greener with his puzzling screwball set down the Crimson leadoff with ease. Then a low line drive struck the tall hurler in the side, a glancing blow over the ribs as it passed on. From the bullpen, Mel watched Doc Greener sit down. They rubbed the side and after a few practise throws, Doc continued in the game. But Mel had another one of his hunches. He motioned to the bullpen backstop and got up and began to throw. Doc finished the top of the frame safely. Root of the Crimsons stopped the Cougars cold. Doc went back to the hill. It was a

tough enough assignment anyway with those sharp place hitters the Crimsons had in their lineup, a lineup that included a bunch of speedsters who could grab that extra base.

Mel watched Doc as he got the first man to ground out. Then Mel went to work faster. There was the pistol crack of a clean base-hit. Then the groans of the fans as Doc's control faltered and he gave up a walk. He pitched wide twice, had Pep come out for a confab, but got the next man to whiff. Then he pitched three straight balls to the next hitter. And Mel grabbed up his windbreaker and hustled down the foul-line toward the dugout. There was a long foul into the stands. And then ball four to load up the sacks.

"Pep!" Mel called, breaking into a run, as the skipper started out of the dugout for the mound. "Let me go in there! I gotta lot of ball games to make up for! Let me have that ball, Pep, please, for the lovva Pete! I tell ya—" Then he got shy, realizing he'd called the boss by his nickname.

Pep Barnell's eagle-like eyes went steely, then twinkled. He grinned lopsidedly, then nodded to the chief umpire. "I'm pitching Sellers... Good luck, kid."

**T**HE FAN reaction wasn't too good as Mel whipped his five warmup pitches down to Stoffer. But Duke came over and patted the kid's shoulder. Mel wondered if he was crazy again. Two down and the sacks loaded. Scoreless game. It would be charged against his record if the Cougars lost it. Then he looked at Duke back to position, calling out words of encouragement. The dirty hypocrite! Mel felt the surge of outraged anger and began to pitch.

It was tough. He had his hook crackling in there so sharply Stoffer could hardly hold it, dropping one. The count went full up, 3 and 2. Mel gambled coolly, came through with the sweeping half-speed curve. It was a tricky hopper to Flash Curry. But the veteran gobbled it for the out at first. Going off the mound, the usually retiring shy Mel swag-

gered slightly. Without quite knowing it, he had tapped some spring of new-found strength inside himself.

The first Crimson in the third reached him for a single. The plunk of balls in the catcher's glove out in the bullpen increased in tempo. But Mel, whipping that ball in there, set down the next three men in order.

"We gotta get to that Root!" Pep Barnell declared as they took their licks in the third. But Tip Root with his sinker ball mixed up with soft stuff was hard to put the wood to solidly. The game was still scoreless when the fourth opened.

And Mel got in trouble almost at once. With one down, a hitter lifted a fly into short left. Back-tracking fast, the great Duke Lacagnio circled under it, went deeper, then seemed to lose it in the sun. It fell safely for a two-base blow.

"Convenient sun," Mel said to himself, stiff-lipped.

**H**E WENT to work on the dangerous Fazio of the Crimsons. But when the score went to 3 and 2 as Fazio refused to reach for an outside hook, Pep flashed the sign from the bench to walk him. Mel obeyed. Lank John Darcy stepped in there, right-handed, a powerful pull hitter. Mel threw away the rosin bag, then turned and signalled Duke Lacagnio over. Mel smiled as he talked.

"Duke, you're my great pal, so I don't wanta have to blow the whistle on you. See?"

"What the hell, Mel?"

"You know what I mean, pally! I can give out a newspaper interview and tell the world what you said about Barnell. And how you got Flash in your debt so you'd be safe if he was manager next year. And—"

Duke's thin-lipped mouth went white and vicious. "Prove it, jerk!"

"And about your tipoff to me to pitch high to that Tigney in that game, pally! You knew Tigney. And—wait—I'm not the only one who knows how you told me to pitch him."

"Aw, nuts! You ain't got any evidence that—"

"Just don't come up with one of

those slick fielding errors, Duke, that doesn't look like an error! See? Or I blow the whistle."

Then Mel went to work on Darcy. And on the 2-2 count, the lanky Crimson bashed a low one like a bullet between short and third. The flying Lacagnio lunged, stabbed it off the grass on the hop. Then his peg was going to Flash at second. And the relay to first was in time for a double play.

One Cougar rapped out a solid double off Tip Root in the home half. But it was in the fifth, after this newly confident Mel Sellers had stopped the Crimsons again, that the Cougar clubs went to work. There was a solid single. A strikeout. The next man powered one into the stands, foul by inches. And Root, shaken, nicked him in the ribs to put him on. Root whiffed the cleanup man. And as Duke Lacagnio stepped in, Mel came off the bench and yelled:

"Remember Tigney, pal! Belt a good one!"

Lacagnio stepped out of the batter's box a moment, reset his cap. And when he slashed at that third pitch, he had authority. It was a clean two-bagger, scoring a couple of runs. And then Red Dern, with a knowing grin for Mel, stepped in and first-balled the pitcher for a clean single, the Duke came around with the third run.

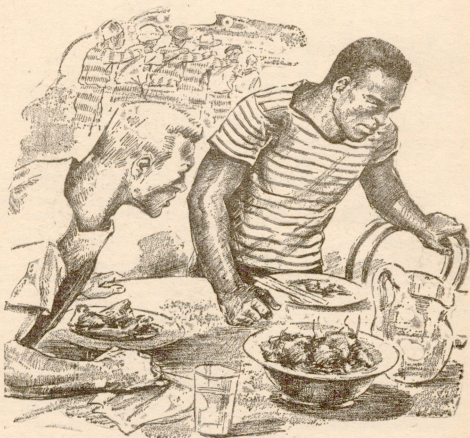
Mel Sellers went back out to that mound and knew calmly within himself that he would need no more. He still was a nice looking kid with a slow smile, but something had been born in him. No longer was he star-struck, awed by the big names. He'd discovered that men like Flash Curry and the too-smart Duke and Red Dern were human beings just like himself, no better. And with the awe gone, his own ego flowered and he was the hurler Pep Barnell knew he could be. He mowed down the amazed Crimsons in order.

In the seventh, Lacagnio thrashed out another double with a man on for the fourth run, and that was the final score as the new Mel, with a

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# THAT OLD GREY

*A Powerful Fight Novelet*



**By John D. MacDonald**

*No one remembered Singer Washburn now; the years had chugged by, and the old grey train had carried him far past the time when he'd be champ, past the time when he'd be retiring. Then he saw this kid Joe, with a mean streak in him, and knew that Singer Washburn wasn't useless yet—there were a few things he could do, and maybe doing them would somehow make up for what he'd lost...*



# TRAIN



*Jug Smiled Broadly. "I'm the Champ, Aren't I, Barney?"*

**A**FTER a long, long time, they unlocked the gate for me and they let me go. I stood in the warden's office and felt the cloth of the cheap suit where my hands hung next to my thighs, and he said, "Washburn, you did your stretch like a man and I don't think you're

going to get into any more trouble."

There were so many things I couldn't say to him—I couldn't tell him how my folks had wanted to educate one of the kids and sent me to Howard University, thinking they were going to have a colored boy that could make a living with the

books in a white man's world. I was a junior when the dough got low, and I found a way to make some money. In those days I was lean and tough and fast. I did me some boxing, and the big trouble was, I was too good at it. If only I'd met a real good boy when I was first fighting.

You remember me. First they called me Young Washburn; then I got the name of "Singer" Washburn. I'd be in there with a good boy, the fight would be tough and then the music of it would get to me, the rhythm of it, and somewhere deep in my throat would start a tuneless chant, a heavy throbbing that must have been some kind of cousin to the war chants back in Africa. I know I've got some Senegalese blood in me, and they're supposed to be pretty hard boys.

I quit school the week I turned pro. It wasn't until the year later than Johnny Rye bought my contract from Stevie. Maybe if Johnny Rye had been around when I turned pro, he wouldn't have let me quit school. He's that kind of a guy—one of those white men that can feel what it's like to be a Negro and be up in that ring with the crowd yelling, "Kill that eight ball! Murder that shine!"

Maybe because Johnny Rye was a very good welter in his day, he knows these things. Maybe it's just because he's a good man all the way through.

Anyway, he taught me all the professional tricks of the trade, and he brought me along slow to where I was ready for a shot at the light heavy title and it happened. You read about it. It hurt me and it hurt my race. I found out the gal I wanted to marry was cheating, and with that deep chant in my throat I went after the man and I tried to kill him with my hands. I would have, too. They stopped me. It took four of them to stop me—but I'm not proud of that. It shows you how crazy I was. Johnny did all he could, but I'd made the mistake of pulling it in a very tough state and they gave me ten. Good behavior cut it down to six.

I was twenty-five when I went in; thirty-one when they opened the gates. It's funny. At first I was crazy

wild to get out. Then the years chugged along like a slow train, taking me right past the place where I could have been champ, right on past the years I would have been defending my title, right on by the thirty mark where I'd planned to retire with the dough I'd saved from the fights I didn't have.

The old train, he chugged along and he slowed down and let me out, and by then I didn't want to get off. I wanted to keep right on riding in that grey train, with the grey cells and the bars and the tin plates and the shaved heads. You see, I was afraid to get off. What could I do? I was too old for the only trade I knew, and I hadn't finished my education. Life had given me just a little taste of big cars and good liquor. I'd managed to forget that on the grey train, but I knew that back out in the bright world I'd see it all again and start wanting some. Without being able to get myself any. I couldn't figure on what to do with myself and that old open door to the world had me licked.

The warden, he says, "What you going to do with yourself, Washburn?"

Even my name sounded funny to me. All those years being called seventy-nine two thirty-two. I couldn't answer him.

He said, "I tell you what to do. You forget about the cities, boy. You take yourself right on down to the deep south and get yourself a share cropping job, get a healthy wife and raise a cabin full of kids. Then you can forget all this."

I didn't hate him for it. He was a well-meaning man and he thought he knew what was best. But you can't put shoes on a Nigra, get him used to them, and then tell him to go put his toes back in the dirt. Never.

**I** WANDERED on out with the silly feeling that the sky was going to fall right on my head and I couldn't stop looking around over my shoulder. I walked all one day, walking on the wrong side of the road so that nobody would want to

give me a ride. I had a lot of walking to catch up on.

And when the five dollars the warden gave me was just about gone, I got me a job sweeping out a building and taking care of the lawn out in back.

They found out about me when the probation man came around and pretty soon I was walking again, heading toward the south. But all the time I walked, I knew I wanted to go see some fights. I wanted to smell the ring and see that spray of water under the lights when a man comes out from the corner and collects that Sunday punch that knocks the water off his hair.

After a while I did, and I hung around the dressing rooms; when they asked me who I was, I said my name was Johnson. I got me a few bucks helping out in the corner and I was a lonely man. I weighed one ninety and there wasn't a bit of fat on me, but I knew the old steam and snap were all gone. No chance to try again.

I helped them out one night, and went in with a white boy for the final bout when the other bum didn't show. It was funny to stand up there in the cigar smoke and hear that old bell clang out, to turn and touch gloves and drop back into the old game of figuring how you can hit the other boy without getting hit yourself.

I had my orders not to win and there was twenty-five bucks in it for me. That white boy sure was clumsy. He gave me a clean shot at the jaw in the second round and I dropped him. I stood in that neutral corner and prayed he'd find the guts to get back up on his feet. He made it, and I carried him around until he woke up. Then I let him slam me with a left and I made the fall look good. I stayed right there on my face and waited until the count of eight before I started to stir. He was a clumsy boy and even as slow as I was, he couldn't have licked me with a brick in each hand. His name was Sonny Vine.

I came out of the shower about fifteen minutes later and went back

to the locker they give me to put my clothes in. I was still wearing that suit I came out of the prison in.

Johnny Rye stood by my locker, his foot on the bench, a cigaret in the corner of his mouth, the grey smoke curling up past his wide red face, his stone grey hair. All I could do was stop and stare at him.

He snatched the cigaret out of his mouth and said, "Washburn, you're one dumb nigger!" He scowled at me but there was something in his eyes that brought a big old lump into my throat. I couldn't say a word.

He said, "I found that you'd been let out and I waited for you to get in touch with me. I come down here to look this punk, Vine, and what do I find. I find you taking a lousy dive for him. Is that the way I taught you?"

"Mister Rye, you don't want me for anything. I'm all through. Too much time has gone by."

He walked over to me and his face got redder. "What the hell do you mean, I don't want you? Sure, you're all washed up as a fighter. But you know more about the business than any punk I got in the stable. I need you, Washburn, and, damn it, you're going to come back with me and work for me until I damn well tell you that I don't need you any more. And I intend to stay in this business for a long, long time."

He taught me right then what it is to have a friend. I knew he didn't need me at all, and I knew I had a job for life. Right then, as I fumbled for the handle on the locker, I knew that if he told me to cut both hands off at the wrist, I'd grin and do it. Somehow I had come home again and the lonely days were over.

**HE** HAD some other business and he sent me on alone up to Lake Benton in the Adirondacks. I rode in the back end of buses and I kept thinking of that suit the warden gave me. After I put on the suit Johnny bought me, I took the old one out and crammed it down deep into an ash barrel. The old grey train was a long way behind me.

It was the same old training camp

where I had been getting in shape for that shot at the title six years before. I got off in the center of the town of Benton and walked on out the dusty road, carrying my suitcase.

I turned down the familiar trail between the trees, and stopped when I came to the bend where I could see the first blue of the lake shining ahead. I walked on slow, smelling the woods, looking at the lines of the main camp, the outdoor ring with the peaked roof over it the shack which housed the light and heavy bags, the pulleys and the bars. Somebody was in the shack singing hoarsely as he slammed the light bag around.

I walked on down and Barney Cizek, the ugly little guy who has been trainer for Johnny's boys for the last thousand years walked out onto the porch and looked at me blankly. Then his wrinkled face cracked into a wide grin.

"Holy Nelly! It's the Singer!" he gasped. He ran down the steps and grabbed my hand and danced up and down as he shook it. Then he yelled, "Everybody! Come on out here!"

Four guys came out, two from the house and two from the shack. I knew two of them, Fat Stan Bellows, a middleweight a couple of years younger than me, a trial horse with deceptive speed who works as a sparring partner for Johnny's better boys and also chops down the hopefuls from other stables—and Harry Jansen, a blond, dumb honest light heavy who is pure sparring partner and a nice guy.

Fat Stan grabbed my hand and said "How the hell are you, Wash? Nice to see you around. Do any fighting in the clink?"

Harry Jansen shook hands too and said, "You're heavier, Wash."

Then Barney introduced me to one of the strangers, Jug Hoffman, and told me that Jug had a shot at the welter title coming up in the Garden in a week. Jug shook hands and said, "I heard about you, Washburn. Saw you fight a long time ago when I was fighting amateur." I liked his looks. He was one of those chunky, solemn boys, with a chopped up face and eyes without guile. He moved quickly

and breathed audibly through his flattened nose. He looked every inch a scrapper.

I turned questioningly toward the last of the four, and Barney said, "You ought to remember Joe, Wash. Joe Rye. He's coming right along as a light heavy."

I remembered him then, but it was hard to figure out how a kid had changed so much. I remembered him as a skinny kid of seventeen, pale and quiet, who used to sit and watch practise rounds. He read a lot, too.

The skinny limbs had filled out. He was deep chested, broad shouldered and sullen. There was something wild and uncontrolled that was readable in his eyes.

Unlike the others, he made no attempt to shake hands. He said, "Hi," turned and strolled back toward the shack. He walked like a fighter.

The others were silent for a minute, and then they all began to talk at once as though to cover up for the kid. I told them how I had run into Johnny and he had hired me and they told me that there was a lot of work and they were glad to have me around. They told me about the good and bad luck that Johnny had had with his string during the years that I was away.

Finally we were caught up on the news and I jerked a thumb toward the shack which was vibrating with the noise of Joe Rye slamming the heavy bag. I said, "How about the kid? I thought Johnny said once that Joe'd never be a fighter if he could help it."

Barney sighed and said, "That's the answer. He can't help it. He knows that if he doesn't handle Joe, somebody else will."

"Watch yourself if you spar with him, Wash," Fat Stan said heavily.

"What's the pitch?" I asked.

"He's one of the mean ones," Barney said.

**I** KNEW what he meant. There's a lot of them in the fight game. They find out that they can get into a ring and whip another man with their fists. The realization seems to unlock something inside of them,



some ferocity that is more of the animal than of the man. After a little while it pervades their whole life, and they can't help thinking of every other human in terms of combat. They walk around with a growl in their throat and a chip on their shoulder, a beast walking like a man. They turn cruel and savage in every aspect of life. They can't climb into a ring without trying to kill the opponent, even when it is only training. It is a type of sadism. I know because I was close to being that way when Johnny first took me over. He cured me.

I said, "How did the kid get that way? I didn't think he was the type."

Barney shrugged. "He went into the army when he was twenty. He was such a quiet kid that I guess he had a rough time. Then he got sore and licked a guy that was picking on him. Now all he wants to do is go around beating the hell out of everybody."

"What's Johnny doing about it?"

"Hell, he can't see it. It's his own son, Wash, and I guess maybe being somebody's pop gives you a blind spot. He hates to have his kid in the fight racket, but since he can't do anything about it, he wants to have him be the best. He thinks that the mean streak is spirit."

"How's the kid doing?"

"Good. Real good. He's had seven pro fights and got five knockouts, one decision and one loss on fouls. He ain't popular though," Barney said. "Down in Philly a month ago, he knocked out Harry Rosar in the fourth. While Harry was trying to get up, the kid clubbed him on the back of the neck. The fans don't like that stuff."

"You wait until you go a few rounds with him," Jansen said. "He scares the hell out of me."

"How good is Jug Hoffman?" I asked.

"Just about the best. He ought to take the title. Only trouble is he's weak on defense when the heat is on. You can see from his face that he's taken a lot of slamming around. He's been fighting since he was sixteen."

"Punchy?"

"Not at all. Seems to take it okay. We've been working on his defense."

I WENT in the camp with Barney and met Sam Tooker, the cook and janitor and he fixed me up with a late lunch. I didn't see all the rest of them together until dinner time. I was willing to hang back and take my dinner in the kitchen, but the rest of them seemed to take it for granted that I'd eat with them—and that is one of the nice things about the fight game. Your worth depends on what you can do with your hands, not what color you happen to be.

Joe Rye was a little late and I noticed the conversation died away when he got to the table. He glared at me as though I shouldn't be there, and then didn't look up again. He wolfed his food silently while I sat across from him thinking how it was too bad that a kid so good looking should have that streak of mean blood in him. He was certainly built like a fighter, and he wore his blond hair cropped close to his skull. On the outside he looked more like he should have been rowing for some college crew rather than punching at heads. It's hard to tell where that streak'll crop up.

Joe finished and shoved his chair back. He walked out without a word or a backward look. The table conversation got lively again. I could see what was wrong with the training camp. One guy like that can sour the atmosphere for everybody. It made it worse to have the guy in question be the son of the manager. That limits the things you can do to keep him under control.

The others piled in early and Barney and I stayed up, sitting on the porch, looking out across the lake, talking about the old days. I don't know how we got started on Joe Rye again. Barney said, "It's too bad, you know. I can figure right now how the kid'll end up. He'll get better and better, and get a bigger and bigger head. Then, some day, some poor soda jerk or bartender is going to cross him up and Joe'll tear the guy's face off with his fist. You can't go

around thinking like he does and not get into trouble."

It made me wonder how Joe would like his ride on a slow grey train where the years chug by.

Barney said, "The trouble is, it won't be just him that'll be hurt. It'll hurt Johnny and Sis. And me."

"Sis?" I asked, confused.

"Yeah. You remember her. My daughter. She was running around with Joe before he went overseas. Now, even though he's all different, she won't let herself see the change in him. I never wanted her to get tied up with a fighter, Wash."

"Have you tried to talk to her?"

"You can't talk to them, Wash. They know everything at that age. They got to get hurt all by themselves. The trouble is, when it happens, it's going to hurt me too. She's a pretty gal, Wash, but stubborn. You can't tell her what's ahead. Hell, I'd rather see her running around with Jug Hoffman who hasn't had half the education that Joe has had. Jug is a gentle guy and he goes at this fighting like it was a business, which it is. Joe has made it a kind of religion. I guess Jug wouldn't mind either. I've noticed the way he looks at Sis. Like a guy on the desert looking at a glass of water. And there'll be trouble if Joe ever sees him looking at Sis like that."

"Where is she?"

"Living down in the village. Working in a candy store so she can be near her big fighting chump. Joe's got his toughest fight yet coming up the night after Jug's, otherwise he'd be down in the village tonight."

**B**ARNEY gave me the small room at the end of the upstairs hall, and for a long time I stayed awake, thinking how glad I was that I had come back to the things I knew and understood—but there was a little cloud in the air, and I had a hunch that I was going to be in on the blowoff.

My first contact with Joe came sooner than I thought. After breakfast I went down to the shack and spent some time pasting the heavy bag, loosening up, getting the right

roll into the punches. Then I took a long trot along the lake trail, puffing hard. At lunch I could have eaten the table right along with the food.

I took a quick nap after lunch and then wandered out to the ring. Fat Stan, giving away weight and reach, was going a round with Joe Rye. They were using the face masks and the big gloves. I watched, because I wanted to see how good Joe was. He was like a big cat—alternating between slow stalking and blinding flashes of speed. Fat Stan hadn't lost any of his art. He rolled the sting out of Joe's punches, slipped a lot of them, blocked others and jabbed his way out of trouble. But it wasn't the kind of fighting you expect to see at a training camp. Behind the mask, Joe's face was set and bloodless, his eyes narrowed. I could see that Fat Stan was working hard to keep away from bad trouble.

