

JULY

15¢

SUPER SPORTS

3 COMPLETE NOVELETS

THE GOAT TURNS

by Roe Richmond