Suddenly Stan was trapped in the corner over my head. He bounced out, jabbing, and then tried to slide along the ropes. In doing so, he made the mistake of carrying his elbows high and straightening up too far. Joe put his shoulders into a heavy left hook that landed just above Stan's belt. Stan whooped and doubled over. Joe chopped him once in the kidneys and once behind the ear. Stan dropped onto his face. Joe swaggered away from him.

Stan got up, pulled the mask off and said, "What the hell do you think this is?"

Joe turned and smirked at him. "What's the matter, dearie? Does ims wanna dance instead of fight?"

"I don't want no clown showing off at my expense," Stan snapped.

Joe pulled his own mask off and dropped it on the canvas. He walked toward Stan, his lips drawn back from his teeth, saying, "Fatso, I'm going to show you what a licking really is."

Stan looked pretty uncertain and I could see the trouble ahead. Without thinking, in order to divert Joe, I said, "Could I try a round, Joey?"

Joe stopped and looked down at me. "The name is Mr. Rye, eight ball. Climb in and have some."

I pulled off my sweat shirt and climbed in. I put the mask on and Stan tied on the gloves.

I said, "Okay," and moved out and touched gloves with him. This time he was fighting somebody with more weight and a better reach. I was curious to see how he'd act. He jabbed lightly, feeling me out, and I countered with a jab of my own and a light left hook to the head. My timing was all shot; it was no longer instinctive. I had to plan out each move ahead like a man playing checkers. There wasn't any of the deep singing in my throat like there used to be. My rhythm was gone. And even when I told my right arm to shoot out there, it went out too slow, and it didn't hit where I wanted it to. This boy was a lot different than the Sonny Vine I had chopped down. I could see why, if Johnny wouldn't handle him, some other manager would.

**H**E JABBED and then rushed me into the ropes, swinging lefts and rights. I caught some of them on my forearms and felt the others light flares in my head. It was too rough against the ropes, so I covered up, bending far over. He tried to hook me in the face but couldn't get past my arms. I saw his feet back away, so I straightened up and followed him on out with jabs that weren't as fast as they should have been.

Even so, it surprised him, and he got his feet tangled trying to move off to my left. He tripped and his left swung back instinctively to protect himself from the fall. It gave me a clear shot, and I had the punch well started before I pulled it back. As I yanked it back, he got balance, and brought the left around and hit me high on the head. It was a good punch, slamming me back across the ring, fighting for balance. As I bounded off the ropes he was on me. I could see the right coming up the slot, and I told my right arm to get over in the way. It moved but not fast enough, my wrist brushing the glove as it came up and exploded on my jaw with all the weight of his rush and my bounce off the ropes.

It was like being hit with a sledge, and the mask didn't give me much protection.

When I could see clearly, he was standing in the middle of the ring, untying his right glove with his teeth. His mask was on the canvas at his feet. He said, "Washburn, you're a disappointment to me. I thought you'd be rougher than these other bums. Maybe I didn't know enough about the game when I used to watch you. You used to look pretty good." By the time I had the gloves off, he was already gone. It was just one of those things.

Johnny Rye got back late in the afternoon, and after I took a shower for dinner I walked out onto the porch. He was sitting on the railing, smoking a cigaret. He looked up and smiled at me. "How does it feel to be back, Wash?"

"Great, Mr. Rye."

"Why the formality, Wash. You used to call me Johnny." I couldn't tell him how I'd had a recent lesson about calling people by their first names.

I just grinned and said, "Okay, Johnny."

"I hear you mixed it up a little with the kid this afternoon, Wash. What do you think of him?"

"He's okay, Johnny. He can fight."

"He's really okay?" Johnny seemed pathetically anxious for my good opinion, and that was strange, because he had been judging fighters when my ambition was to grow up and be a traffic cop. It embarrassed me to have him ask in that tone of voice; it wasn't like Johnny. He was always so sure of himself and here he was begging for good words from a jail bird Nigra. He was up against something he knew in his heart he couldn't handle, and so he was going around trying to make himself feel good. Hell, I couldn't tell him that his kid was smart enough and fast enough but too loaded down with hate and cruelty, could I?

So I just said, "He's a real good boy, Johnny. Real good."

Johnny grinned, "Took you, didn't he, Wash?"

And then I had to chuckle and

say, "He sure did." I couldn't tell him that Joe had suckerpunched me when I refused to pop him as he was falling. I couldn't tell him how rusty I was, and how far off on my timing and coordination. It would have sounded like a bunch of excuses, and in the old days, I never made excuses to Johnny. Not a one. With Johnny, you win or you lose.

So the warm days went by and every day I got a little closer to the way I used to be—but I knew that I'd never be back there—not by a mile. You can't take a year off and expect to come back, much less six years. On the third day I found out that it was a joy to work out with Jug Hoffman. We kidded around and he made me fight like this boy he was going to meet. I went through it slow, and he'd move in with open gloves. We didn't use the masks. Then I'd go through the style as fast as I could manage, and Jug, he'd fly all over me, pulling the punches, and I knew that here was a boy who could handle himself.

He had a funny, perky way of moving around in the ring, skipping and yanking at the sides of his shorts with his gloved hands, snuffing hard through that mashed nose, his feet making little hard slapping noises on the canvas. He had a nice stunt of bouncing and yanking at the shorts, and then flashing a left jab up when you were the least expecting it.

And he took criticism good. I showed him how he was taking the steam out of his own left hook by moving the shoulder too soon. I showed him how to throw the shoulder along with the punch after the hand had moved about five inches so that the full power exploded right at the point of contact. He liked that. He took about three hundred shots at the heavy bag until he had it just right, until he'd absorbed it into his fighting instincts—until it was a part of him, available for those thousandths of a second in the ring when there's no time for thought.

Before we turned in, Jug and I made a deal for a light workout the next day, Friday, because on Friday afternoon, late, Johnny was taking

him into town for the fight Saturday night. Johnny was pleased when Jug told him that I'd helped him a lot and he was glad that Johnny had got me out there. It meant a good deal to know that I was helping Johnny. Johnny left right after dinner Thursday night, telling us that he'd be back in time, on Friday, to take Jug on down to the city.

As soon as Johnny had gone, Joe took the keys to Barney's car off the mantel, without asking him, and went on into the town of Benton to see Sis. Barney was sore about it, but there wasn't anything he could do.

AT BREAKFAST the next morning, while Joe was cramming his mouth full of eggs, Barney came in and said, "That was a cute trick, Joe. Next time you ask for my car, see?"

Joe mumbled, "Keep your pants on, Pop. She's your daughter, isn't she?"

Then it happened. Jug Hoffman thumped his coffee cup down on the table and said, "You better play that deal straight, Junior."

Joe stopped chewing for a moment. His eyes looked small and bright hot. He looked at Jug and said softly, "Where do you come in?"

"I know the girl and she's a good kid," Jug said. "Just play it straight or you'll have a lot of people to talk to. I happen to know she's stuck on you, but I couldn't tell you why. For my money, you're poison."

Joe stood up slowly, fists clenched. He said, "I give lessons to people who put their noses in my business. You ready for yours?"

"Any time," Jug said calmly. He finished his coffee and stood up. "You got reach and weight on me. See how much good they're going to do you. Regular rounds. Barney'll referee and Stan'll call time. Regular gloves. No masks. I'll take Wash in my corner and you can take Harry."

Barney put both palms up and said, "No, guys. What'll Johnny say? Wait till after your fights. He'll blame me."

Joe turned to him and said, "Shut up, grandma. Let's roll this thing. I haven't liked the way this dumb



punk has been looking at Sis anyway. I'll try not to cut him up too much," Barney gulped when he saw how hopeless it was to try to stop it.

I HAD the collodion and the tape laid out where I could grab them quick, and when Stan whacked the bell, I snatched the stool out and moved over so the post wasn't in my way. Jug circled fast, dancing on his toes, the muscles in his shoulders nice and loose, his face impassive. The mouth guard distorted his lips. The only sound was the slap of his toes on the canvas, the noise of his breathing.

In comparison, Joe looked clumsy, loose jointed, amateurish. You could tell from their eyes that this was something which had been building up for a long time. The difference between them was that with Jug, once the bell sounded, it was his trade and he went at it with the emotion of a master plumber tackling a pipe. With Joe it was something in the glands.

Jug bounced and yanked at his shorts. The left flashed out, slamming Joe's head back and Jug followed it up with a short right that had his back in it. Joe shook his head and backed away. When Jug followed up, Joe clubbed at him with swinging rights and lefts. Jug caught them on his arms and gloves and shoulders, riding with them to cut the shock. Joe rushed him and had him poised against the ropes for a fraction of a second. He slammed a piledriver right, but Jug wasn't there to catch it. He circled and nailed Joe behind the ear on the way out.

Joe's face became something less than human. He charged blindly, snowing Jug under with pure weight and ferocity. Jug ducked some, but he couldn't duck all of them. He tried to stand toe and slug with the heavier man. It was a bad plan. He nailed Joe three times before a whistling left caught him and floored him. As he bounded up at nine, Stan banged the bell for the round.

I pushed the split on Jug's cheekbone shut and covered it with collodion. I whispered to him, "Boy,

you've got to box him. Don't try to slug with him. Box him and counter-punch him. Make him take six to get in one." Jug nodded and I repeated it to make sure he got it. He rinsed his mouth and spat into the pail. I sloshed some cold water on his chest, and jumped down at the bell.

Jug rushed out, dancing, and caught Joe with a solid left hook. Joe circled like a big cat, waiting until he could rush Jug into a corner. Jug saw his danger and danced clear, flicking the left out.

Joe shot across a straight right which missed, and collected a hard left hook to the middle and a right cross to the head. I could see that the left hook had bothered him a little. He opened his lips around the mouth guard to suck air. But he took his time and, in the middle of the round, rushed Jug into a neutral corner. Jug clinched, but Joe tore him loose with lefts and rights to the middle. When Jug bounced off the corner ropes, Joe slammed one home. Jug clinched again, and by the time Barney broke them, Jug was okay. Going away from the clinch, he threw one right down the groove that cut Joe's lip.

In the third round it settled down to a pattern. Jug would get in six clean blows on Joe's iron jaw, and then Joe would stagger Jug with a clean left or right. But I could see that it was working out the way I thought it should. Jug was taking brutal punishment, but his blows were having more effect.

The fourth, fifth and sixth were almost identical. In each round Jug went down, but twice he was pushed rather than hit. Each time he took a shorter count.

The seventh brought it to a head. Joe had thrown so many punches that his arms had turned to putty. He grunted and snarled as he tried to force the punches across. Jug bounced, high, tugged at his shorts and went in, both hands held low. Joe saw the opening and swung a slow, heavy right. Jug slammed one across while the right was still floating at him. Jug puffed and slapped home a left and a right. Joe

tried to make his arms work, but they wouldn't. And he wouldn't fall. Each time he tried to throw a punch, he was hit three times. At last, his arms dropped to his sides and he weaved. Jug measured him and slammed across an overhand right. It knocked Joe's mouth guard out. He started to fall. As he went down, Jug slammed in a left hook that finished it. Joe rolled over onto his face. He twitched once and lay still.

Jug walked back to the corner and said, to the world in general, "Game kid." His lips and his eyes were puffed and the cut on his cheek was widened. It didn't look as though he'd be in shape to fight.

He was gone by the time Joe came around. He yanked himself away from Stan and myself and walked unsteadily toward the camp.

**J**UG was pretty quiet about the whole thing. He took a long cold shower and we fixed him up as best we could, but it was a cinch that he had taken a terrible smashing around the face.

We started lunch, Jug eating quietly, and we didn't expect to see Joe at the table. It seemed likely that he'd come down when we were taking a nap and get something to eat. The door to his room was shut.

But, halfway through the meal, we heard his steps on the stairs and he walked in. He scowled at all of us and slid into his chair. He banged on the table with a fork to get some service. He wasn't marked up as badly as Jug was.

Nobody said a word. Tooker hurried in with a plate and set it in front of Joe and hurried back into the kitchen.

Even though he had started late, Joe finished before the rest of us did. He shoved his plate away and looked across the table at Jug. He said, "Okay, Golden Boy, so you can lick me. So what? When I've been at this as long as you have, I'll be the champ, not a third rate bum."

It was as violent as a slap in the face. Jug looked over at him blankly. He shook his head, as though to clear it. Then he smiled broadly and

said, "Champ! Johnny told me I'd be the champ if I licked the guy. I'm the champ, aren't I, Barney?" He grabbed Barney's arm. Jug grinned across at Johnny and said, "Thanks for telling me, kid. I forgot all about the fight. That's funny, ain't it? I forgot I'm the champ. Tell me that it's funny, guys. Who ever heard of a guy forgetting he was the champ? I did win, didn't I Barney?"

Nobody said a word. There was a sadness in Barney's eyes. He said gently, "Sure, kid. You're the champ. Go on upstairs and go to bed."

Jug got up and walked to the door. Before he left, he turned and said to all of us, "Imagine me forgetting a thing like that!" He went up the stairs.

Joe looked at Barney and for once the scowl was gone from his face. He said, "What's the matter with him!"

Harry and Stan pushed their chairs away from the table and walked out. There were tears on Fat Stan's cheeks. Barney said, "Joe, maybe you never saw a guy go off the end before. You see, Jug's been fighting a long time. Every time he got slammed around the head, it give him what they call a pin point concussion. Each concussion left a little scar tissue on the surface of his brain. Some guys are more susceptible than others. We thought Jug was okay until three minutes ago. But you gave him the finishing touches—gave him just enough more of those pin point concussions so that suddenly he cracks. Now he's punchy, kid, and he's worse off than the ones that build up to it gradual."

Joe said, "But can't he take a rest?"

"That stuff doesn't wear off kid. He won't be the same guy again. He's taken it for too long. He may get the title, but before the year is over he'll be sticking his face out for guys to hit him just so he can show them that it doesn't hurt. In a couple of years you can maybe find him hanging around some arena in Jersey trying to beg a ten dollar opening bout for whiskey money, trying to give some cheap promoter a snow job on how

the great Jug Hoffman is as good as he ever was."

Joe looked pale. He said loudly, "It isn't my fault. It's the way he's been fighting for years. Look at his face."

Barney said gently, "That's right, kid. It isn't your fault." But there was a curl to his lip that said something else entirely.

Joe looked at him and I could see, in Joe's face, the shadow of what he had been once, and what he could have become if he hadn't turned into a fighting animal. Way down in him was a decency that hadn't quite burned out yet.

I said, "Joey, that's the way it is for us guys. That's the end of the road."

He turned on me. "You're nuts, Washburn. I'll never let myself get pasted around that way."

I smiled and said, "You got a good start today, Joey."

He flushed and bit his lip. He said, "I'm learning. Nobody is going to do that to me in a little while."

I put a superior grin on my face and said, "Kid, you fight with your glands and not with your head. Maybe you can start out every fight thinking you're going to be cool and protect yourself but you'll end up every fight wide open—too anxious to land punches to give a damn about how many you take. You're a perfect fit for a strait-jacket at the end of the road. Why I could go right out now and do the same thing to you that old Jug did. Only quicker."

He went out of the chair so fast he turned it over. He leaned close to me and yelled, "All you guys hate me because I got more stuff than you ever had. You're a hasbeen, Washburn. Come out now and I'll knock you cold before you lay a glove on me. Come on!"

I yawned and said, "I'm coming. Go on out there and wait for me. Or will it make you too nervous, junior?"

He ran out and Barney looked at me, his eyes bugging out. "What the hell's got into you, Wash?"

"Just don't try to stop me, Barney. I'm doing this little job for Johnny. If I do it right, you're going to have

a good son-in-law and maybe Johnny'll have himself a good son instead of a mean tempered meat ball."

**I**T WAS the same deal all over again, except that I stood up in the corner and said, "I don't need nobody to handle me in this corner, junior. And let's forget this foolishment about rounds. We'll just stay out there for the sixty seconds I'll need to chill you." He agreed. I acted cool on the outside, but on the inside I was praying. If my slow muscles didn't do what I told them to do, I'd do more harm than good to the kid.

I broke the padding of the gloves over my knuckles. Stan clanged the bell and we went out. I had to make him mad and open him up fast. I know the tricks but I've never used them before or since like I used them at that moment. When he stuck his hands out to touch gloves, I made like I was going to touch, and then threw a left in his nose. He roared and charged me. I slipped under his left and clinched. In the clinch I kneed him, slammed my head against his cheek, rubbed the laces across his nose, thumbed him in the eye and pushed him away.

It had the effect that I wanted. He charged at me wide open. I stepped aside and brought my left up through with every ounce of power. He started to drop onto his face, so I clinched with him to hold him up, and danced him over to the ropes. When I had him balanced nice, I stepped back and gave him a left, a right and a left. The blows smacked across, ringing in the open air.

I didn't watch him fall. I walked away, feeling the tremor of the boards in the floor as he went down.

I climbed down out of the ring and as soon as I was on the ground, a hand grabbed me by the arm and spun me around. I looked down into the furious face of Johnny. His eyes had paled to the shade of his cigaret smoke. He called me a foul name and hit me in the face with a full arm swing. He hit me a second time.

He said, "I saw that stunt, Washburn. I take you out of the gutter and you have to show off by using every dirty trick you know on Joe. I'll give you five minutes to get off the place. And don't come back."

I didn't say a word. When I looked back from the porch of the camp, he and Barney were kneeling beside Joe. Barney was rubbing his wrists and Johnny was slapping his face lightly.

So I went back up the trail with my suitcase, pausing at the bend to take one last look at the blue lake. I walked into the village and caught a bus that took me down to where I could get a bus for Baltimore.

I rode along in the back of the big bus and I could touch with my fingers the spots of pain that Johnny's hard fist had made on my face. They were spots that only hurt on the inside, not on the outside. The bus rumbled along and I watched the lights of the little towns and thought of how the people in the houses had something that they didn't even know about. They'd never know how a grey train can pick you up and chug along with you for a ride that's so long that you're afraid to get off it.

Johnny took me in when I needed it, and I didn't know how it had all

come out until, after I sent my address, I got a note in Barney's childish handwriting. It was forwarded to me in Jacksonville where I was taking care of a parking lot. It said, *Joe has quit the ring. I thought you would like to no that. He and Sis are getting married in four months and Joe has went back to school. Johnny is still soar at you for what you did and he thinks Joe would have been champ but I no he is glad Joe has quit the ring. Maybe I can make him understand some day what you did. Jug got the crown as you no and Johnny has made him quit. He bought an annuity but he is not the same old jug which is to bad. Please keep letting me no where you are if you move to another place. Joe has lost that mean streak after the lickings. Maybe some day Johnny will want you back. I do, anyhow. Your pal — Barney.*

And so I've been in a lot of towns and they all look alike. Maybe, one of these days, I'll get that word from Johnny. He better not wait too long, though; because once you've taken a ride on that old grey train, it's awful easy to get back on for another ride.

THE END



## HOT-CORNER HI-JINKS

By John Wilson

## THE MAN WHO BEAT MERRIWELL

By Roe Richmond

## Swing, Ya Bum, Swing!

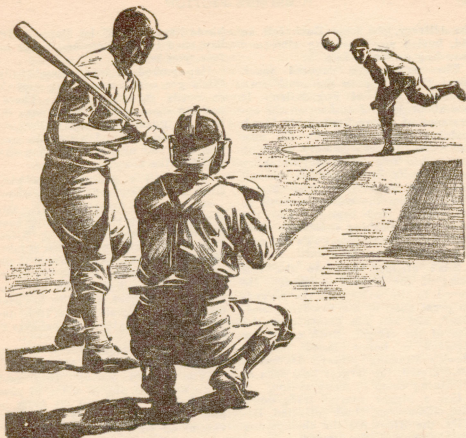
A Complete Novelet

By T. W. Ford

These and Others Are in  
the September

**SUPER  
SPORTS**





# No Strikes An Out

By JOHN WILSON

Buck Holm and Fog Allen had buried the hatchet publicly years ago. But Buck knew he hadn't forgiven Fog Allen and now Allen's kid was here in his first big tryout . . .

**B**UCK HOLM stuck a pudgy leg on the dugout step, and clamped his stare on the rangy, square-shouldered left-hander going through his warm up paces.

Fog Allen's kid, Buck thought. And I'll bet he doesn't think he can miss making the grade; his old man was plenty sure of himself, too.

Buck grinned, a hard grin.

He watched Smoky Steve Allen rear back, kick the leg skyward and lash the wing around in a sidearm motion. It was a nice smooth delivery, full of rhythm and deceptiveness. Buck flinched a little, knowing the delivery was almost a carbon copy of that which the kid's old man, Fog Allen, used to own. He didn't like the memories associated with

the delivery, the man. Buck felt an old, buried anger leaping alive and crowding up inside him.

The newspapers devoted much space these days to the moth-worn pitching legend of Fog Allen. It was all pegged, of course, on the appearance of young Steve in the Hawk training camp. The kid's old man had worn the garb of only one club during his long major league tenure—the Hawks. It was golden baseball lore how Fog Allen had moved straight from the college campus to the Hawks, and begun riding the fame of his slashing speedball. And here, years later, was Fog's kid trying to duplicate the stunt.

Buck stepped up into the full burst of the Florida sunshine. He waved to the writers in the rigged-up press coop in the wooden grandstand, and ran his glance over the size of the crowd. Each season he received a bonus based on the Hawk's drawing power. It was a good crowd, the largest he'd seen at a training camp in many seasons.

Got a bigger tourist trade down here this season, Buck reflected. Besides, the Blues are the champs and the champs pull the crowds.

But Buck knew the reason for the large attendance wasn't altogether the Blues or the heavier tourist traffic. It was the fact that Smoky Steve Allen had been announced as the Hawk hurler. Even the writers from adjacent baseball camps had converged on the Hawk camp to see the son of the famous Hawk hurler make his debut.

There was the call of Buck's name, and he turned, and Hap Wade, whom the writers tagged his "right arm" walked up to him. Hap was one of the game's great backstops, still available for an occasional stint behind the plate. Buck had assigned him the role of tutoring the young pitchers and catchers.

Hap's red face was dripping sweat. "I've been warming the kid's flipper," he said. "But those writers keep bothering him. They won't even let him warm up properly."

Buck said, "He sure gets a pile of attention for a rookie. It would be

kinda hard luck if he flopped. It's happened in these circumstances before, you know."

Hap looked at him, thoughtfully. "He's got nearly everything a pitcher needs to stick, Buck. There's nothing more he can learn outa the book. I guess old Fog really gave him a going over. It's how he uses that arm and noodle under fire that will tell the story."

"He's still a green college kid," Buck said. "You're forgetting that."

"No, I'm not forgetting," Hap said slowly. "I'd say the same thing even if his old man wasn't Fog Allen. This kid already knows what it takes other guys a couple of seasons in the minors to pick up. Maybe it's corny but I've got a hunch this guy was born a big leaguer. The idea has been drilled into him since the first day he picked up a glove. He believes it, too."

Buck smiled faintly. "A regular edition of his old man, huh Hap?"

"You should know," Hap said. "You and Fog put in a lot of time together on this outfit. It must be kind of a strange feeling passing the verdict on your old teammate's kid."

**B**UCK WAS silent a moment. It was reassuring that he had not tipped his hand, for he would not want even Hap Wade to know how he really felt about Fog Allen and his kid. And yet there was something in Hap's curious glance, the broadness of his words, that seemed to suggest he knew of the conflict raging in his mind. Maybe Hap knows I'm going to turn the kid back to the minors, Buck thought, and he's trying to change my mind.

"Well, it's a cinch he's not going to win any games on his old man's rep," Buck said. "The sooner he finds that out, the better. And we'll get a pretty good line on him today." Buck paused, then: "We gotta start cuttin' some of the chuckers. I hope young Allen does all right out there."

Hap's glance jerked alive, and his eyes threw a challenging stare. "I'd like to handle the kid in this one, Buck; maybe I could steer him along

and feel out those Blues hitters. It wouldn't do his confidence any good, getting jolted the first time out."

Buck said, "Tuffy Warner's gonna work behind the plate. I wanna get a look at him against some big league competition."

Buck moved down the third base line, where Smoky Steve was finishing his warm up. There were several newspapermen huddled to the right of the kid. Being oldtimers, he had no doubt but that they were comparing the kid's stuff and delivery with that of his old man.

Buck grinned at them. "Take the microscope off the kid for awhile, men. He's only got a few more minutes to heat that arm up."

"It looks red-hot from where we're standing," one of the sportswriters said. "Seems like you got yourself a chucker, Buck."

He walked with them toward the dugout, and then Al Miller of the Press International said, "I can just imagine old Fog Allen, nervous as a cat, knowing his kid is chucking against the Blues. He was always plenty jumpy himself before a game. But once he went to work, the guy owned a million dollars worth of confidence."

Buck noticed that Chick Kyle, who represented a metropolitan paper and had travelled with the Hawks many seasons, was staring curiously at him.

"That might only make matters worse," Buck said. "The Kid has enough pressure on him, the way you guys keep tagging him."

A sly grin edged Chick Kyle's mouth. "It couldn't be that there's still a bit of life in that old feud between you and Fog, eh, Buck?"

Buck stopped in his tracks, the anger mounting in his face. "That's old history, Kyle. And besides, you know that thing was patched up."

"I remember," Chick Kyle said.

**T**HE DIAMOND was cleared and Smoky Steve stuck his glove in his hip pocket and strode toward the water cooler. Buck's glance fell on Smoky Steve, looking at him through eyes that had passed judgment on

rookies and veterans down through eleven seasons of piloting major league clubs. The kid was plainly nervous. He kept pulling at the peak of his cap, and there was a frozen grin on his face. The look in his eyes was a grim, almost a frightened one. He knew how much he was on the spot, and how important that first impression of him against a top-notch outfit like the Blues could be.

Steve fumbled for his glove again, and then he was looking at Buck. "Any special way you want me to throw to the hitters?"

Buck was silent a moment. The kid wanted a few words to calm the pre-game jitters more than actual advice. He felt a sudden desire to take Steve aside, calm his jitters; but he thought of Fog Allen and hatred flared, overwhelming the desire.

"Sure," Buck said. "Just fling the thing so you make 'em all hit into put-outs."

The crack drew laughter from everyone within earshot. But Steve didn't blink an eye. He just stared at Buck.

"You don't mind me letting one or two of 'em get on base," he said. "Sometimes it happens that way when I pitch."

He said it lightly enough, but Buck did not miss the tightening of the kid's lips.

The Hawks trotted to their positions, and Smoky Steve began chucking his preliminary tosses across to Tuffy Warner, the rookie backstop. Buck slouched down on the bench, next to Hap Ware. It was apparent Hap found no humor in his remark; Buck had intended none.

The first Blues hitter stepped into the target-square, and Smoky Steve, hunching his shoulders in a depreciating gesture, took the sign from the squatting Tuffy Warner. And Buck, noticing that movement of the shoulders, marveled that the kid had even captured that little familiar characteristic from his old man.

Smoky Steve reared back, the leg kicking skyward, and the ball came shooting out of the churning back-ground, suddenly flashing into the

backstop's taloned mitt. The ump punched his right fist into the air. It was a strike. Smoky Steve took the return flip, grinning a little, and Buck knew the tautness had broken; he seemed more like Fog Allen than ever.

The lead-off was fooled again on a half-speed, jughandle pitch, watching it belt the strike zone. Smoky Smoky Steve wasted a shot, and then turned loose the fireball heave. The hickory swished, missed. The hitter trudged back to the bench, shaking his head a little.

Smoky Steve was a fast worker, and wasn't wasting many shots. He piled two straight strikes across on the next batter, and a buzzing sound ripped through the stands. The arm lashed around again, a blazing white smoke puff. The Blues hitter stood there, letting it zip through the money slot, and was down on strikes. A hoist into center and the side was retired, and the buzzing throbbed louder into the afternoon air.

Buck squirmed a little. The thought began gnawing in his mind that he should go out there, tell Smoky Steve and the rookie backstop to play the corners more. Mix in more sucker pitches. Not even Fog Allen would have tried to pelt the plate with so many shots in the strike zone.

There was a marked difference between trying to crash the ball past the enemy sticks, and using the speed to maneuver the hitters off balance. The Blues hadn't quite notched their timing to Smoky Steve's fireball, and when they did, Buck knew they would pound the kid something awful and drive him out of there. But he thought how he'd waited and planned this revenge, and the tide of his bitterness swept aside the urging to help Smoky Steve.

He would, in due time, send Smoky Steve into the deep minors, back to Fog Allen, a beaten and discouraged guy, and it would be a kind of poetic justice. It took only a glance at the newspaper stories to realize that Smoky Steve was Fog's great joy and hope in life, that Fog's deepest desire was to see his kid following in

his glittering footsteps. So Buck had looked forward to Smoky Steve's arrival in camp, fully aware of the awful pain and hurt it would bring Fog if the kid failed to make the grade.

**B**UCK HAD dropped the mask over his bitter feelings for Fog Allen, many seasons ago. And now he was looking through that mask, the old hatred alive and flaming and demanding revenge.

There were two down in the second frame when Sam Adams, the Blues third-sacker, smashed a fireball pitch into the right center pastures. He got three bases.

The rookie backstop signalled for a blazer across the letters on Hunk Meyers. Smoky Steve put it there, and Buck grinned thinly, knowing that Meyers murdered that kind of pitch.

Suddenly, he wanted to warn Smoky Steve.

Buck swore, and slouched back down on the bench, annoyed at the persistency of this desire.

The ball flew into right, and only a great piece of fielding prevented the blow from being worth another three bases. The run came across, and the Blues hitter went into second. An almost miraculous stop behind second of a sizzling drive retired the side. The thunder was beginning to hammer home.

Buck thought about the feud, knowing his hour of revenge was within his grasp. Maybe there were a few guys around, like Chick Kyle, who suspected that Buck had never really forgiven Fog Allen for what he'd done; most of the fans and writers believed it ended the day he and Fog had shaken hands and posed for those cameramen.

It was funny, how in the beginning they'd been great pals, he and Fog. They roomed together, and the opposition could not fight one of them without taking on the other. During the off season they'd hunted and fished, and found time to play the bright light district a bit.

That was how things stood between them till Helen came on the



scene. Buck had known Helen back in his home town, and even then dreamed of someday marrying her. Helen had ideas about show business, and though she did not climb the footlight ladder to the top, she achieved a fair amount of success in the theatre.

The school-day romance looked like the real thing, and then Buck introduced Helen to Fog Allen; finally, it was Fog who married Helen. All the time Buck had no idea of what was going on behind his back. It wasn't so much that he felt Helen cared for Fog any more than she did for him. The margin had been Fog's whirlwind tactics, his high octane personality. It had not been a fair contest.

He had loosened his anger and hurt on Fog Allen in the locker room, and it had been a bloody and grueling battle till exhaustion. The Hawks watched silently, none of the moving to stop it. Buck never really forgave Fog Allen, carried the grudge down the years....

Buck smiled grimly. This was his day. He was going to reap his vengeance. At last it was his turn to let Fog Allen know how it feels to be cheated and hurt.

He watched the Hawks put a run across in their half of the second. Then Smoky Steve was going out there again, bearing down hard on the Blues. He slid two strikes across the plate, and then tried to whiff the hitter, working a snapping hook on the outside corner. The horsehide crashed down the third base line, a white bullet, landing in there for two bases. Alongside Buck, a loud moan came from Hap Wade.

"Warner don't know those Hawk hitters. He's calling for stuff that's right in their groove. And when he ain't doing that, he's trying to out-smart 'em with called strikes."

Buck said, "He's a rookie, and not expected to know their strengths and weaknesses."

Hap said, "I'll smarten him up a bit between innings."

"You leave things alone," Buck snapped.

There was defiance in Hap's

glance but he said nothing. He got up from the bench and walked to the other end of the dugout.

**B**ULL OLIVER wielded the wood, waved it menacingly at Smoky Steve. The arm flashed across the chest, and Bull tied into the pitch, the heavy shoulders swaying and the wrists snapping. A sudden roar burst across the field. The ball was climbing in the sky, riding deep, clearing the left field fence.

Smoky Steve stalked around the mound, kicking the dirt. The infield pressed in, and Tuffy Warner walked out to the pitching box. The mound conference failed to steady Steve. He threw four straight balls and the next batter went to first base. The Blues then notched a pair of singles, and they'd scored three times without losing a putout. Calls of "take 'im out" began to come from the stands.

A nice running catch in deep center finally retired a batter. Smoky Steve then ripped three strikes across, and momentarily he seemed to have regained his earlier form. He got touched for another baseknock, but got the side out on a force play at second. The Blues had themselves a fat 5-1 bulge.

The first Hawk hitter had lashed a single into dead center when a sudden buzz ran along the bench. Buck snapped his stare from the diamond, knowing that the baseknock was not worth that much excitement.

He saw the heavy-set, bushy-browed man walking toward him, and he gaped. It was many seasons since he had seen Fog Allen, and somehow the sudden appearance shocked Buck. Fog grinned but he did not offer his hand.

"Mind if I sit down with you, Buck?"

Buck said, "Hello, Fog."

There was a little silence and Fog said, "The boy seems to have all his stuff, and his control is sharp enough, but they're plastering him all over the place. That's why I came down here, Buck, to kinda study things a bit."

He knows, Buck thought, that the

kid isn't getting good handling from behind the plate. He wants to let me know that he's got things figured out.

Buck said, "That's baseball, Fog. I remember days when you had a world of stuff and they murdered you. It happens sometimes."

"Sometimes," Fog repeated, the smile thin. "And sometimes a guy gets some bum breaks."

Buck said, "You've taught the kid all you know about pitching, but you couldn't give him your experience. That, he has to dig for himself."

Fog gave Buck a level stare. "Steve had a lot of big league offers," he said slowly. "Some of them were willing to put a clause in his contract that he couldn't be sent down to the minors. But it was Steve's idea that he wear a Hawk uniform, and Helen sided with him. She always said it would be a nice gesture, Steve pitching for the Hawks and working for Buck."

"But you didn't feel that way, huh, Fog?"

"No," Fog said softly, "I didn't. I sorta had the idea that things were never really patched up between us. I was afraid that you'd take your feelings toward me out on Steve." Fog leaned forward a little, smiling faintly, and went on, "But I was wrong, Buck. You're giving Steve a real chance to show his stuff, putting him in against the Blues. If he can't come through, it's better that you do send him down. Helen would want it that way, too."

Buck looked at Fog Allen, puzzled. He hadn't much doubt that Fog knew Smoky Steve was getting the skids put under him. You couldn't fool an old-timer like Fog, not where his own son was concerned. Then why was he making with the riddles, and saying how nice it was that Smoky Steve was getting a fair trial with the Hawks.

**T**HEN THE drift hit Buck, and he knew how it must have shaken Fog's pride, coming to him, and asking indirectly that the kid get a fair shake. Fog wanting him to change his mind before it was too late, and

bury the old grudge once and for all. The thing was bigger than the old feud. It was Helen and Steve putting a trust in him, and believing that nothing could interfere with his honest judgment of a player. The fury of his desire for revenge had blinded him, till suddenly the full ugly light of the act broke clearly in his mind.

Buck knew that he did not want to ruin Smoky Steve's career. The thought had been wedged in a corner of his mind, and now he recognized and understood it. He'd fought through the baseball wars. He'd given his rookies every break and piece of advice he possibly could. He was for them, for his team, for the fans. He could not go against these principles.

And maybe that was partly the reason he'd been a great keystone, and a successful manager. Smoky Steve was another player, another rookie, and it did not matter that he was the son of Fog Allen. What mattered was whether he had the stuff to make the grade.

Buck stood up, looked down the bench, spotted Hap Wade.

"Hap, he said, 'get your glove and mask.'"

Hap grinned, "Sure enough, skipper."

The Blues had a rookie chucker in there themselves, and the Hawks tagged him, scoring twice. The score was Blues 5, Hawks 3, going into the fourth inning.

Buck leaned back on the bench, and watched Hap Wade walk Smoky Steve to the mound, pouring advice into his ear. The Blues hitter stepped in, and Hap crouched and gave the sign. Smoky Steve sliced the outside corner. Hap worked him carefully, the count leveling at two and two.

Smoky Steve uncoiled again, side-arming. The pitch came in, a lazy, dippy-doo thing. The batter swung and rolled the pill meekly to the mound. A half speed ball got the next hitter to lift a foul near the Hawk dugout, and Hap Wade gobbled it in. The side went down, Smoky Steve whiffing the third Hawk.

The kid strolled into the dugout, grinning, with Hap Wade slapping him on the shoulder. He mowed through the Blues lineup, retiring nine straight men. He played the corners, mixing in a change of pace, and a nice assortment of stuff. Hap handled him skillfully, probing for the holes, and Smoky Steve kept laying the pill in there. The Blues weren't able to plant themselves for the payoff pitches, and that was the difference.

The Hawks ripped into the Blues hurler for a brace of one base knocks in their half of the seventh. Then Sully Manders went up there, and swung on the first pitch. The ball started to travel. It went into the left field stands, and the Hawks went ahead, 6-5.

The Blues powerhouse hitters came up in the eighth. The first man caught hold of a low-breaking shot, rapped it sharply to right. The number two man punched one through the middle, and the Blues had runners on first and third. That brought Bull Oliver to the plate.

Buck glanced at Fog Allen. The old guy was staring onto the diamond, eyes fixed on the kid. And Buck knew that Fog was wondering about the same thing he was. It was simply how Smoky Steve would react to a guy who'd tagged him earlier for a four baser, and was hungry for another round tripper. The pressure was on full blast, and it was up to Smoky Steve now.

Steve leaned forward a little now, watching the sign. He let the leather ride in there. It was a sinker, and Oliver swung, nicking it foul along

the first base line. Then a ball. A hook kicked through the slot, swerving away from the flashing hickory. The count went the full route, 3-2. Smoky Steve threw again, the downer, and this time Oliver did not get a piece of the leather. He went down, swinging viciously, the ball plopping into Hap Wade's glove.

He got Hal Lambert to bring the stick around on an outside hook. The pellet streaked toward second. Link Edwards flung out a gloved hand, nailed the leather. He flipped to the shortfielder covering the bag and from there it was blazed to first. Double play.

The noise was flooding out of the stands, and Buck looked at Fog Allen and saw the proud, fierce glow in his eyes.

Buck put his hand on Fog's shoulder. "That kid of yours is a big leaguer, Fog."

Fog Allen said, "Let's see how he does in the ninth, Buck. That's always a helleva inning."

Smoky Steve did fine. He whiffed two Blues, and ended the game on a roller back to the mound.

Fog Allen grinned at Buck. "I don't know how I ever coulda thought you might not do right by Steve. It just shows you the crazy hunches a man can get."

Buck winked, said, "Why that old feud of ours ended way back when we shook hands for the newspapermen, Fog. But let's shake on it again, just to be sure."

They did.

THE END

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## COMING NEXT ISSUE

# *From Sideline To Goal-Line*

## *A Top Notch Football Novelet*

*By J. W. Ford*

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# *Blind Baskets*

A COMPLETE NOVELET

By **ROE RICHMOND**

**K**ILMARTIN took the ball from Abrams, pivoted away from his guard, faked a pass and a cut, and passed in to Koenig. As he raced in to take the return, Kilmartin's eyes blurred again and he lost sight of the hard-thrown ball. Just a split-second but it was enough. The pass ripped through his fingers and bounced on. Pitsford recovered the ball and launched their attack. Cursing, Kilmartin took up the chase, but after snapping the ball from side to side a Pitsford player scored from the corner. Pitsford led by four points now, 44-40.

Hoskewicz passed in from outside and the gold-shirted Northern team broke down the court. Kilmartin's vision was still fogged. He shouldn't be in there at all, the sophomore Stevens should be in his place.... Kilmartin signaled to set up a play that would leave him back. LeMay, Abrams and Koenig opened the Pitsford defense with some swift passwork, and Lefty LeMay slipped free to net one from under the board. Two points now.

Pitsford came back fast. A pass zipped through Kilmartin's zone. He waved at it, too late, and turned to see another Pitsford shot drop into the meshes. Kilmartin called time out and the gold-jerseyed players gathered round him. Their red sweaty faces looked vague and blurred to Kilmartin. He shook his head and looked at the scoreboard, but he couldn't read the clock.

"How much time left?" he asked, eyes on the floor.

"Six minutes," Husky Hoskewicz said. "What's the matter, Killy?"

"Nothing. I'm all right," Kilmartin

had planned to yank himself and send in Stevens, but he couldn't do it.... The team depended on him. He was their captain and leading scorer. Tonight he had scored 17 points. He couldn't let them down. He couldn't explain how his eyes acted when he was tired. Nobody would believe it anyway; they'd think he was quitting. Ran up 17 points and then quit when the going got tough. And they didn't like young Stevens, didn't click with him. Stevens was good but he was too cocky. Kilmartin glanced at the bench and saw Stevens watching him with a strange smile. Kilmartin went hot with hatred for the sophomore.

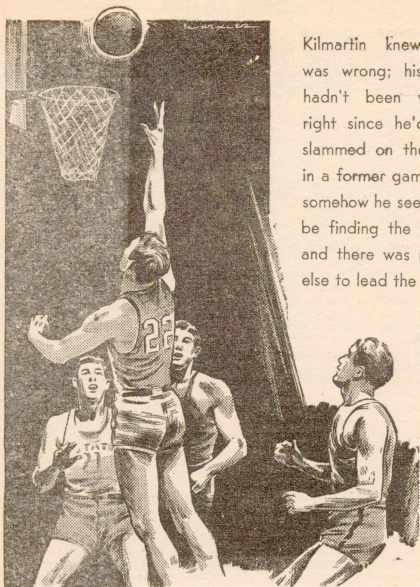
"We've got plenty of time," Kilmartin told them. "But I can't go any more. I'll hang back with Husky on the offense. Abe, you swing up front."

The players nodded but looked at him curiously. Kilmartin avoided their eyes as he slapped their wet shoulders. The whistle, and play was resumed.

**B**OTH TEAMS attacked in turn, missing their shots. Pitsford drove forward once more, but Abrams and Hoskewicz broke it up. A series of lightning passes and Koenig tallied from a dogfight under the basket. Pitsford retaliated by sinking a long one. Pitsford 48—Northern 44. The referee got Abrams for charging and Pitsford added another point.

Northern beat the enemy defense with a quick break, but LeMay and Koenig both missed. The ball came out to Kilmartin, who faked passes but couldn't uncover a receiver. Fak-





Kilmartin knew what was wrong; his eyes hadn't been working right since he'd been slammed on the head in a former game. But somehow he seemed to be finding the basket, and there was no one else to lead the team!

ing again Kilmartin set his feet and arched a shot from his chest. The ball barely rippled the netting, and the crowd roared. Kilmartin shook his head. It had been like shooting blind-folded, lucky as hell. Three points now. LeMay was fouled and made good his free toss. Pitsford by two, 49-47.

As the time shortened the pace increased. Pitsford got panicky and started heaving impossible tries from all over the court. Husky Hos-

kewicz and Abe Abrams took the rebounds and started the Northern offensives. Lefty LeMay hooked one in from the left sideline, and Abrams popped another home from the right wing. Northern led at last, 51-49.

Then another pass got away from Captain Kilmartin. Pitsford recovered, swept up the floor and scored the tying basket. Time was almost up. Northern turned on the heat, but Abrams and Koenig missed the hoop. Pitsford unleashed a desperate drive,

but Hoskewicz smeared it. Jump ball. Husky tapped it to Abrams, and the golden jerseys leaped to the attack. Kilmartin fumbled again, but Husky regained possession, passed in to LeMay.

Lefty's try glanced off the rim. Ki Koenig's rebound failed to drop. Abrams batted the ball out of Husky. Husky feinted and chucked it to Kilmartin. Kilmartin searched in vain for an opening. Then, as his man charged out after him, Kilmartin sidestepped and pushed another long looping shot from his chest. The ball whipped cleanly through the meshes and the field house filled with roaring sound. Northern 53—Pitsford 51.

Seconds later the gun ended the game. The Northern players and substitutes swarmed round Kilmartin, pounding and mauling him, but Kilmartin walked in silence shaking his bent head.

In the dressing room young Stevens confronted his captain. "Boy, are you lucky or are you lucky?" he said grinning.

Kilmartin looked at him with narrowed blue eyes and tight lips. Stevens wore a superior knowing look. Kilmartin's muscles tensed and his knuckles itched. With a great effort he restrained himself.

"Sure I'm lucky," said Kilmartin. "It's better than being good."

Stevens laughed and tossed his curly blond head. "Sometimes," he said. "But not always. I'd rather be good."

"Oh, you are," Kilmartin assured him. "You are."

"You're telling me!" grinned Stevens.

"Run along, punk, before I slap you bowlegged," growled Husky Hoskewicz.

"You and who, the Russian army?" jeered Stevens. But he moved away as Husky started towards him with grim intent and huge fists doubled.

"If you don't smack that guy I'm going to myself," muttered Husky.

"Let him have fun," said Kilmartin. "He doesn't know any better." But even as he spoke he was wondering just how much Stevens did know. He had the feeling that Stevens knew

his secret, his weakness, and it was not pleasant at all. Kilmartin hadn't told anyone, not even his closest friends. It was ironical to think that Stevens, his enemy, might be the only one who knew.

**K**ILMARTIN was becoming almost painfully aware of the girl who sat on his right side in English Lit class. He hadn't noticed her at first; he never paid much attention to girls. But ever since that day she had prompted him in answering a question he had been conscious of her fragrant nearness. She had a clear cut profile, soft brown hair brushed back from a pure brow, and deep brown eyes that were level and frank. Her poise and quiet assurance made Kilmartin feel awkward and shy. Her name was Betty Dunmore and her manner was friendly and pleasant. Kilmartin had become more interested than he would confess.

The professor had written a list of quotations on the blackboard and was calling on the students to identify them. Kilmartin slouched low in his seat and hoped he wouldn't be called. No matter how he strained his eyes he couldn't read the quotations. They were just white blurs against the black. It was getting worse all the time, Kilmartin realized with a hopeless sinking feeling. He gave up trying to read them and thought about Betty Dunmore.

The professor's voice startled him and he went hot all over. "Mr. Kilmartin, will you be kind enough to rouse yourself and identify quotation number seven?" Somebody snickered. Kilmartin sat up straight and studied the board blindly, suffering with prickly heat. He was about to mumble that he didn't know, when he saw what Betty Dunmore had scrawled swiftly in her notebook. Kilmartin cleared his throat.

"It's from Andrea Del Sarto by Browning," he announced with some difficulty.

"Very good, Mr. Kilmartin," said the professor. "Are you an admirer of Browning?"

Kilmartin flushed. "Well, uh, I kind of like some of his stuff," he

muttered. "The simpler ones, I guess you'd say." There was more snickering. Kilmartin knotted his fists and tried to spot the offenders. The professor passed on to the next quotation. Kilmartin whispered a gruff thanks to the girl at his side. She smiled brightly and whispered back: "You'd have known it if you could've seen it." For the rest of the hour Kilmartin pondered over that remark. Somebody knew his secret for certain now.

**W**HEN THEY were dismissed Kilmartin walked out beside Betty Dunmore. She looked up at his lean hard face.

"Why don't you get glasses, Mr. Kilmartin?"

"I'm going to," he told her. "As soon as basketball is over."

"How can you play when you're eyes are so bad? I've marveled at it all season. And you score so many baskets, too."

"I don't know. Sometimes I think I shouldn't be playing. But the boys kind of depend me, I guess. Against Stanton I wanted to go out and put Stevens in, but I couldn't do it."

"Stevens is good, isn't he?"

"Yes, he's pretty hot. Conceited now, but he'll outgrow it maybe."

"Couldn't you play with glasses? I've seen fellows do it."

"I don't want to start wearing them now; it's too late. You see, my eyes were all right until this year. It must have been that head injury I got in that early season game with Atlantic."

"I remember," Betty Dunmore said. "They knocked you into the bleachers just as you went to shoot. It was dirty basketball."

"It's just the way Atlantic plays, that's all," Kilmartin said. "Cardosi, Boyle, Fleming, Higuera—they're all tough boys. And Kramer is the toughest of them all."

"And that's the team you've got to beat for the Conference championship, isn't it? Oh, I hope you can do it. I hate those Atlantic players. They're—they're gorillas!"

"They're good ball players, too,"

grinned Kilmartin. "But we can knock them off—if we're going right."

The girl looked at him gravely, almost fondly. "I'll be right in there beside you," she said earnestly. "I want you to know..."

"Thanks, it will help to know that," Kilmartin said. They strolled on in silence, but there was a warm close feeling between them. At the corner of the building a familiar cheery voice shattered their communion. It was Stevens, his yellow curls shining in the frosty sunlight, his handsome face red and smiling.

"Well, well, I didn't know you two knew one another," Stevens said. "Hello, Beautiful. And how are you, Kilmartin? A fine winter's morn. Betty, I'm cutting the next hour. How about coffee or a coke or something? With Captain Kilmartin's permission, of course."

"Why, yes, I'd like that very much," Betty Dunmore said. "Won't you join us, Mr. Kilmartin?"

"Thanks, but I've got a class I can't cut," Kilmartin lied. "See you later."

Kilmartin turned and walked rapidly away, teeth set and fists clenched, hatred burning in his brain. Now he was sure that Stevens knew his secret, and he was equally certain how he had learned it. It affected him more than it should have probably, but he couldn't help it. Something about Stevens went against his grain. Their mutual dislike had been instinctive. Now that Betty Dunmore was in the picture it was stronger and more bitter than ever. There was the taste of acid in Kilmartin's mouth.

The sun was blinding on the white snow, and Kilmartin's eyes ached and watered in the glare. Heavy with a sense of defeat and despair he turned across the campus toward his fraternity.

**T**HE LUCK of Kilmartin and Northern held through the Kingsley game, but it was torture for the Gold-and-Blue captain. Now that his secret was out Kilmartin seemed to lose the desperate edge of courage

that had kept him going. He felt strangely guilty and ashamed, as if the weakness of his eyes was a shameful thing. He could feel Stevens watching him from the sideline. He was distracted by the knowing look and superior smile of the sophomore.

Kilmartin didn't play the basketball of previous years. He was slower, almost faltering at times, and he fumbled passes and failed to spot receivers. But he could still hit the hoop, even if it was a hazy target under the brilliant lights. He picked up the range automatically from his position on the court and let the ball go. He could have shut his eyes after noting his position and done as well. Shot after shot Kilmartin sent flying through the hemp, while the crowd roared. But his feeling of guilt and shame persisted.

Kilmartin had always been deadly with his one-handed shots from all angles and distances. It was almost impossible to block them without fouling. Two Kingsley players fouled themselves out trying to stop Kilmartin and he went on hooking them home from the right side. Northern switched their attack to the left alley and Lefty LeMay began whipping them in from that sideline. Kingsley was baffled, broken, outclassed... Ki Koenig was slapping rebounds back into the bucket. Husky Hoskewicz and Abe Abrams chipped in with long tosses. The final count was Northern 67-Kingsley 41.

When it was over Kilmartin felt limp and empty with exhaustion. Playing as he had to play with impaired vision was a terrible strain. He had always loved basketball, but now he was coming to hate it. The presence of Stevens bothered him more than he liked to admit. The sophomore was becoming an obsession with him. Kilmartin knew that sooner or later would come the showdown between them. He had to whip Stevens or give up the fight... And for once in his life Kilmartin wasn't sure that he could beat his man.

It preyed on Kilmartin's mind and showed in his eyes and face. He

looked drawn and haggard. Sometimes he cursed himself for a damned fool. There were two sensible courses to take and he had ignored them both. He should tell the truth and bench himself in favor of Stevens; or he should consult an oculist and get glasses to wear when he played. But he shrank from doing either. Perhaps if it had been anyone else but Stevens... Still, his stubbornness was disloyal to the team, a menace to their championship chances. For two years now Atlantic had moved Northern out for the title. This season Northern had set its heart on revenge. They took their basketball dead-serious in the Conference.

**T**HE INTENSE pressure and constant worry was making Kilmartin a sick man. Against Chatham he had an awful night.

Everything went wrong. Kilmartin's shots weren't dropping. They circled the rim, rolled off the edge. They went in and popped back out. There might have been a board over the basket so far as he was concerned. And Chatham couldn't miss a shot that evening. Only the superb defensive play of Abrams and Hoskewicz, the left-handed wizardry of LeMay, and the rebounding of Koenig kept Northern in the contest. No score for Kilmartin in the whole first half.

Kilmartin grew anxious, almost frantic. He tightened up, tried too hard. And he started passing wildly, fumbling, losing the ball time after time. Chatham pulled ahead of Northern, steadily increasing their lead... The whistle blew for a substitution. Kilmartin turned wearily and saw the lights flash golden on Stevens' fair head. Kilmartin didn't have to yank himself after all, Coach Crail was doing it for him.

Crail pulled his captain down beside him. "What's the matter, Killey?"

"I don't know." Kilmartin shook his sweaty head miserably. "I'm just off, I guess. Way off."

"One of those nights," Coach Crail said. "Relax, Killey, take it easy. There's lots of time left."

Stevens stole the ball from two



Chatham men, streaked down the floor, spun away from an opponent and flipped the ball into the strings. It was spectacular and applause filled the field house. Stevens was lightning fast and moved with smooth sure grace, handling the ball like a master. The crowd was still cheering his first sortie when Stevens snared a pass from Husky, jumped high to clear his guard and threw another into the net. The crowd went crazy. The Chatham defense concentrated on Stevens. The sophomore drew them into the corner, feinting, pivoting, and rifled a pass to Ki Koenig, who tallied from beneath the board.

"He's hot tonight," Coach Crail said. "When he's hot he's as good as they come."

"He's hot all right," said Kilmartin, rubbing his aching eyes.

With Stevens setting the pace Northern surged back and closed the gap in the score. LeMay left-handed a couple through the twines, and Husky Hoskewicz roared in to goal a step-shot. Stevens himself scored the tying basket, and almost immediately afterwards fired another home to put Northern out front.

After that Northern was never in grave danger. Stevens went on ringing up points, and his defensive work was on a par with his sensational offensive play. Northern forged steadily ahead and won, 55-43.

As the crowd poured from the exits the name of Stevens was on everybody's tongue. Captain Kilmartin had been abruptly relegated to obscurity.

In the locker room Stevens was frankly jubilant, laughing, singing, wisecracking. But the other players were unusually sober and quiet for a winning team.

**P**RACTICE that week went bad. Coach Crail used Stevens on the varsity, but he didn't fit so well. He wanted to direct both the offense and defense, dominate the play entirely. When he started crabbing the veterans for real or fancied slipups it was too much.

"What are you, acting-Captain or

something?" growled Husky Hoskewicz.

"Well, it's about time this outfit had some kind of a captain," Stevens proclaimed. "Come on, now let's try that play again, Hoskewicz."

"What'd you say about a captain?" roared Husky.

Stevens repeated his words with even greater contempt. Husky started for him, but Kilmartin cut between them. "I guess this is my party, Husky," Kilmartin faced the sophomore. "You've been asking for this." He slapped Stevens' face a ringing smack. Stevens' blond head flew back from the impact. Stevens recovered and lashed out with both hands. Kilmartin's mouth went numb under smashing knuckles. He pushed Stevens away and whipped a left and a right across. Stevens' head bobbed and he staggered... Then Coach Crail and the others forced their way between the fighters and held them apart.

Kilmartin's mouth was bloody and puffed. Stevens bled from the nose and a slashed cheekbone. It had been a brief but brutal encounter. Coach Crail sent Stevens to the showers and Kilmartin back to the bench. Practice went on with Tenney at right forward. It was a sorry exhibition.

The next afternoon Kilmartin was back at his old post, conscious always of Stevens' scornful eyes upon him. The rest of the team snapped back into form, but Kilmartin wasn't right. He was slow, uncertain, and blundering. Crail yanked him and sent in Stevens. The sophomore unleashed some flashy basketball, but the other four men weren't with him.

Coach Crail shook his bald head in bewilderment and disgust. In the homestretch his club was cracking wide open.

**T**O MAKE matters worse Kilmartin had something else on his mind besides basketball troubles. Betty Dunmore... When he found she was constantly in Stevens' company he tried to ignore her, forget all about her, but she lingered in his thoughts. He couldn't get rid of her. It was the first time he'd ever felt

that way about a girl. He took to cutting English Lit class so he wouldn't have to sit beside her. Then one day she stopped him on the campus.

"Where have you been?" she asked. "I've missed you, really I have." She was very serious.

"I've been busy," Kilmartin said and started along.

"Please—" Betty Dunmore caught his arm. "I want to talk with you. Let's have a coke in College Inn, what do you say?"

Kilmartin wanted to refuse but he couldn't do it. Furious with himself he followed her into the noisy smoky Inn and sat down facing her across the table in a booth.

"What's the matter with your ball team?" she asked.

"You know as well as I do, I guess."

"The boys don't like Stevens, do they?"

"He won't let anybody like him," Kilmartin said. "It's his own fault. He's got the worst case of swelled head I ever saw."

"He feels awfully bad about it."

Kilmartin laughed his disbelief. "Please, lady, don't give us that."

"But he does," insisted Betty Dunmore. "Stevie's not at all like he acts. That's just a defense mechanism he uses. You see, I come from the same town he does. In high school he was pathetic, so shy and sensitive and bashful. He had the worst inferiority complex I've ever heard of, honestly. I felt sorry for him. I tried to help him. You know, build up his confidence. Perhaps he overdid it. Anyway he doesn't suffer like he used to."

"Instead he makes everybody else suffer," grinned Kilmartin. "So you're responsible for that swollen head? Well, you ought to be proud of your handiwork. You sure did a good job."

The girl bowed her brown head. "I guess I'm just making matters worse . . . I wish you and Stevie could be friends. You could help him a lot."

Kilmartin laughed again. "I'm going, all right. I'm going to beat his head off one of these days."

"Do you think you can do it?"

"I'm not worrying too much."

"Well, I'd like to see it. It should be a great fight."

"You think he's quite a guy, don't you?"

"I think he will be—when he grows up a little," Betty Dunmore said. "Of course there's really nothing serious between us. I mean, we're just friends, that's all."

Kilmartin's blue eyes lighted and his lean face was boyish. "Gee, I thought you—. Say, I'm sure glad to hear that. You know, I'd like to—. I don't know how to say it. But I'd like to see you more. . ."

"Why don't you then?" smiled the girl. "I'd like it, too."

"Okay, it's a deal," grinned Kilmartin, and they shook hands across the table. Kilmartin felt better than he had for a long time.

**K**ILMARTIN started the State game. After two scoreless minutes he cracked the ice with a one-hander from deep in the corner. On the bench Stevens squirmed and swore. "That blind bat! He's the luckiest guy in the world." Coach Crail glanced at the sophomore, asked him what he said. Stevens shook his head and muttered, "Nothing, Coach, nothing."

Northern caught fire from Kilmartin and piled up a quick lead. Lefty LeMay pitched in points from the left wing. Ki Koenig was in like a panther for the rebounds. Hoskewicz and Abrams counted with long loops. Kilmartin didn't score again, but he didn't need to right then. The Gold-and-Blue was sweeping State off the court.

Kilmartin's fumble paved the way for State's first basket, and his poor pass gave them their second. Anger flared up in Kilmartin and he fouled his man in the act of shooting. Two more points. Kilmartin saw through a hot thick haze. It was a nightmare under the bright lights. His man slipped away from him and rolled in another. Northern 13-State 9. . . . Northern was suddenly stalled dead. State surged onward and evened the score.

Kilmartin called time out and

looked toward the Northern bench. Stevens was standing up getting out of his blue sweat suit, blond head bent to Coach Crail's voice. Kilmartin walked to the sideline with his dark head bowed. There was no cheering. Stevens smiled mockingly at Kilmartin. Then the crowd gave Stevens a rousing ovation.

"Killy, you're not right, not yourself," Crail said. "What's the matter, boy?"

"I don't know," Kilmartin mumbled. "I just haven't got it."

State's scoring streak continued until they led by seven points. Then Husky Hoskewicz broke up a play, passed to Abrams, and Abe fed it to Stevens. The ball settled nicely into the iron rim. Stevens laughed and said, "Now I'm going to show you boys something." And he did. Three times in rapid succession Stevens raced through, broke loose and threw the leather into the cords. Northern 23-State 22. It was tied at 26 at half-time.

The second half was tight and hard-fought with the score see-sawing crazily. The Northern team had slumped sadly, but young Stevens went on pumping points into the bucket. State concentrated on stopping Stevens, but it couldn't be done. Playing like an inspired man Stevens kept blazing away and scoring. Single-handed Stevens lifted Northern into the lead in the closing minutes. During a time-out the sophomore lashed the lagging veterans with his tongue, got them fighting-mad... And Northern held the lead and won, 43-39.

"We can thank the kid for this one," Coach Crail said. "But heaven help us against Chapel Hill and Atlantic, if we play like we did to-night."

Both Chapel Hill and Atlantic had doubled the score on State. The Northern players were sullen and morose under the showers. Only Stevens was in a mood for celebrating.

"Hey, you guys!" Stevens yelled. "Didn't you know we won a ball game?"

Husky Hoskewicz looked at him

darkly. "You won it, kid," Husky said. "So you celebrate it."

**N**ORTHERN drilled for the Chapel Hill game with Stevens at forward and Captain Kilmartin on the sideline. Kilmartin watched the practice sessions with mixed and conflicting emotions. There was the bitterness of failure and inactivity, but there was also a vast relief that the burden was off his back. With his eyes as they were Kilmartin might have lost the championship for his team. Now the responsibility was no longer his. Maybe it was best for all concerned. Kilmartin sat back and relaxed fully for the first time in months.

Stevens still didn't click with his teammates, but individually he was brilliant and effective. Coach Crail's bald head shone with sweat and his face was seamed with worry. Northern had to beat Chapel Hill and Atlantic to take the title.

Chapel Hill opened with a rush and grabbed an early lead. The Northern team acted disorganized, unsure, lost. But Stevens cut loose with a series of solo dashes and scintillating shots to balance accounts. The first half was tight with the lead swapping hands at every tick of the clock. Stevens was the whole show for Northern.

Kilmartin watched with dispassionate interest. It was no longer his team, his game, his fight. He was through with basketball. It was an inglorious way to wind up his court career, but that couldn't be helped. Fate had decided the issue.

In the last half Chapel Hill spurted again and jumped ahead. Lefty LeMay and Ki Koenig teamed-up to lessen the gap, and Abe Abrams and Husky Hoskewicz began to bear down harder on the defense and choke off the Chapel Hill thrusts. Stevens played as if he were the only gold-jerseyed player on the floor. The sophomore refused to pass the ball. Every time he got hold of it Stevens either shot or tried to dribble through and score. He lost the ball repeatedly. Northern went to

pieces. With ten minutes left Chapel Hill led, 37-27, ten big points.

"All right, Killy," said Crail quietly. "It's up to you, boy. It's your ball game."

Kilmartin stood up and shed his sweat-suit almost reluctantly. It was unnerving to be jerked so suddenly back into the center of things. He had been resigned and comfortable on the bench. If only his eyes were right.... Well, it was his club and his game now. He passed the angry sneering Stevens without a glance. The gang was glad to see him, all right. It showed in their sweating faces.

Husky Hoskewicz shattered an enemy drive and reversed the direction of the ball. Koenig and LeMay worked it into the Chapel Hill defense. Kilmartin cut down the right sideline at top speed. The ball came, a swift blur in the lights, and smacked his palms. Kilmartin outraced one opponent, leaped high to clear another, and swung his right arm. The ball caromed off the board and swished the meshes. Kilmartin felt the old exultant thrill in his veins.

Northern was an entirely different team after that. Abrams and Hoskewicz and Koenig smeared the Chapel Hill attempts. LeMay's left-handed tosses were registering consistently. Koenig cuffed in rebounds. Abrams scored on a quick breakthrough, and Husky sank a long one. Kilmartin hooked another into the net from back of the foul circle. Northern was out front. Chapel Hill was bewildered, beaten. Northern, 48—Chapel 42, at the finish.

Northern did celebrate that victory in the dressing room. Stevens watched the hilarious horseplay with bitter brooding eyes, noting the difference here as he had out on the court. Kilmartin belonged and he didn't. Those players would go through hell-and-highwater for Kilmartin. Kilmartin made a team of them.... Stevens was alone and on the outside. He dressed and left quickly.

Kilmartin was happy in the midst of his laughing kidding mates, but

he was still worried and afraid. Atlantic was the toughest of them all. Atlantic had Kramer, Boyle, Cardosi, Higuera, Fleming.... And Kilmartin's eyes were no better. The luck of the Irish had got him through again tonight. His first shot sparked the boys, touched off the fireworks. He might get credit, but they had won the game, not him.

It would've been better, Kilmartin thought miserably, if they had won with Stevens, if they'd won without me, left me on the bench. That's where I really belong now. I know it, Stevens knows it, Betty Dunmore knows it.... But he was back in there and he'd be in there against Atlantic. And the final outcome rested squarely upon him.

There was no way out. Tonight's game had sealed all avenues of escape. It was up to Captain Kilmartin.

**T**HE NIGHT before the Atlantic game Kilmartin and Betty Dunmore sat in a booth in the Campus Grill drinking milk and looking very grave and sombre.

"Wouldn't it be better to tell them about your eyes, Killy?"

Kilmartin shook his dark cropped head. "I can't, Betty. It'd throw the other boys off stride. They'd lose confidence in me. It'd lick us sure, Betty."

"Well, they're better with you in there, Killy. They're no good with Stevens. Poor Stevie, he can't seem to learn...."

Just then the glass doors swung open and Stevens swaggered in, handsome in his tailored coat, a bright scarf at his throat. He saw them and walked toward the booth laughing.

"Now isn't this cosy?" Stevens said. "Captain Kilmartin, I congratulate you on your excellent taste. Betty, I can't say the same about you. Seems if you could do better for yourself, gal. But there's no accounting for taste. May I sit down?"

"No," Kilmartin said flatly.

"Aw, please, Captain. Let me sit down and entertain you with my inimitable conversation. Betty looks as



if she needs a bit of light and cheer."

"Beat it," Kilmartin said quietly.

Stevens regarded him steadily. "Sometime, Captain, we'll settle our little debate once and for all."

"Any time," said Kilmartin. "The sooner the better. Now scram."

Stevens smiled. "I leave you to your boredom, then. I hope your luck holds tomorrow night, Kilmartin. You'll need it. Good night, Betty. When you tire of your present company give me a ring." He walked jauntily away.

Kilmartin's big hands were clenched on the table, the knuckles jutting white under the brown skin. Betty Dunmore smiled warmly and covered his hands with her own.

**T**HE HUGE Northern field house was crammed to capacity for the championship game between the traditional enemies. Northern wore gold shirts with blue numbers and blue shorts piped with gold. Atlantic was clad in bright red uniforms trimmed with white. Brilliant lights flooded the hardwood surface. The teams lined up for the first tip-off. Kilmartin, captain and veteran, was the most nervous man on the court. Kilmartin shook hands with the powerful rugged Kramer.

Kramer said: "They tell me you haven't been right since the night we roughed you up some."

"Don't count on that," said Kilmartin.

The referee tossed the ball up. Ki Koenig controlled the tap, but Kramer tore the ball from Kilmartin's grasp. Atlantic started their famous fast-breaking attack, whipping the ball about in an intricate pattern. Cardosi got loose for a second and pushed in the first basket.

Abrams passed in and Northern advanced, working the ball in and out. Kilmartin screened for LeMay but Lefty's shot missed. Atlantic rushed up the floor again, snapping passes with dazzling speed and precision. Kilmartin lost track of Kramer long enough to let Kramer score on a quick thrust. Kilmartin shook his head and rubbed his burning eyes.

Northern carried back and shook Kilmartin free under the basket, but Kilmartin muffed Koenig's bullet pass. The ball had come like a fleeting shadow through the fog that veiled Kilmartin's eyes. Atlantic charged once more, but Hoskewicz stopped them cold. Jump ball. Abrams took the tap and passed to Koenig, who was fouled as he tried to shoot. From the foul mark Koenig chalked up the first two points for Northern. But Atlantic promptly retaliated with Fleming caging the spheroid. Atlantic, 6-2.

Fast and furious the play surged back and forth. It was rough tough basketball. Atlantic always played that way and got away with it. Kramer was a master at fouling without penalty. Kilmartin had another chance but Kramer slammed into him, and the shot went wild. No foul called... Then Lefty LeMay banged in a beauty from the left lane. Abrams intercepted a pass, threw to Kilmartin, and Kilmartin cut loose with a burst of speed that carried him into the clear on the right wing. As Kramer hurtled at him Kilmartin got the ball off swiftly. He was on the floor when that shot cut the cords cleanly. Tied, 6-6.

"Blind luck!" snarled Kramer, using his elbows and knees on Kilmartin as they untangled. Kilmartin jabbed back with his own elbows and told the big guard to quit crying.

Atlantic put on the pressure and took the lead, with Boyle and Cardosi dropping spectacular heaves. Kramer snatched a pass out of Kilmartin's groping fingers and went down to score another. Atlantic, 12-6... Kilmartin missed a free try, but Ki Koenig vaulted high to slap the rebound through the hoop.

Northern hurled all five men forward in a daring assault then, teaming-up perfectly to open the Atlantic defense. Hoskewicz rammed a rushing shot home. LeMay pitched a sensational left-hander in. Captain Kilmartin dodged and whirled away from clinging red jerseys and sent another flying into the meshes. Northern, 14-12.

THE STRIFE grew even more savage. Players drove recklessly after the ball. Shocking collisions left men sprawling on the floor. A double foul was called, and both Abrams and Boyle converted. Kilmartin stabbed blindly at a pass, but Kramer snared it and was off. Kilmartin knocked him down under the basket, and Kramer added two foul points to the Atlantic total. Tied at 15.

On the Northern bench young Stevens was learning more and more about teamwork and spirit. For the first time he understood the courage that kept Kilmartin in there fighting. Half-blind but fighting his heart out.

Two Atlantic players rode Lefty LeMay out-of-bounds, piling him under them. Lefty did not get up at once. When he did was limping badly and had to be helped off the court. His ankle.... Stevens stood up all afire with eagerness. But Coach Crail said, "Sit down," and pointed at Tenney.

"You're next, Kilmartin," promised Kramer.

Kilmartin had been ready to ask for a substitute. He was nothing but dead-weight, a handicap to his mates.... But now with LeMay out he had to stay in the game. It was a terrible break for Northern.

Higuera, Tenney's opponent, immediately ran away from the inexperienced replacement and scored twice in short order. Northern, stunned by the loss of LeMay, was still scrapping. Abrams goaled a pretty long one. Kilmartin crashed through and hooked a rebound home. Even at 19 now. Atlantic had the superior team, but Northern held them even through sheer fight.

Stevens was watching and learning and beginning to grow up.

Atlantic unleashed all their power and might, but Hoskewicz and Abrams damned the red tide. Then Kramer out-maneuvered Kilmartin, made him look foolish, and Kramer scored from close-in. A few seconds later Fleming, the Red center, rebounded successfully. Cardosi cashed in on two foul tries, and Atlantic was

on top, 25-19. Atlantic was shooting the works now. The half was nearly over... Higuera ran away from Tenney to dump in a step-shot. At intermission it was Atlantic 27-Northern 19.

In the locker room young Stevens hauled Kilmartin into a far corner. "Killy, I've been a damn fool, but that's all over now. Get me in there, Killy. I'll play ball with the team."

Kilmartin shook his dripping head. "I'm not running that end of it."

Stevens swore wildly. "You can speak to Crail. Listen, man! I'll win this game if you give me a chance."

Kilmartin's blue eyes were cold. "No one man'll win it. We'll play it out, win or lose. You wouldn't understand that."

Stevens' eyes blazed. He caught Kilmartin's sweat-greased shoulders. "You want to lose it? What's the matter with you? Tenney doesn't belong in there, he's lost. And you—you're losing the game yourself, Kilmartin. You can't play ball blind!"

Red rage flamed through Kilmartin. He struck Stevens before he knew what he was doing, once, twice, three times. Stevens stumbled back, recovered and lunged ahead with lashing fists. Kilmartin felt the numbing jolting concussions, and then the wall against his back. Kilmartin started a swing but Stevens beat him to it. The terrific blow smashed the side of Kilmartin's head and drove it against the wall. Kilmartin's knees folded and he fell to his hands and knees. Blinding lights exploded in his skull, then faded in the blackness. He tried to get up but he couldn't raise himself. He stretched out on the floor. Someone lifted his head and bathed it gently with a cold wet towel. The uproar in the room seemed far away.

Kilmartin opened his eyes slowly. As his vision cleared he saw the anxious faces around him. Hoskewicz said, "I'll kill that punk after the game, Killy." Kilmartin shook his head. "No, Husky, I started it. My fault. I'm all right..."

Then young Stevens was kneeling beside him and there were tears in

the boy's eyes. "Killy, I'm sorry, I can't tell you, Killy..."

"That's okay, Steve." Kilmartin smiled up at him. "Buck up, boy, we got half a ball game to play."

"And we'll win it!" Stevens said fiercely. "We will, Killy. You're damn right we will."

**S**TEVENS started the second half in Kilmartin's place. Atlantic had heard a lot about this boy, and they meant to watch him. Kramer started roughing him, but Stevens gave back as good as he got. And his mocking wisecracks infuriated Kramer. With masterly skill and poise Stevens lured Kramer into fouling him flagrantly. Two free attempts. The ball scarcely brushed the strings as Stevens made both points.

Boyle scored for Atlantic on the end of a machinelike play. Stevens ripped an Atlantic pass away from Kramer, cut through like a golden arrow and flipped one in at full speed. Directly afterwards Stevens feinted Koenig into the open, fed him a perfect pass, and Koenig put it into the twines. Atlantic still led, 29-25.

"The kid's hot," Coach Crail said in a thankful voice.

Kilmartin grinned. "Sure, he's a ball of fire."

"How's your head feel, Killy?"

"Fine. I'll be ready in a minute." Kilmartin spoke the truth. His head felt clearer than it had for a long while, and his vision continued to clear and sharpen. Perhaps that punch had fixed his eyes, by some freak of fortune. The blow had landed right where Kilmartin's head had hit the bleachers that night at Atlantic... Kilmartin looked at the scoreboard and saw it distinctly. A warm glow stirred to life inside him. It was impossible, fantastic, but it was true. He could really see again. The ball was no longer a blur, the baskets stood out plainly. That haze obscured his sight no more.

A great roar shook the high rafters, Stevens had scored again, flipping it through on the dead run. Kramer was raving like a maniac. On Stevens' next attempt Kramer flattened him

with a wicked body-block and the whistle blasted. Stevens calmly deposited two more points in the basket, knotting it up, 29-29.

But Atlantic still had plenty of powder left. Kramer juggernauted in to bag a two-pointer, and Cardosi followed with a breathtaking long looper. Husky Hoskewicz came back for Northern, gunning one through from far down the floor. But the towering Fleming planted a push shot in the hoop for the invaders. Atlantic, 35-31.

Tenney's man, Higuera, got away from him for a quick basket, and before Captain Kilmartin could get out of his sweat-suit Higuera had rung the bell again. Atlantic by eight points, 39-31.

**K**ILMARTIN in for Tenney. For the first time since his injury at Atlantic Kilmartin felt supremely sure of himself, eager for combat, his eyes keen and ready. Once more he could handle that ball with the best of them. Kilmartin took a pass, rifled it in to Koenig, and slashed in himself. Stevens got the ball from Koenig, slipped it to Kilmartin, and blocked Kramer out of the play. Kilmartin dashed in close and banked the ball into the net.

Kilmartin and Stevens got together and engineered another scoring play, with Steve on the shooting end this trip. Atlantic was beginning to worry plenty. Stevens missed one from the side, but Kilmartin broke through, jumped high in the air and popped the rebound in. Stevens tied the score with a twisting leaping overhead shot that brought down the thunder from the thousands, and it stood 39-39.

Atlantic's fear gave way to panic now. They couldn't check those twin threats, Kilmartin and Stevens. They felt the championship slipping from their hands, and they began shooting wildly, taking impossible shots. Hoskewicz and Abrams captured the rebounds and started the ball back. Koenig pivoted the attack, feinting to one forward and feeding the other. Kilmartin split the rim from the foul circle. Stevens flipped another

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## BLIND BASKET

through. Another attack... Stevens pulled the defense over, slammed a spot pass in, and Kilmartin caught and basketed the ball with one clean motion.

Atlantic cracked under the pressure, blew wide open and broke down completely. Northern by six points, 45-39.

While the Northern crowd went insane with excitement and joy Kilmartin and Stevens kept on pouring leather into the meshes. Final score, Northern 55-Atlantic 43. And eighteen points apiece for Kilmartin and Stevens, but nobody but the sports writers—and Betty Dunmore—cared about that.

In the dressing room the Northern champions celebrated unanimously and riotously. For the first time Stevens was one of them, one of the gang, and it was the finest feeling he had ever known.

"I want to thank you, Killy," Stevens said. "I want to thank all of you. I sure learned a lot this year; it took me a hell of a long time to get it, but I've got it for keeps now."

"I want to thank you for that belt in the head, Steve," grinned Kilmartin. "It cleared the old eyes, kid. No glasses for a while anyway. Funny thing, though..."

"Wonderful thing!" exclaimed Stevens. "Marvelous. Now I can be glad I clipped you, Killy."

Later Betty Dunmore told them she was the proudest happiest girl in the world. Happy for the championship, for Kilmartin's eyes, for Stevens' coming of age, and for their new friendship. And just naturally proud of her two big foolish overgrown boys.

"You won't have to prompt me in English Lit any more," Kilmartin said.

Betty Dunmore laughed. "That's what you think, Kilmartin. And that's not all I'll be prompting you in either."

"You're a gone duck, Killy," grinned Stevens. "And a damn lucky duck, too."

THE END





# The Surgeon

By ARTHUR MANN

*Swiftly Tother had nerve but the wrong kind!*

**E**VERYTHING goes along fine with your ball club in Spring training and at the start of the season. It's working like a chunk of well-oiled machinery when *bingo!* it falls apart in the manner of the one-horse shay. Panicky, most managers hard-scrabble around for veterans to patch up the wabby spots. They go into the baseball market and pay fabulous prices for oldsters, because you can depend upon veterans when hot weather and double headers loom ahead. They know how to look a crisis in the eye and stare it down.

But you can't always find the veterans. In fact, you seldom do. They just don't grow on trees, nor anywhere else when you're desperate for help, as Joe Hodgens was. Joe was manager and part-owner of the Brookline Bears, and he was sorely tempted to empty the safe and beat the bushes for high-priced skill. Then he changed his mind with almost feminine suddenness and did the unexpected.

With surprising daring, he decided to take the big chance, and go the

whole hog with inexperience and youth. He yanked at least six of the creaking oldsters and put kids in key spots. As you can well understand, it brought the snipers of the press into the open, and they combed Joe to a fare-thee-well. But Hodgens had a tough hide. He simply ignored the barbs and concentrated on his long-shot scheme.

No doubt he had hustle on his Brookline team now, and he had a fifty-fifty chance of getting away with it. They had looked pretty good in training, and everything depended on whether they could stand up under heavy firing.

One of the outfielders, a promising centerfielder, was particularly impressive. He was left-handed all the way, rather small, compact and fast as a frightened elk at a Masonic meeting. They called him Swiftly. He had earned the nickname fairly, and nobody bothered with his real tag, Ken Tother. He was from the Carolina tobacco country. He scowled with a pair of shoe-button eyes, massacred a wad of gum all the time, had

a knack of learning fast. Hodgens never had to tell him anything twice. He contained no more fear than a jackal and was just as sly.

Tother was quick on the vocal comeback; you couldn't stop him with any kind of a wisecrack. As soon as the team heard him pop off, they knew something of a jockey was on their hands.

"They don't go heavy for you Claghorns up north," Jack Alston, the first-sacker, called to him one day.

"Ty Cobb was a southerner, too," Swifty replied.

Alston laughed. "But Ty Cobb was a real center fielder."

"Too bad you can't stick around twenty years and see how I make out," the kid challenged.

Grinning, he chewed hard on his gum. He was tough to stop, though he talked back only when he was spoken to. Other times he'd just go on chewing his gum savagely and puzzling things out. At least, he always looked like he was puzzling out something. If he wasn't, he sure did a swell imitation.

From his remarks, you could tell that Ty Cobb and his dashing game had made a deep impression on Swifty Tother. And from the way he hustled in that center field acreage, he seemed to picture himself as a thorough reincarnation of the "Georgia Peach."

Perhaps the youngster had the correct line on himself. Of course, he needed experience, and Hodgens wasn't certain that he'd hit the good pitching. Otherwise he had the goods. He was fast and awake. He could run the bases and slide to any spot you'd call. He was a natural lead-off man, peppy, goat-getting and steady.

Hodgens brushed aside his freshness, and took a liking to him. A young, hustling ball player is unusual. A good one rarely comes along twice in a generation to the same ball club.

**I**T SHOULD be explained here that a baseball team is something like a family, except that there might

not be so much scrapping on a ball club. But surroundings in a family will mould a boy's life. And it will do the same to a player on a ball club.

If the club is loose, allows gambling, late hours, and if some of the veterans drink, you can't expect a young player to start preaching early hours and abstinence. No sir, he'll join up with the reprobates and have a whale of a time going to the dogs.

That's why Hodges didn't take a dislike to young Swifty Tother. Joe figured he could be brought along, taught table manners, good habits and something fine made out of him. He looked as though he'd be around with the Bears for a couple of seasons before he'd be ready to command a fortune from the big leagues.

Joe talked to the kid as much as he could, giving him good tips here and there on the hitting strength and weaknesses of the Oakland Tigers, who opened the Bears' schedule. Joe explained as well as he could just what he'd pitch to them.

Swifty drank everything in without a word, massaging his wad of gum like it was his worst enemy. Then Joe asked him how he felt about playing in the league. The boy grinned and stared back with those licorice-drop eyes.

"I'm here to stay," he said firmly. "I fought my way up, and I'll keep on battling."

"What do you mean?" Joe asked, a little puzzled.

The boy's face grew serious. "Baseball is tough. The strongest hang around the longest. If you sit back, somebody'll knock you right out of your job. And I'm going to see that I do the knocking before they knock me!"

That little speech was surprising, one of the longest anyone ever heard him make. He glared with a look of defiance. Joe did some hasty thinking, trying to decide whether to tone him down then, or later. Joe decided to wait.

"Don't get cracked up," the manager warned.

He laughed. "Not me. I can take care of myself."

It was just like one of these bantam roosters poppin' off in a barnyard. But Joe didn't want to do anything about curbing such a spirit. After all, you've got to have it on every team, although any manager will admit that it can be overdone. This kid seemed so full of pep and anxious for baseball that you had to admire his spirit.

As opening day drew near, Joe began to wonder whether he should have laced into him.

**T**HERE HAD been a lot of talk in the Brookline papers about Hodgens and his team of "unknowns". It wasn't exactly a team of unknowns. It was simply that five or six of the positions were occupied by brand new players. Old favorites had been let out. To hundreds of fans, this was downright injustice. They forgot that poor play by these same veterans the year before had kept them from the ball park late in the season.

As the season opened almost nobody on the Bears had a following. The first game brought a sellout crowd, but they were just rooting in general for the Bears. To each new player they growled, "Come on, show your stuff!"

As far as a following was concerned, it was a free-for-all. It was a scratch race to see who would draw the biggest percentage of fans. The logical leader was Packy Mack, a young, hard-hitting right fielder.

All of Hodgens' colts were on their toes as the opening gong sounded that day. They realized the importance of this first impression. Lefty Pearson, one of the few hold-overs from the season before, was pitching for the Bears.

Lefty got through the opening inning with only a pass to the third batter to worry him. The fourth man flew out, ending the frame. The crowd settled back to watch Hodgens' baby parade.

Swiftly Tother strutted to the plate, swinging three big bats. He tossed a pair behind him, just missing the bat boy's head. Then he examined the batter's box as though he'd never

seen one before and looked over the pitcher.

Swinging hard and true he whacked the first ball pitch right on the nose. The wallop went into deep right, but it hooked around foul by a few feet. The crowd gasped at that one, and so did both dugouts.

The kid hitched up his pants and took another toe hold, but he didn't bite at the next throw, a wide one. He took his toe hold again and bit down extra hard on his gum. The ball zoomed to the plate, and the kid's bat shot down like the tongue of a rattler.

He dropped the neatest bunt down the third base line you ever did see. And by the time the third baseman got in at it, Tother had dug his spikes into first base.

He had been warned about the power and aim of the Oakland catcher's arm; Wally Bihler was poison to base stealers. But whether the kid forgot or was just too smart for his own good, no one knew. He merely lit out on the first pitch and streaked for second.

You could have bought Hodgens' feelings for two cents as he saw Bigler's arm go back and whip that ball down like a bullet. It looked like Hodgens had sent the kid down on a cinch play. Tother hit the dirt. The umpire's hand waved him out, and then went out straight, palms down. He was safe!

**T**HE TIGERS' second sacker came up and started to swing at Swifty, but the kid ducked and sat on the bag, making believe he was adjusting the roll of his pants and stockings.

The umpire was holding the second-sacker back, and Swifty, as calm as you please, was waiting for the game to start up. Hodgens suspected something, but, from where he stood, at the first-base coaching box, he couldn't see and wasn't sure. Then the Tigers' first baseman came back, scowling and muttering.

"That bushier is a ball kicker," he muttered to Joe.

"That baby?" Joe said, registering horror at the thought. "Why, he

don't know the first thing about ball-kicking. He's a grammar school kid."

"He's a ball kicker!" the sacker repeated. "He'd better watch out. He'll be kicking that ball with his head."

Joe bantered a few more words with the first baseman. The crowd gave the kid a great hand when the game was resumed. They knew the kid was smart and fresh, but didn't think he was a ball kicker.

But he was a revelation on the next play. Abram, the Bears' second baseman, hit a ground ball to the shortstop. It was a long hopper, and the shortstop took the fielder's choice at third. It was a close play, but the throw had Swifty beaten. Yet that ball rolled into the dirt and away from third. Abrams made second on the fumble.

There was the devil to pay. The Tigers were claiming interference, which wasn't exactly true, because the third-sacker already had the ball and failed to hold on to it when there was "bodily contact." The crowd was howling for Swifty Tother.

Packy Mack's long fly brought the chesty little outfielder across the plate, and you'd have thought the stands would come down from the cheering that followed. As he walked to his bench, behind first base, there wasn't a change in his features. He just bore into that wad of gum and scowled as though he was trying to puzzle something out. He touched the peak of his cap and disappeared into the dugout.

Now, if the game had gone along like ordinary games, with a few hits here and a run there, everything would have been forgotten. But it so happened that Lefty Pearson, not trusting these green kids, settled down to protect that one-run lead with all he had.

The Oakland pitcher did likewise, only more so. He allowed just one more hit—Packy Mack's harmless double in the eighth. Pearson wound up allowing only five hits, but no runs, and took unto himself a 1-0

victory for his first performance of the season.

**Y**OU'D HAVE thought the mil-lenium was at hand. The papers screamed about Swifty Tother and what a wow he was on those base paths. Of course, they didn't mention ball-kicking, because they probably didn't know. In fact, none of the Bears did for sure. Those Tigers would claim anything to win a ball game.

That first win was charged up to Swifty Tother's great base running. They had a good word for Lefty Pearson's pitching, but throughout all the stories, there were peonies of praise for the speedy boy. It was so sugary, it was sickening.

Naturally, the Bears thought it would turn his head. Lots of kids' hat sizes have jumped from less. But the kid seemed unimpressed by it all. Evidently he had puzzled the thing out beforehand. He was exactly the same the next day.

The Oakland Tigers, however, were not the same. They had spent a bad night, and they came to the ball Park next day with a glow in their eyes that was not exactly love-light.

The crowd was all for Swifty Tother as he opened the home half of the first inning. They wanted some more of that base-running, and he knew what they wanted. For a kid supposed to be inexperienced, he was the coolest article under fire you ever saw.

The first ball, of course, came right at his head, and he hit the dirt. He got up and brushed himself off.

"Three more of them," he called to the Tigers' pitcher, "and we'll have some fun!"

He got three more, but they weren't at his head. The pitcher couldn't find enough of the plate to keep out of trouble, and Swifty walked. The crowd came to the edge of their seats and began to whoop it up for action.

Playing up the situation, Joe Hodgens called the kid over and whispered some nonsense in his ear. He nodded, quick as a flash, as though Joe had just given him some



great advice. The Tigers looked worried, and the pitcher began to shuffle around. It was great stuff.

Naturally, Swifty didn't go down right away as they expected. He waited till the count was three and two on Abrams. Then he was off with the pitch. Abrams whacked one to third. The third-baseman scooped it up and heaved underhand for a force play at second. It was close again, but this time Swifty was out.

He walked back to the dugout, still chewing his wad of gum and looking like he was puzzled. With the kid out of mind, Joe Hodgens got busy trying to pump up the rally which was budding, and he succeeded to some extent. The Bears got a run out of it to tie the score.

Nothing much happened until the third, and then the Bears were goaded into making up for lost time. Swifty was more than just a lead-off man, he was the generalissimo of the attack.

He slashed a ball into right field. It was a long single to any other ball player but Swifty that day. He streaked for second without taking more than a glimpse at the fielder. He went straight into the bag with both feet slashing the air. The second baseman rolled over into the dirt. The ball bounded away.

Swifty got up with no lost motion and headed for third. The Tigers' shortstop rushed over, picked up the ball and did an unusual thing. He heaved that ball right at the kid's head. The ball struck Swifty in the shoulder and bounded off. He hit the dirt again and was safe at third in a cloud of dust.

From the reactions of the crowd, you'd have thought a war had just ended, instead of just starting. When the excitement of that mad dash had simmered down to mild hysteria, the base umpire came a-running over to third and started to yell at Swifty for spiking the second sacker. But he had hardly opened his trap when Swifty sat down on the bag and pulled down his own stocking.

The sight of the kid's left leg shut that umpire up for good. The stocking was caked to a spike wound that

Swifty had picked up in that opening inning. Yes, they'd given him "the works" as he slid into the bag on the force-out.

The sight of that red leg and stocking was all the Bears needed. They lighted into that Oakland crew and knocked the pitcher into kingdom come. It was a real pasting.

And every time the speedy kid got on base, which was plenty that afternoon, the Tigers went gunning for him. But he was a clever article. He knew what to do and when to do it, and Oakland came out second best all around.

It was a personal victory for the kid center fielder, and another win for the Bears by a score of 7 to 2. The city began to go cuckoo on the subject of Swifty Tother.

**T**HE THIRD game with Oakland was rained out, giving the Bears a sweep of the series. For rainy day stories, the sports writers wrote only about Swifty Tother and his slashing, dashing style of play. They blew up his spike wound into a big balloon of sympathy.

It was good stuff, in a way, so long as it didn't turn young Tother's head. It gave the town-folk something to talk about. They forgot about the war-time stars who had been let out. Baseball fans are quick to forget that way.

The Westwood Packers were next on the schedule for a three-game series. Word had got around fast through the grapevine route that Brookline had a package of dynamite in centerfield. The Packers were all eyes when they came out on the field.

Just before the game started, the Westwood manager, came up to Joe Hodgens. He didn't look any too friendly.

"Are the bags strapped down to the ground?" he asked.

"Of course they are," Joe snapped back. "What's the matter?"

"Then, if they're strapped down," Brame growled, "there won't be no use slidin' high. Right?"

Joe stared back and then laughed.

"Go ahead an' laugh," Brame shot

back, only I ain't got enough players for your head surgeon to take carvin' lessons on."

He walked away leaving Joe still laughing. But he sobered up just as soon as Ollie was out of sight. He knew that Ollie was right. It would be the same if somebody was cutting up his own players. Only he didn't want Ollie to get the notion that he was running a tea-party ball game.

Swiftly Tother was meek and mild during that opening game. He seemed to be favoring his left leg a little. It was a tame game all the way through. Hodgens' kids were stopped cold by a fine piece of pitching, and lost the game, 4 to 2.

But the speedy kid had wings on his feet for the second game. He got off to a flying start. There was trouble at first base in the very first inning. Strook, the Packer's first baseman, claimed that Swiftly clipped his shoe and showed some kind of a dusty cut in the leather.

The kid showed no interest in the argument. As soon as the ball game was resumed, he was off for second and more trouble. He dumped that keystone like a sack of meal. Took the breath and fight out of him.

In the fifth inning he tripled to right. It was really only a double, but he stretched it. He came into third with his spikes flashing. But the Packer's third-sacker wouldn't go to the mat with the kid. He could have tagged Tother, but he didn't, and that run was an important one in the score.

As soon as he saw the third baseman fold up, Swiftly Tother knew that he had the Indian sign on the boys. From then on he developed a spiking complex. He set out to build up that fear in their hearts that they might get hurt, if they went to the mat with him.

Ollie Brame dropped two out of the three games, and left Brookline full of threats. They were echoing long after Ollie was gone. All of his threats concerned Swiftly Tother and what would happen if he wasn't curbed on the bases.

Now, Joe Hodgens was not a sissy. On the other hand, he was not like

that crowd of old Orioles, who, they say, could play ninety days with one eye hanging out on their cheek. He never stuck a broken finger in the dirt to cure it, as that crew is supposed to have done. Joe had all his broken fingers set.

But he wasn't blind to consequences. He knew well that you can't let a colt run loose in the woods and expect him to have any stable manners. He knew right well that Swiftly Tother's flying feet would have to be brought down to earth sooner or later. Either that, or he was in for serious injury. And he was too good a ball player to lose that way.

So far, he hadn't hurt anybody. Maybe he had nicked a couple. It wasn't serious, but only because Ollie Brame's team was chicken-hearted. As soon as the speedster ran up against some players who weren't afraid to put the ball on him, well—

**I**T SO happened that the Madison Reds followed the Packers into Brookline, and the Reds were mortal enemies as far as Brookline was concerned. They were strong, tough and didn't know the word fear. No matter how many new players the Red took on, they never put a chicken-livered kid in the line-up.

Swiftly Tother sailed into the Reds like they were a gang of left-overs from a Sunday School team. Their size and the fact that they had won the pennant the year before meant nothing to him.

He didn't get on base in the first inning, but he did in the fourth. He was the first Brookline batter to reach first base. He went down on the third pitch and slashed his way to the bag.

Hulse, the Reds' shortstop who covered on the play, swung at Swiftly and missed. Then Hulse fell over, grasping his own leg. A crowd gathered around, Joe among them. But Hulse wasn't badly hurt. Joe heaved a sigh and went back to coaching at first.

In trying to keep Swiftly on the bag, the Madison pitcher threw and the second baseman covered. Swiftly slid and the second sacker went out

of the game with a spiked right hand.

That was when the real trouble started.

Swifty Tother didn't run into any knees, or spikes or knockout punches when a baseman tagged the runner. It was the rest of the team who began to pay for Swifty's daring on the bases.

The Bears took that opening game, too. Abrams, the second-baseman, had his shin scraped with a spike almost from his knee to his shoe. But the kid stuck in there and played his game out. He didn't show up for the third game. The doctor had ordered him to rest the leg.

That didn't stop Swifty. He sailed into those Reds every time he got on base, and so did a lot of Bear batters. Packy Mack carried his part of the attack.

The Bears lost that third game, the last at home, because Jackie Miller, the kid third-baseman, refused to risk having his hand slashed off when the Reds slid into the bag. Near the end of the game, shortstop Kline also developed a bad case of spike-shyness.

When the smoke of the series had died down, the papers were still screaming about Swifty Tother, the toughest kid in the league. He was afraid of nobody, the writers wrote, while the games had been lost by the weak-kneed juniors who were afraid to tag a runner coming in feet first.

The crowd had gone for Tother in a big way now. With a sadistic lust for danger and injury, peculiar to some sport fans, they turned out in droves to see who and what Swifty Tother would do the next day. You never saw such a gang of ghouls in your life.

Joe Hodgens saw what it would lead to. But he also thought that Swifty might get enough and lay off with his spikes. Then everything would quiet down and be forgotten.

**H**HE CALLED the kid aside as the Bears started a short road trip away with the same three clubs.

"Listen, kid," Joe told him. "If you keep up that spike nonsense,

you'll be nothing but hamburger at the end of the season."

Swifty laughed, but his expression didn't seem to change. He had a cruel face when he laughed like that.

"I'll be one of several pieces of hamburger, then," he said defiantly. "I'll see that I get plenty of company."

"That's not baseball," Joe scoffed. "You can't last."

"I do my hitting and fielding," he answered and started to walk away. "I told you it was a fight up here. Everybody's out to get me, on or off the field."

"Sure they are now," the manager exclaimed. "But if you'd quit using those foot knives, everybody'd quit."

"No Tother ever quit," he muttered. "Not a Blue Ridge Tother."

When the Bears opened against the Tigers in Oakland, Manager Joe Hodgens realized how serious the situation was. Not only were the Tigers out to get his team, but the three kids covering second, shortstop and third, were ready to fold up.

Plainly, they knew that they were targets for every set of spikes that got on base against them. And none of the kids knew when he would wind up in the hospital, badly injured, maybe permanently, if an infection set in.

The first game was a joke. The Bears hit hard, and scored runs, but the pitcher, Moose Meyer, had to pitch to almost twice as many batters. Tub Davis, the catcher, couldn't catch anybody stealing, because the infield kids were afraid to put a ball on a runner. The flashing spikes frightened 'em dumb.

Hodgens paced the dugout throughout the game, cussing a blue streak as the team seemed to fall apart. He had what looked like a swell club at the start of the season. It was young, fast and strong. But within two weeks the big dream had turned into a nightmare.

It was a cinch that he couldn't win, if the runners ran wild against him. The pitchers could get nowhere. And, even if they kept up the good hitting, it wasn't good enough to offset the wild base-running. It was a spot.

Now, you might think that Joe would've benched Swifty Tother till the epidemic of spiking wore off. Well, that's because you don't know Brookline fans and Brookline papers. They had three correspondents along on that trip, ready to take a pot shot at Manager Hodgens if he made one move that displeased them.

They had developed into press box managers. Most sports writers are fair and above such smallness, but once in a while you run across a couple of snipers who haven't got enough to think about after they do their work, and so they decide to manage the ball club.

Besides, they felt like they could, having built up this brash kid, Swifty Tother, into the best box office draw that the Bears had ever developed. They felt as though he was their property.

If Joe had benched the kid, or put the needle into him to stop the offensive baseball, it would have been curtains. Yes, they'd have jumped on him in the papers and his big plan, a gamble that few managers have the courage to take, would have been blown to bits.

One little smart Alec, a pint-sized, self-inflated kid had undone all Hodgens' shrewd and careful planning. There wasn't a thing that Joe could do about it, least of all the thing he wanted to do most, which was to sock Swifty Tother in his gum-chewing jaw.

**W**HEN he dropped that second game to the Tigers, Joe felt as sorry for himself as he had ever felt for any man. He was licked completely. But the big blow was eleven stolen bases by the Tigers!

That was when he decided to do something. You see, he felt a little to blame for this Tother's wild state. Joe felt that he could have put the curb on him before the season opened. Now he felt that he should have done it. And so he felt bound to get the boy out of this jam.

He had to do it without drama or excitement, and without antagonizing the press. But Joe Hodgens was an

old and wise baseball man. He knew a lot of answers.

You should have seen Swifty Tother's face the next day when Joe broke the news to him. It wasn't until infield practice that the manager told him to go down and take a work-out at second base.

His face didn't move, except to massage that wad of gum.

He went down and started to out think the ground balls from Joe's fungo bat. He was pretty good, too. He worked nicely with Kline, the kid shortstop; he was very fast.

Joe benched Abrams and sent a substitute, Newcomb, into center field. There was a roar from the press box when they got a load of Tother down at second base. They, the writers, didn't have time to come down and find out, so Joe sent up word that a few of the boys needed a rest—others a change of scenery. Then he took a deep breath and waited.

You couldn't tell whether Tother was stubborn or just plain dumb during that first inning. He got a pass, and then resumed his old life of making misery for the fielders. He stole second and tried to carve the Gettysburg Address on the second baseman's thighs. There was a mad scramble, but only a torn uniform.

Real fireworks started in the second inning. The Tigers lashed out with a single and a force-out at second. Joe hated to watch the Oakland runner go into Tother as he covered second. Two flying feet almost hurled him out of the ball park.

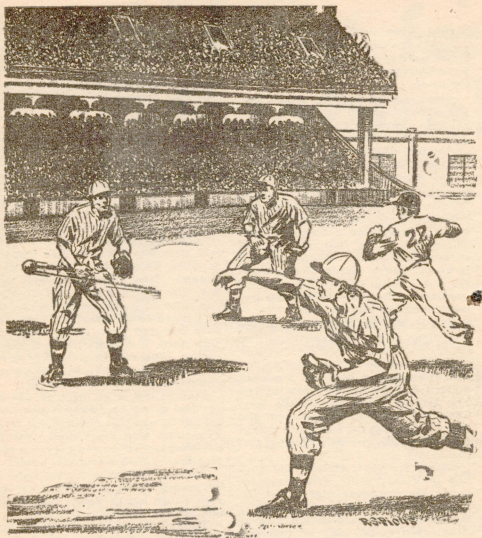
The fighting kid got up, stunned and surprised. He took it calmly, and went back as though nothing happened.

Plenty more happened. The Bears had a sort of wild youngster in the box, and he couldn't find the plate very well. The boys went down on passes and then set sail for Swifty Tother. Within three innings, the kid's socks were in shreds. The knee of his uniform was cut.

"Go in and change your stockings," Joe ordered.

"Only brought one pair along," he snapped at Joe.





"There's a dozen in my locker," the manager barked. "I brought them along especially for you."

Swiftly went in and came out a little later with new socks on. He gave Joe a dirty look.

Within three innings they had the kid staggering, but he held on. More than that, he put a ball on a runner in a way that made the rest of the infielders wince, because half of the time he was tossed headlong by the force of the impact.

The Bears lost the game, but not by much. They hit the Tigers head and avoided disgrace. In the clubhouse, bruised and scratched, Tother came to Joe's locker.

"Do I play down there again tomorrow?" he asked.

"No," Joe said, "you've had enough there."

**J**OE DIDN'T tell him until fielding practice the next day that he was playing shortstop. When he

got this news, you'd have thought he was going to pull a knife on him. The Bears were in Madison and the Reds were dancing around in great glee at the news.

Abrams came back to second and Kline was benched. Joe kept Newcomb in center where he was going great. The announcement of the lineup brought dignitaries from the press box. But Joe shut them up in a hurry.

The Reds turned into right-field hitters especially for the occasion. They wanted Swiftly to cover the bag from shortstop on all plays, which he did, except for a few. And Joe felt sorry before four innings had been played. Swiftly was ready to call it a day, and a career, if necessary. He wasn't badly injured. He was just manhandled by feet and spikes; they were dumping him all over.

And as for his own base-running technique, he didn't have enough pep to spare when he got on the base paths. He was content to slide calmly into the bag and play for a smooth arrival. But the fielders just kicked his foot or ankle out of the way. They fell on him, elbowed him and tagged him with the force of a knock-out wallop. He got up without fighting back.

Before the game ended, they gave him back everything with heavy interest. He was beaten down, and Joe wasn't sure that he'd ever have any fight in him again. But it had to be done, even at the cost of two ball games, the price so far.

Before the next day's game, he came to Joe, and the manager knew what was in his mind. Joe beat him to the punch.

"I thought the Blue Ridge branch of the Tothers never quit," Joe said.

He looked stiletos. "I didn't come to quit," he muttered.

"Well, I don't care what you come to me for," Joe went on, "you're playing third today in place of Miller. I hope you enjoy it."

"How long is this gag going to keep up?" he asked.

"Until you learn that your reasoning is wrong, Swiftly," Joe said. "All this spiking traces back to you and

your ball-kicking against the Tigers on opening day. You think the Tigers started the spiking. You've talked yourself into feeling that everybody's after you. Well, they are—until you wake up.

"When you're in baseball a little while, young man—if you last that long—you'll find that all the great and glorious spikers, the dashing and fearless base runners are outfielders. They are so brave. Yes, it's easy to be brave when you can go to an outfield and let your infielders take the brunt of the attack that you started by your wild base-running.

"That isn't bravery, Swiftly," Joe said, changing his tone. "It's just the opposite. You probably thought that Abrams, Kline and Muller were yellow. The sports writers said so. Now you know how yellow they are.

"I hated to do this, but it was the only way out. Now, go in there and play third. Run bases like a civilized person. Live and let live. Play hard, but use those foot-knives only when you're on your feet. That's all."

And, believe it or don't, it was all Joe had to say to Swiftly Tother. He set out to win that outfield job back. The Bears won the second game of the Madison series and played a sixteen-inning 3—3 tie in the finale.

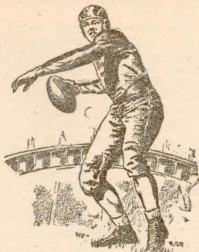
The press began to see the light in Westwood. Well, they didn't exactly clap hands, but they sure understood and became converts.

Tother? He turned out to be a better base runner than ever. With those homicidal ideas out of his mind, he was more elusive than before when they tried to tag him. And, of course, the spiking stopped. There was hardly another spiking case on any team all summer. If there was, it was kept mighty quiet.

There was only one bad feature about Joe's "experiment". Hodgens confessed later that he was thinking of putting Tother back at the shortstop job to stay.

But he never did, because the Bears started to win, and Joe was satisfied to go along without tampering. If he had tampered, he probably wouldn't have won the pennant that year.

END



## Come-Back

By Dick Kraus

A TRUE STORY

**T**HE TEAMS are lining up for the opening kickoff," the radio announcer husked into his Polo Grounds microphone. "Now the crowd is quiet. Waiting....waiting...."

"The ref is lifting his whistle, blowing it—and the Chicago Bears are moving forward. It's a good, solid kick, going end over end, deep into Giant territory!

"There's a man waiting for it. It's Reagen, the speedy back. He's got the ball now and he's moving up, cutting across the field in a sharp diagonal. Here comes his interference now, charging in front of him. He's up to the twenty...the thirty...the forty! ...Wait! Two of the Chicago linemen are piling up the interference, and here comes Sid Luckman! He's knifing through to tackle Reagen—stopping him hard! He's down now, and *listen!* You can hear the crowd—all forty-eight thousand of them, cheering this first play."

It was December 16, 1946—a cold, clear day, ideal for the National

Football League Championship play-off game. Pitted against the Eastern champs, the powerful New York Giants, were the Chicago Bears, Western title-holders.

Rising from the ground, Sid Luckman, the veteran quarterback of the Chicago team, rubbed his chilled hands together. Momentarily, Luckman's eyes went up and he saw the stadium outlined against the sky, pennants waving. In that brief flash, he remembered the cheering of other Polo Grounds crowds, in other years.

Some of Sid Luckman's greatest games had been played on this field. Once, in 1943, he had licked the Giants single-handed, by throwing seven touchdown passes. But that was three years ago—before he enlisted in the Maritime Service. That much time out of football didn't help a guy when he was in his early thirties, Luckman reflected. And the cumulative physical beating he took in every game didn't help either.

But there was no time to daydream now. The Giants had snapped out

of their huddle and into offensive formation.

The New York team flung a play into the Chicago line and failed to gain. Again they plunged off-tackle, picking up three yards. Underfoot the turf was fast and hard, and the sound of the tackling echoed in the stands.

Now the Giants punted deep, toward the Chicago goal line, and the Bears took over.

Sid Luckman crouched in the huddle, his keen dark eyes sizing up the New York formation. Coach Steve Owen's team was spread in a wide defense.

"They're expecting us to pass," the Chicago quarterback said. He nodded to Osmanski. "Take it off-tackle."

Receiving the ball from center Luckman palmed it to the powerful Osmanski. Then he ran back, pretending he still had the ball and was going to pass. The Giant defenders waited, trying to cover the receivers. Suddenly they woke up to Osmanski's lunge through the line, and closed in. Big Jim White got a hand on his ankle, and Tex Coulter hit him in the middle, smashing him down.

Next Luckman called his own number, on a pass play.

Taking the ball and faking left and right, he dropped back fast, protected by two teammates. Downfield was the blue of color that meant a Bear receiver was racing into position. The ball left Luckman's hands, hurtled clear through the air, and Jim Keane leaped high to spear it at midfield. The crowd roared as he tumbled to the ground—tackled by George Franck.

"Now we're moving, guys!" Sid Luckman pounded his teammates on the back. "Let's soften 'em up!"

An end-around and a center buck brought seven yards. The Giant defenders moved in, guarding for ground plays. Sid Luckman struck his hands together and called staccato signals. It would be another pass.

The ball snapped back to the quarterback's hands. He retreated a

pace, trying to spot his receiver. Suddenly the lanky Bear end, Ken Kavanaugh, broke clear, dashing for the end zone, with the Giants' Liebel close behind him.

Sid Luckman drew back the arm that had made National League history and flung the ball in a long, arching pass. Dead center between the goal posts, Kavanaugh turned, leaped, and grabbed the throw. Liebel hit him and the two players sprawled across the line.

The whistle shrieked and the ref's hands shot high.

Touchdown! It was first blood for the Bears and, with the conversion, the score was 7-0.

Five minutes later, Dante Magnani intercepted a Giants' heave and sprinted over six white stripes for a second score that put the Bears out in front, 14-0.

As one man, the spectators rose and cheered the Chicago squad at the quarter's close. This was football at its best—hard-hitting tackles and blocks, accurate passing and cool, intelligent quarterbacking!

**A**S SID LUCKMAN dropped back on defense, he felt his heart pounding tightly under his jersey. A 14-0 lead was good, but this early in the game it didn't mean much. The Giants were the class of the East and they had their own ideas about taking first place prize money.

The play grew rough and player after player was carried off the field. Frank Filchock, the Giants' passer, suffered a broken nose, but stayed in the game. Reagen and Franck both were helped off the field by their teammates, too badly hurt to return.

But now the Giants struck fast and hard. Filchock, broken nose and all, hurled a long pass that the speedy Frank Liebel snared in the second quarter. Covering 38 yards, he raced over, to make the score 14-7.

Again the play see-sawed back and forth. The big Giant line swarmed through, breaking up plays and smashing Luckman to the turf, time and again.



Chicago was forced to punt, giving the ball up.

It was now the Giants' turn to go roaring down the field, their host of powerful ball carriers slicing through the line and whirling around end. Using spinners, reverses, passes, bucks, they chewed off down after down.

Again Filchcock marked his man—Steve Filipowicz—and dropped a touchdown pass in his arms. Ken Strong converted and the score was dead-locked at 14-14. The crowd hushed. As the big minute hand on the score-board ticked through the second and third quarters, all eyes fastened on Sid Luckman.

This New York crowd knew the big Jewish lad from Brooklyn who held down the quarterback berth on the Chicago squad.

They'd first seen him years ago, a speedy youngster on Brooklyn's Erasmus high School squad. They'd watched him, more mature now, star on Columbia's Light Blue team, under Coach Lou Little. And, for many years, they'd seen him doing a brilliant job of quarterbacking the pro Bears to victory after victory over their own Giants.

What would he do now? How much had his years in the service—and the beatings he'd received all season—taken out of him?

Sid Luckman alone knew the answer to that...and he wasn't saying.

He hurt all over; in his nose, broken and re-broken earlier in the season; in his tired legs; in his chest, where a strong heart protested punishment; and in his cleat-marked, half-frozen hands. But, groggy and beaten, his face bruised and his uniform torn and smeared, Sid Luckman had to keep going.

Back and forth the two great teams surged. It was more than a tie game now, more than a playoff for a football championship. To Luckman it meant proving—to the stands and to himself—that he still had the stuff, that he was still Mr. Quarterback.

The game moved into the fourth

period and the seconds ticked away with the score still 14-14. The Giants held the ball now, thrusting with desperate strength at the Bear defenses. And, as desperately, the Bears held on.

Finally, Livingston punted out of bounds on Chicago's 34-yard-line. Sid Luckman shook his head like a bull feeling the picador's lance.

"Come on, gang," he pleaded. "Let's move!"

One pass to George McAfee and a second to Jim Keane ate up 24 precious yards. Then Osanski high-kneed his way to a first down on the Giants' 34-yard-line.

Time for another pass. Luckman took the ball from center, stepped back, spotted a receiver, and started to throw. The ball hadn't left his hands when a wall of Giant tacklers surged upon him, crushing him to the ground. He lay there, aching in every bone, knowing the pass hadn't been completed.

A whistle blew.

Slowly the quarterback lifted his tired body from the turf, his legs buckling beneath him.

The referee was penalizing the Giants 15 yards for unnecessary roughness. Picking up the ball, he placed it down on the Giants' 19. Sid Luckman felt a strong arm go around him, helping him up. It was Ken Kavanaugh, grinning through a smudge of blood and dirt.

"Thanks," Luckman said. "This is our break, Ken. Let's go!"

**H**E WAS in the huddle now, his arms around the wide shoulders of his buddies. Slowly, making up his mind, he looked into their faces, one after another. He'd been in a lot of huddles since those early days on the Erasmus squad. He'd played with a lot of good boys. And, he realized now, as never before, how much he had gained strength from his teammates. If his legs gave way, theirs held him up. Their blocking protected him, their catches made his passes good.

When they were all out on the field

together, it didn't matter what a guy's religion or race was, or where he came from. Why should it? They were all playing on the same team—playing to win.

"What'll it be, Sid?"

He looked around from face to face.

"They're expecting a pass. Let's surprise them."

Up in the radio booth, the announcer watched the play.

"Bears in the T. Luckman's calling the signals.

"He takes it from the center. He's giving it off to McAfree—No! No, he's holding it himself. Luckman's spinning, cutting toward a hole, not much of a hole, in the Giants' left side.

"He's going through! He's in the secondary now, running hard. But here come two Giants. They've got him cornered.... Wait! He's broken past them, stumbling, slipping, still on his feet. He's on the five, the two, the one—

"He's over! Sid Luckman's gone

over, 19 yards for a touchdown!"

That wound up the game, 21-14, with only a few moments to go.

Just before the final gun, the Bears added three points on a field goal, to put the game on ice. But they didn't need it. The veteran Sid Luckman, back from the wars, the man the wise guys had predicted couldn't possibly come back, had passed for one touchdown and scored another to win the 1946 National Championship for the Chicago Bears!

*Sid Luckman has now taken on a new assignment. At the special request of Coach Frank Leahy, he is drilling the Notre Dame team in T-Formation ball-handling and passing. A Jewish football star coaching at a great Catholic College! That's sports for you—and democracy. ....*

THE END



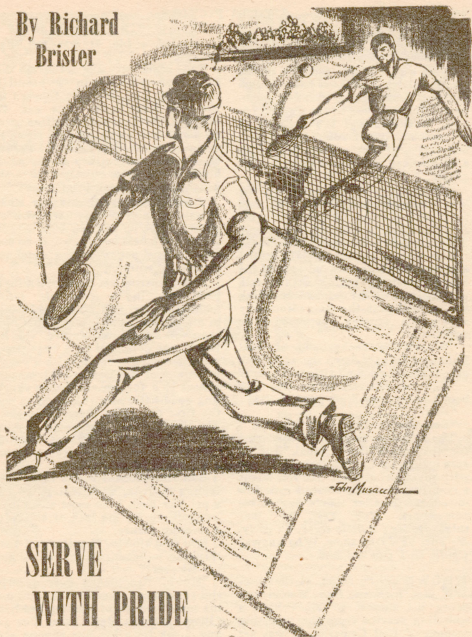

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BUY and HOLD  
UNITED STATES  
SAVINGS BONDS

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By Richard  
Brister



## SERVE WITH PRIDE

It sounded a little too good to begin with, and after a while, Ban Martin began to regret accepting Rod's generous-seeming offer.

**T**HE TINY college of Pineville, in North Carolina, was noted for two things this year, its two top-ranking tennis players. A record crowd had turned out for the finals of the school championship playoffs, for the pair were both

seniors, and this would be the natives' last chance to see them in action.

From a seat in the top row of the small gallery a tall, red-faced man squinted down at the sweating opponents and observed to the man beside him, "It's amazing. It's little short of amazing. One I could understand, but two topflight players buried in a whistlestop school like this—I don't get it."

The other, who did not know the big, expensively-clothed city man from Adam, observed somewhat huffily, "It's not so amazing, my friend. This is a tennis country."

The big man smiled covertly behind a gloved hand, and waved toward the court, whistling gently as the tall, graceful one of the pair sent a rifling service ball past the net, effectively aceing his stumpy, peppery little opponent.

"What's the background on that Mutt and Jeff act down there? Which of 'em won the school title last year?"

"The tall one, Cameron. But Ban beat him in their Soph year."

"Ban?"

"Ban Martin. Short for 'Bantam.'"

The tall man grinned. "Good name for that quick little rascal. But he sure makes up for his lack of height with plenty of ginger." He fell silent a moment, while his shrewd eyes followed the smaller man's aggressive movements. *He's fast, he was thinking. He's a little tiger, by golly. He puts on a fine show. Who knows? Could be I can use him.*

**D**OWN on the court, at that precise moment, Ban Martin was doing his utmost to block back a whistling service from the smashing racquet of Rod Cameron. It was set point now. If he dropped this one, it would be just about over, he knew, because sets were at 2-1, his favor, and there was not another set in his tired legs. Rod had been running him ragged with his sharp, angled placements, and Ban was exhausted.

He got his racquet in front of the twisting high bounce that Rod's serve took to his backhand. He blocked it back, trying to give it height as it passed the net. Somehow

it foozled a bit. It was not high enough.

Rod came slashing in from his baseline, went up in a beautiful stretching leap, his eyes focused on the ball like those of a cat. He smashed. The ball sent up a fine spray of sand two yards to the right of where Ban stood watching helplessly. He saw the futility of trying to block it and went quietly over to the bench, for the final, brief recess.

"Looks like you win this year, Rod," he said simply, as they sat down together. "You've run my legs ragged. Don't see how I'm even going to last for the final set much less stand any chance of winning."

Rod Cameron was blond, strikingly handsome in a graceful, feline fashion. There was quiet confidence in his manner, and a negligence that came of an assured future, for his father was president of a huge paper manufacturing concern, with a yearly income that to Ban would amount almost to a fortune. Rod was chuckling good-naturedly at him. "You won the first two years, Ban. So maybe I win the last two. But you're making me work like the Dickens for this one. Like a brick wall, trying to put a ball past you."

Ban was silent. He was in a mood, feeling disgruntled at losing, even to a pal like Rod. Like most short men, he made up for his lack of size with a scrappy nature.

Rod said slowly, "Look, son, I been thinking — what're your plans, now it's all over?"

"Huh?" Ban looked over queerly, and ran a small, nervous hand through his unruly shock of flaming red hair. "Plans? Shucks, don't guess I've got any. Look for a job like anyone else, I suppose. Why, Rod?"

"Well, I was thinking: there's the Larchwood Invitational Matches, and the Hovendon Cup, and—look, what's to prevent us from taking a month's real vacation, before we put our noses to the grindstone? We could work on our tennis, and try our luck in those two tournaments, and—"

Ban smiled ruefully. "That's for the idle rich, son. Me, I've got to work for a living." Ban had worked his way



through Pineville, except for a scant hundred or two each year that his dad had provided. It was a fine dream, what Rod suggested. But for Ban, it was just out of the question.

In four years of almost constant association, out on the courts, Rod had learned to read him like a book, Ban thought. Rod's answer showed it.

"That's the point, son. I'd be darn glad to take care of any expenses. Wouldn't be much, just for one month. And besides, it'd be worth it to me. I mean, the workouts together, and—"

"Uh-unh," Ban shook his red head firmly. "Thanks, pal. But that's out."

**I**N THEIR four years at college, Ban had several times been forced to turn down the large-handed Rod's offers of help, when his finances had become a bit too involved for comfort. Ban didn't have the family background his more fortunate pal had, but he did have his pride. And he intended to keep it.

"Ah, there you go again," Rod said chidingly. "Getting crusty. If you'd really look at the proposition without prejudice, you'd see there's nothing wrong with it. I need somebody to practice with, Ban, and no dubs, either. You're my only real hope, and the thing is: I've never played in a tournament without you, not since before college. We're good for each other. You make me work, when I start getting lazy out there. And I tone down your pepper, when you start to run yourself ragged."

"Yeah, maybe, but—"

"Another thing," Rod put in craftily, "it'd be another chance to find out which of us is really the better player. If I cop this last set, we'll be even up, on the annual titles. So—"

Ban always had been a sucker for a dare or a challenge. He said, grinning, "You're a fast talker, aren't you? Look, I got my own ideas about this last set, see? You win it, and maybe I'll have another answer for you, on that proposition."

Rod chuckled and laid a friendly hand on his shoulder. "That," he announced, "sounds more like you."

Ban played like a madman in that

final match set. Rod was cool. His long legs carried him about the court with a minimum of effort, and he had not taxed himself nearly as much, today, as Ban had.

It was oppressively hot, and Ban was exhausted. He stayed with the taller, more graceful man up to a score of 3-3 in games. And then, abruptly, his energy folded. He went apart at the seams, literally. Rod slammed through him for the final three games, to win at 6-3.

They shook hands across the net, and the first thing Rod said was, "Well, I've won it. So how about that little proposition?"

"It's a deal," Ban said soberly. After all, he had practically promised. He hated accepting favors, even from a swell guy like Rod. But after all, he supposed Rod did need him. Maybe it was he who was really doing the favor.

And it would be fun, he thought, now that college was finished, and he could devote all his attention to tennis, to find out once and for all whether he or Rod was the better player.

**H**ALFWAY to the field house they were accosted by a tall, expensively-dressed, florid man, who looked, Ban thought, utterly out of place on the Pineville campus.

"Mind if I introduce myself, fellows?" the tall man said, extending a big hand in Rod's direction. "I'm—"

"Carter," Rod put in glibly. "Saul Carter. Glad to know you. I saw you up at Skytop Lodge, two summers ago, when Tilden was playing an exhibition. Thought I recognized you up there in the top row today. What brings you down to Pineville?"

The older man smiled, showing even white teeth. "Business. What brings a man in my line anywhere, son? I heard about a couple of hot tennis players."

Rod sent a side glance at Ban. "Mr. Carter's a tennis promoter, Ban. He used to have a pro troupe, with Corda, and La Costa, and—"

"Still do, young fellow," laughed the promoter. "Lay off that 'used to.'"

"Sorry." Rod's face turned crimson.

Ban shifted his feet, and asked the question that had been needling him since he'd heard the promoter's name. "You—uh—you came down here to look us over, Mr. Carter? I mean—you were thinking of hiring one of us, to play the pro game?"

"Well," Carter hedged, "it was just a case of looking, this trip. I'm always interested in the good young players. Have t'be, in my line of business. You boys are fine, fine, considering you've been practically buried down here. A year or two more, to take off the rough edges, and I might very well want to hire one of you." He turned, just then, caught sight of an acquaintance in the crowd milling out of the grandstand, and said quickly, "Scuse me, fellows. Gotta see a fellow. Glad to've met you." He was gone abruptly.

Ban watched Rod's face, and saw an expression of yearning cross the blond, handsome features, as Rod followed the promoter's retreating figure with his eyes. Ban suddenly realized something that he hadn't until this moment suspected. His tall friend would give his right arm for a chance to make the grade in pro tennis.

Why not, after all? Rod had always had an easy existence. He was a total stranger to work, and no doubt his heart shrivelled at the prospect of settling down to an 8 to 5 routine in his dad's paper business. But pro tennis! That would be play for Rod. Right down his alley. And best of all, a darn' good living, and a chance to indulge the social side of his nature.

Ban said gently, "Yeah, I agree with you. It'd be a nice racket. Kinda like it myself, for that matter."

"Wh—huh?" Rod looked surprised. He hadn't known Ban was reading his thoughts.

Ban said, "Carter was hedging. He didn't come all the way down here for his health. He'd've made one of us an offer, if we'd looked right to him. I dunno, Rod. I feel kind of cheated. I mean—if you knew he was up there, you could've mentioned it to me."

"I wasn't sure it was Carter, Ban. After all, it's years since I saw him."

"Okay," Ban said. But somehow,

Rod's answer was still not entirely satisfactory, the way he looked at it.

Why'd Rod come up so suddenly with that proposition for Larchwood and the Hovendon, in the rest period before the final set of a tough match? That's a funny time to be getting brainstorm, Ban thought. Unless, of course, you've just happened to look up in the grandstand, and recognized somebody like Carter. Sure, five thousand buck jobs don't come easy. Carter would be sure to take a good look, before he bought. And Rod was smart enough to be ready for him. Ready to win impressively at Larchwood and Hovendon. But of course, he needed Ban to help get himself ready.

Oh, he was slick, Rod was. Ban hated to believe that those were Rod's motives. But it did all add up.

For two cents, he'd back out, right now, and let Rod fight his own battles. But he'd already made that decision. He had never liked welchers. And besides, a small insistent voice prodded within him, Rod didn't *have* to be the winner at Larchwood.

**B**UT it turned out differently than he'd expected, down there. Something went haywire with Ban's game. He couldn't explain it. He tried. He scampered around that court like a rabbit, blocking Rod's placements, pouring his heart out on the court for all to see. It was no good. Slowly, inexorably, Rod's smoother, more graceful play piled the score up against him.

What made the lopsided game the more surprising was the fact that both Ban and Rod had swept through all opposition to the finals without any apparent trouble. The pair were the two top men of this meet, and it just didn't make sense for Rod to have such an edge over Ban.

The first set went to the taller man at 6-2. He copped the second at 6-3.

Now they were in the third; it had gone to 3-0 in games, Rod's favor. Ban was serving. He flipped the ball up, sent a hopping ball over the net. It dipped down sharply, and bounced to Rod's backhand. The tall man

blocked it back to Ban's baseline. Ban ran over and smashed with his forehand. It was a whizzing low drive, over near Rod's right alley.

The tall man bounced in with three long strides, sent a sharply angled ball across court, out of Ban's reach.

The umpire's voice announced in booming inflections, "Game for Mr. Cameron. He leads at four-love in the third set. Mr. Cameron's service."

Ban scowled as he took his place to receive from Rod. This was the rottenest tennis he'd ever played in his life; he knew it. But he was powerless to analyse the difficulty. His drives stayed in. He was not double-faulting. He was steady enough. But Rod seemed to be making all the best placements.

Rod flipped a ball high above him, and sent his hard, high-hopping serve arcing over the net. Ban had to chop it back, with an overhand motion. It skidded at midcourt. Rod took it on the rise and drove hard to Ban's backhand. Ban blocked in a low lob. Rod rushed up, leaped high, and smashed it down at an angle for an unreturnable kill shot.

"Fifteen-love," the umpire intoned from atop his high wooden stand.

Ban played automatically, instinctively. He had wanted so much to win today. Carter was not here in person, but the man followed tennis closely. He'd be certain to read an account of the match in the papers. And when Carter read of the licking Rod was administering to Ban, he'd either hire Rod on the strength of that, or he'd make dead sure of him at the Hovendon Cup Matches, two weeks hence.

Ban knew Carter meant business, or the man would never have journeyed all the way down to Pineville in the first place.

Another hard service ball bulletted down into court and bounced swiftly toward him. He chopped it deep, then slid over to the center of his own baseline. He had to stop this rout somehow. Rod drove to his backhand. Ban lobbed deep again and went to the net.

Rod was too clever for him. The big man drove one along the edge

of the alley. Ban raced over and tried to reach it for a full-volley, but just missed getting his strings in back of the ball by a fraction.

He was getting burned up. For that matter, the whole tour with Rod was getting under his skin more and more, with each day that passed. It went against his Puritan grain, somehow, eating three hotel meals daily, sleeping in a fine big hotel bedroom, and then having to watch another man foot the expensive bills that were entailed by such luxurious living.

Rod told him again and again that he was silly to feel that way about it. But Ban was not convinced. He had too much stiff-backed pride, he supposed. No matter how often Rod insisted that he, Ban, was doing the real favor for Rod, it kept growing on Ban that he was in Rod's hire. He did not feel independent. He was simply not his own man, and that thought preyed upon him.

These thoughts plagued him throughout the match. He couldn't seem to keep his mind on the play. After an interminable period of time, he awoke from a half-daze to hear the umpire intoning flatly.

"Forty-fifteen, Mr. Cameron's favor. Games are at 5-0, for Mr. Cameron. Game, set, and match, point. Serve please."

**T**HERE was a rustle of programs, and a sharp stir of excitement in the crowded grandstand. So this was match point, Ban thought dizzily. He set himself grimly on widespread legs, and watched Rod's service ball leap the net and dip down sharply toward him.

He blocked it deep. Rod drove to his forehand. Ban smashed it back sharply, on an angle, and watched gloomily as it curved in the slight breeze. It slid over into out-of-bounds territory, into the alley. Game for Rod, and the match was all over. He'd gone down, Ban realized disgustedly, in straight sets.

He went to the net for the duty shake with Rod. Rod stared queerly at him. "Suffering catfish, Ban. What was it today? Where'd you park all your usual pepper?"

"I dunno," Ban said drearily. "You were hot, pal. Just too much so for me, I suppose."

But Rod's words set him to thinking. He'd thought he was going all the way out to win. But to Rod it had seemed he lacked pepper. He wondered about that, and was at a loss to explain it.

Rod said smoothly, "Look, it's been a pretty tough grind. We'll relax tonight. We'll get around a couple of half pound steaks, and—"

"Aw," Ban protested, "you oughta go easier, Rod. You're spending too darn much money on me. I'm not that valuable to you. A couple of pork chops'd do me."

"You're proud," Rod chided. "Lord, but you're proud. Now come on. And quit givin' me trouble."

"But we don't have to live like a couple of princes."

"Look, son, it's my money," Rod started.

"That," said Ban, squirming, "is my point, exactly."

Rod stared at him for a long moment. "You figure you're not earning your keep. Is that it?"

"It's close," Ban conceded glumly.

"Forget it," Rod told him. "Look, two'll get you five we hear from Carter before tomorrow morning. He's pretty sure to have kept an eye on us. If I wind up with a job on his pro troupe, I'll be paid back for any few paltry bucks your coming along's cost me. Right?" He was very smooth, very persuasive.

"We-e-ll . . ."

"Now quit stewing about it," Rod said peremptorily. "C'm' on. Let's clean up for supper."

Stewing about it. The phrase echoed again and again in Ban's buzzing head. He had been stewing about his strange relationship with Rod, ever since they'd motored down here from Pineville. He'd felt 'kept.' That was the thing. And Rod said he'd lacked pepper out there. Sure. It was getting clearer now.

Unconsciously, or subconsciously, anyway somehow, he had let a strong sense of gratitude, of duty to the man who was footing his bills, affect his playing. He couldn't decently

bite the hand that fed him, no more than a dog could. And without realizing why, or even what was going on, he'd slacked off out there today and handed the match to Rod on a silver platter.

He must have been blind not to see it before, he thought weirdly. It was a screwy setup, though. He wondered how it was going to affect him down at the Hovendon Cup Matches. Would Rod pin his ears back again, make a fool of him?

Well, after all, what did it matter, really? He was along for the ride, actually. That pro job with Carter, if it finally jelled, was earmarked for Rod. Ban didn't have a Chinaman's chance for it.

But something happened in the room that night that threw an entirely new complexion on the matter. They had a long-distance phone call from the promotor.

Rod took it, spoke briefly with Carter, then handed the phone to Ban. There was a queer look on his face as he said, "He's asked to talk to you, son."

Ban picked the phone up, completely mystified, and said, "Hullo, Mr. Carter."

"That you, Martin. All right, now listen. I've got to talk pretty fast, see? I understand you took quite a drubbing today from your friend Cameron. Don't get too down in the mouth about it. Every athlete has his bad days."

Ban's head was spinning. "Y-yes, sir," he mumbled.

"I'll be honest, Martin. I'm interested in you. You've got natural color. You showed a lot of zip when I caught you at Pineville, and that's what pays off in the pro game. There's just a chance I'll have a spot open in the troupe this summer, and if you look better in the Hovendon Cup Matches, I may have a contract. That is, if you'd be interested."

"Interested!" Ban exploded the word. "You bet, Mr. Carter!"

"All right, then. Stay in shape, and I'll be down there to see you again in action. It's going to be either you or Cameron, but to be quite frank

(Continued On Page 80)



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## SPORTS FICTION

(Continued From Page 78)

about it, I'd much rather have you. The troupe needs your color."

He hung up abruptly. Ban stared at Rod as he put the phone down. Rod said eagerly, "What's up? What did he say, Ban?"

Ban was all mixed up. He didn't have the heart to spill it all to Rod. He just said, "It's going to be either you or me, Rod. Depends on the Hovendon. Gosh, I never thought our little vacation would end up this way. Seems rotten, somehow, I mean—we're both trying for the same job, and you paying my—"

"Forget that part of it, Ban," Rod said sternly. There was an odd light in his eyes and his handsome face was twisted in a thin smile, as if he wasn't particularly worried about the outcome in the Hovendon meeting.

**H**E NEEDN'T have been, really, Ban realized, after the first two sets of their finals match down there. There was a large, gaily-dressed crowd in the grandstand to spur him, and the thought of that pro job with Carter was in itself a tremendous incentive, but still Ban didn't have what it took to give Rod any real trouble.

It was the same trouble he'd encountered at Larchwood. Only more so. He just couldn't seem to go all the way out, try as he might. There was a sub-conscious governor on him, apparently, a small inner voice that kept reminding his conscience, "You've got no right to steal that job from him. He's paid your way up here. You would never have even thought of coming down here, on your own hook."

And so, he still lacked that necessary drive. Once in a while, he glanced up to the grandstand, where Saul Carter sat shrewdly, inscrutably watching. At such times, he played hard and skillfully. It helped him annex the first set, at 6-4. But Rod always had been a slow starter. He came back strongly to cop the second set at 6-3.

And now they were in the third set, with Rod out in front at 5-3, and another game veering dangerously his way.

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## SPORTS FICTION

(Continued From Page 80)

Rod was serving. His ball zipped perilously close to the top cord of the net, dipped down into court and bounced high to where Ban stood waiting, on his own baseline.

He chopped back to Rod. Rod drove a hard one. Ban went in, tried to full-volley the ball from midcourt, and flubbed it into his own right alley, a wood shot.

"Mr. Cameron's advantage," the umpire said, from his high wooden stand. "Set point coming up."

Rod was hot. He had looked worried when he'd dropped the first set. But now his big handsome frame exuded confidence. He flung the ball high over his head and slammed a vicious serve over toward Ban.

It was just too blazing hot for Ban to handle. He tried to block it back safely. But sidespin on the ball deflected it off his racquet strings at an angle. It foozled into the net.

2-1, that made it. The two sets for Rod. If he won this next one, it would be best out of five, and the match would be over.

Ban sent a weary glance up at Saul Carter's seat as he moved past the net, changing courts. The promoter winked broadly, and cupped his hands to him, as if to say, "Stay in there fighting. I'm pulling for you."

Ban didn't quite understand it. Why should the promoter be so strong for him, when Rod was so obviously the better player? Just the mere fact that Ban had more 'color' could hardly explain it. Or could it? Ban wondered.

Well, Carter must know his business. And the signs of friendship from the older man spurred Ban's spirits a little. He served for the start of the new set, determined not to give up any points without a struggle. He didn't really owe Rod anything. If he could only convince his conscience of it, and play again with his old abandon.

His first serve was in. Rod blocked weakly to the net. Ban raced in and killed it neatly along the sideline.

He played aggressive explosive tennis, there for awhile. The way he was

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used to playing. His drives stayed in, and his legs carried him around his side of the net with the pickup and speed of an Army Jeep. Once he had the initiative, once he saw Rod taking a defensive tactic, Ban kept pouring it to him. He slashed at the ball for all he was worth, driving, smashing. His control stayed 'on,' somehow. He stormed through that set and finally passed Rod's service to nail the big man at 6-4.

The umpire's voice displayed mild excitement at the startling reversal of form Ban had displayed. "Set for Mr. Martin," he announced, somewhat triumphantly, while the exclusive crowd applauded politely. "Sets are at two-all. There will be a brief recess before the final, and deciding set."

They sat in the shade of a canvas parasol and sipped pale tea from dainty cups. Rod looked fairly fresh, for all of the sweat pouring down his broad forehead. But Ban was exhausted.

**I**T WAS always the way. He made up for his bantam size in aggressiveness, in speed, and in a willingness to fight each point out to the bitter end. There was no relaxing for him, out there. Not ever. There was a blistering sun over the court today, sending heat up in shimmering waves, and Ban had paid for that last set dearly.

There was no use kidding himself. He was about through. He'd be lucky to drag himself through the motions of playing another set. Much less stand any chance of winning!

He said to Rod, ruefully, "Looks like those long legs of yours have done me in, fella. I'm just about tuckered."

Rod looked at him with a bothered expression. "Listen, Ban don't concede this thing to me. Don't go out there and just go through the motions of playing. I—uh—I'm thinking of the way it's goin' to look to Carter. If one of us is going to win this thing, let's have it look like a real match all the way. Shall we?"

Ban scowled slightly behind one upflung hand. Rod might as well have

drawn the whole business out on a diagram for him. The job was his, right in his pocket. Now all he was worried about was having it look right. It seemed to Ban that he'd already done enough to further the interests of his tall college friend. Rod's haughty attitude made him a little hot under the collar.

"Let's quit beating around the bush with each other, Rod, shall we?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," Ban said huskily, "You knew darn well that Carter was watching us, that first day at Pineville. That's when you first thought of coming down here. But you figured I might be some help to you. So you gave me that song and dance yarn about coming down with you, and based the whole thing on friendship. Friendship. What a laugh!"

Rod frowned. "Get hold of yourself, son. Don't talk like an—"

"Oh, come off it, why don't you? I'm just a backdrop, to help show off your talents. Why don't you be honest about it?" He was getting sore, when he thought what a chump he had been, how easily the big fellow had used him. The ironic part was that he'd been concerned about the few paltry bills Rod had paid for him. When Rod stood to gain thousands from it, playing for Carter! "Come clean, Rod. Admit it!" he gritted.

Rod's handsome face clouded over, and his square jaw clicked in huffy anger. "You're entitled to think what you like, son. Unfortunately, none of this has any real bearing on the outcome of this final set though, does it?" He smiled thinly. "I intend to win it. And to judge from the way you're acting, I don't expect very much trouble."

"We'll see about that," Ban gritted. He stood up and went out there as the umpire waved an arm to them. He had something now that he had wanted for a long time. He had a tacit admission from Rod that the big man had deceived him about the whole purpose of the trip. Ban meant to lick the big devil now if he had to break himself in half to do it!

He started off like a fury, and raised every eyebrow in the gallery

## SERVE WITH PRIDE

by slamming his way through Rod's opening service to cop the first game after a brief session of deuce-ad exchanges.

He was on fire out there. He copped his own service too, making it 2-0 in games for him. He fell down a bit then, and allowed the big man to hold his own service. But the seething anger within him held out again, and he copped the next game. So it was 3-1 in this deciding, match set.

Then he began to fall apart at the seams, just as he'd anticipated. The recess had helped, but Ban had run miles over the hot sand of the court this blistering afternoon, and the human physique can stand only a certain amount of punishment. He dropped the next two games, making it 3-all, fought like a demon to grab the next, dropped another.

Rod, too, was showing signs of his great exertion. The big man's huge shoulders were drooping. His eyes squinted out from under, bleached sweat-glistening lashes. He was constantly puffing. He had not had to fight for a set as hard as he was fighting for this one in all the years he had been playing tennis, and the grim expression on his brown-burnt face showed it.

Somehow, using all the reserve strength he could muster, Ban passed the big fellow again to make it 5-4, his own favor. Then he was through, or at any rate he was so close to dropping that he knew it was now or never. He had to hold his own service, take this next game for a 6-4 win, or he'd simply keel over and be forced to concede the match.

The crowd seemed to sense the same thing. There was an expectant silence as he lifted the ball and sent a service skimming across the net to where Rod stood waiting.

Rod blocked it deep. Ban took a chance, eager to finish each point up with the slightest possible effort. He slammed a hard forehand drive that barely cleared the top of the net.

Rod, rushing in, was taken by surprise, expecting a lob. He tried to full-volley a return. He wooded the shot and it fizzled into the alley.

"Fifteen-love," said the umpire

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## SPORTS FICTION

(Continued From Page 85)

tensely. There was an excited flurry of clapping from the crowd, which was reaching a fever pitch of excitement.

**B**AN TOOK a tall chance and tried for an ace, slamming into the ball with all of his might. It was the surprise that put it over. Rod just stood there numbly, and waved weakly at it.

Ban thought if it went on more than another minute, he'd never make it. He kept moving like an automaton, though his eyes were sweat-glazed, his head was pounding like a trip-hammer under the impact of each pulse beat, and his legs had no feeling. He served another hard one, felt sure it was going to go in, and stumbled drunkenly up toward the net.

Rod sent a soft block back to him. Ban got his bat on it at midcourt, somehow, and angled it deep. Rod didn't get anywhere near it.

There was a great roar from the crowd as the umpire said loudly, "Forty-love, Mr. Martin's favor. Game, set and match point!"

This was the one then. On the outcome of this point, Ban thought weirdly, could depend his whole future life. For with Saul Carter watching, his chance at the pro game was definitely hanging in the balance. He had to take this one. This was the last point he had in his system, he knew. He was that near to total exhaustion.

He toed the baseline and flipped the ball high above him. He waited till it reached the top of its arc. Just as it came down from that peak point, his racquet slammed against it.

He saw it was going good, and moved over toward the center of his own baseline. Rod blocked it deeply to him. Ban wound up, watching the ball. Suddenly, he felt his legs turning to water, buckling beneath him. There were pinpoints of light dancing in front of his eyes. He knew what was coming—sunstroke. He summoned one final effort, swung hard at the ball. He felt his strings meet the pellet in a smashing forehead drive. Then suddenly everything blanked out. The last thing he

(Continued On Page 88)



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## SPORTS FICTION

(Continued From Page 86)

knew was that the sand of the court was rushing up toward him, and after that, nothing.

**W**HEN he came to, in the clubhouse, Saul Carter was saying in a high-pitched, excited inflection, "Greatest exhibition of sheer guts I've ever seen. Talk about guts under fire. The kid showed it out there. Too bad that final shot flubbed out of bounds. He lost the match by default, but I'll bet there wasn't a soul out there watching who wouldn't agree he rightfully won it."

And then, strangely, Ban heard Rod's voice, chiming in with enthusiasm, "I told you he was a great little player, Mr. Carter. I had an awful time making him play hard against me. He had some crazy idea he had no right to beat me, because I've done him a few slight—uh—favors. But—" Rod paused, as his flicking glance caught Ban staring at him.

Ban said weakly, accusingly, "I've got some more crazy ideas, Rod. Something tells me I was all wrong about you. I-I thought you were trying to—"

"Shucks, Ban," Rod laughed gently, "I never wanted the job for myself. Not really. I'm all set to take over the plant, when Pop retires. I'd be a fool, turning that down for pro tennis. But when I saw Mr. Carter giving us the once-over, back at school, I figured—"

"I get it," Ban stammered. It was all coming clear to him now. He felt sort of silly and ashamed, the things he'd been thinking. "You rigged up this whole thing to line me up for it, and let me think—"

"It was for myself," Rod said softly. "That's about the size of it, son. You had no plans for your future, and you belong in tennis. But you're so darn' touchy. I had to keep you thinking it was all for me, so you'd play along with me. I had to get you hopped up out there, before that last set, so you'd turn on the heat. And boy, did you ever!"

Ban said, gulping, "Then—does that mean—I mean—am I hired, Mr. Carter?"

"You're doggone tootin'," said the

## SERVE WITH PRIDE

promoter. "I'm glad to get you. We can talk terms at dinner."

Ban said suddenly, "Look, could I meet you after? I'd—uh—well, I'd like to have dinner with Rod, since I may not be seen' much more of him. I've got a lot of apologizing to do—sort of personal stuff—and—" He hesitated, and grinned gaily at Rod. "This time, son," he said firmly, "we'll have tenderloin. And I'm doing the treating!"

THE END

## STAR STRUCK

(Continued From Page 25)

new-found poise, struck out the last two Crimsons to face him in the ninth. The downward surge of the Cougars had been halted.

They ganged him as he came off. Little Pep Barnell even hugged him in front of the dugout. Mel towelled his face, chuckling. "Say, Pep, could I go that fourth game against 'em?" And he didn't get sheepish when he realized he'd called the skipper by his nickname again. Suddenly, the rookie grew thoughtful. Before he had dinner, he decided, he was going to write a long letter back to Red Bluffs to Anna....

THE END

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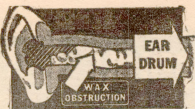
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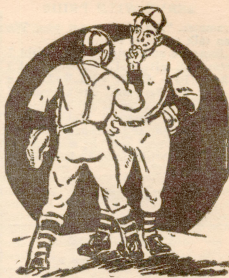
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(Continued On Page 92)





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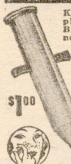
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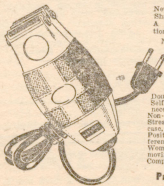
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## SPORTS FICTION

(Continued From Page 90)

showers in one inning by scoring seven runs off his slants. After the game, Derringer sought out his manager, McKechnie, and alibied—"You'll have to forgive me for being so terrible today, Mac, but it's not my fault. It was so hot I couldn't sleep a wink. In fact, I tossed all night."

"Is that so?" was the sarcastic rejoinder. "From now on, if you know what's good for you, you'll do your sleeping at night—and your tossing—exclusively on the mound!"

### A TOUGH ONE TO FORGET

Walter St. Denis, who died recently, former ace tub-thumper for Mike Jacobs, the fistic impresario, was a wondrous spinner of fight yarns.

He tells, how, many years ago, when men were men and the gals were glad of it, Lewis was matched to fight Ketchel in a ten-round bout at the old Pioneer Club in New York City.

Lewis trained for the fracas in a place called "Johnson's Road House," on 166th Street, while Ketchel performed his training chores a mile farther up.

Lewis and Ketchel were firm friends. Consequently, there was no lifting of eyebrows when the lads had a beer together at the end of the day's sparring and roadwork sessions.

Finally, the night of the fight arrived. In those days, boxers who were friends outside the ring, would put on a good show if they were matched, but would never try to kayo each other.

The first round was a lively affair, although no damage was done to either boy.

With the second round about a minute old, Lewis, who was a rather tricky fellow, forgot his friendship when he saw an opening. Stanley's guard was down for a moment after a clinch. Lewis put everything he had behind his famous one-two. Ketchel was staggered. He teetered around on uncertain legs and finally managed to clutch Willie. He held

(Continued On Page 94)

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## SPORTS FICTION

(Continued From Page 92)

on long enough to clear his bewildered head.

Then he gritted his teeth and roared at Lewis through clenched teeth—"You dirty, double-crossing so-and-so. This is the end of the line for you."

With that, he unleashed a powerful right-hand punch that caught Willie flush on the jaw. The latter went down as though he had been hit by a lead pipe.

The referee counted "10" over Lewis' prostrate form. Then he dragged him to his corner and sent a hurry call for a medico. After examining Lewis, the sawbones said—"This man has a broken jaw."

Lewis went to the hospital that night, where he received medical attention. The next day, he insisted on being removed to his home, where he was under a specialist's care.

Willie's home was above the saloon he owned on Avenue C.

The next day, Ketchel visited Willie's saloon. He threw a \$100 bill on the counter and ordered drinks for everyone in the house. Then he walked up to Willie's room and said—"I hope there are no hard feelings."

Willie smiled wanly and shook his head. At the very moment Ketchel made the remark, Willie's wife entered the room. She reached for a broom, picked it up menacingly and chased Ketchel out of the room, down the stairs, through the saloon and into the street, crying—"No hard feelings, eh? You broke Willie's jaw and my heart. Scram before I beat your brains out!"

As you have seen, Ketchel scrambled!

Today, Lewis is a bartender in a spot on Eighth Avenue in New York City. Ribbers through the years constantly get his nanny by asking—"By the way, Willie, did you ever hear of a fighter named Stanley Ketchel?"

And Willie constantly explodes in the same manner at this taunting query "Dawgonnit, I have had over 300 fights in my career—and the only one they ever talk about is the one with Ketchel. I wish I never heard of the guy."



## DOPE FROM THE DUGOUT

### SUCH JEALOUSY

In Hollywood the other day, Bob Hope, the funnyman, came across his pal, Jimmy Demaret, the golf star. The boys chatted for a while about everything under the sun. Then the talk naturally veered to golf.

"Y'know," Demaret chided, "you shouldn't make fun of Bing Crosby. He's a much better golfer than you. As a matter of fact, he's in his 70s."

"Oh, no," shot back Hope, "he's much older!"

### CAUSE INDEED FOR SADNESS

It's not very often that Charley Engle, manager of the Lubbock West Texas-New Mexico League Club, is left at the post in an exchange of words, but he admits he was a total loss in one instance.

The heaviest hitter on his team had just experienced a 0-for-4 day at bat and, riding along in the team's bus toward the next town, was very much in the dumps about his failure to hit. Engle sought to console the young man.

"Aw, cheer up!" he said, "you don't see me acting like that when I go 0-for-4."

The slugger fixed him with a sad eye and remarked, "Yeah, but I ain't used to it!"

### STRANGE BUT TRUE

Did you ever hear of a fighter knocking out his opponent—and getting the decision over him—on the same night—and in the same ring?

Sounds screwy, doesn't it? Nevertheless, it actually happened.

The excitement took place in the Broadway Arena in Brooklyn, New York, on the night of September 18th, 1945.

Vic Costa of the Bronx was trading fistfuls of fives with Morris Reif of Brooklyn, who is considered the best left-hooking welterweight in the game today.

The fun started when Costa belted Reif with two savage punches right after the bell rang, signifying the

(Continued On Page 96)

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## SPORTS FICTION

(Continued From Page 95)

end of the first round. These illegal punches severely lacerated Reif's right eye.

Reif saw red and waded in, punching viciously. One of his powerful left hooks landed flush on Costa's jaw, knocking that worthy colder than a Nazi's heart.

Referee Jack Watson was almost bowled over when Bobby Gleason, Costa's second, rushed him and demanded that he award the fight to Costa on a foul because Reif had hit him after the bell.

Looking Gleason straight in the eye, Watson snapped "If I'm not cock-eyed, those two fists that landed against Reif's eye AFTER THE BELL RANG were encased in a pair of boxing gloves worn by Costa. He started it and will have to suffer the consequences. I'll call no foul. I'm giving Costa and Reif three minutes' rest and the bout will continue."

The scrap continued, with Reif giving Costa a solid thumping to take a unanimous decision.

THE END

Watch for

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# The Insult "CHUMP" Into a CHAMP



## I Can Make YOU A New Man, Too in Only 15 Minutes A Day!

**H**AVE YOU ever felt like Joe—absolutely fed up with having bigger huskier fellows "push you around"? If you have, then give me just 15 minutes a day! I'LL PROVE you can have a body you'll be proud of, packed with red-blooded vitality!

"Dynamic Tension." That's the secret! That's how I changed myself from a scrawny, 27-pound weakling to winner of the "World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

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Using "Dynamic Tension" only 15 minutes a day, in the privacy of your own room, you quickly begin to put on muscle, increase your chest measurements, broaden your back fill out your arms and legs. This easy, NATURAL method will make you a finer specimen of REAL MANHOOD than you ever dreamed you could be!

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Almost before you realize it, you will notice a general "toning up" of your entire system! You will have more pep, bright eyes, clear

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Thousands of fellows have used my marvelous system. Read what they say—see how they look before and after—in my book "Everlasting Health and Strength."

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I want the proof that your system of "Dynamic Tension" will help you make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscular development. Send me your FREE book, "Everlasting Health and Strength."

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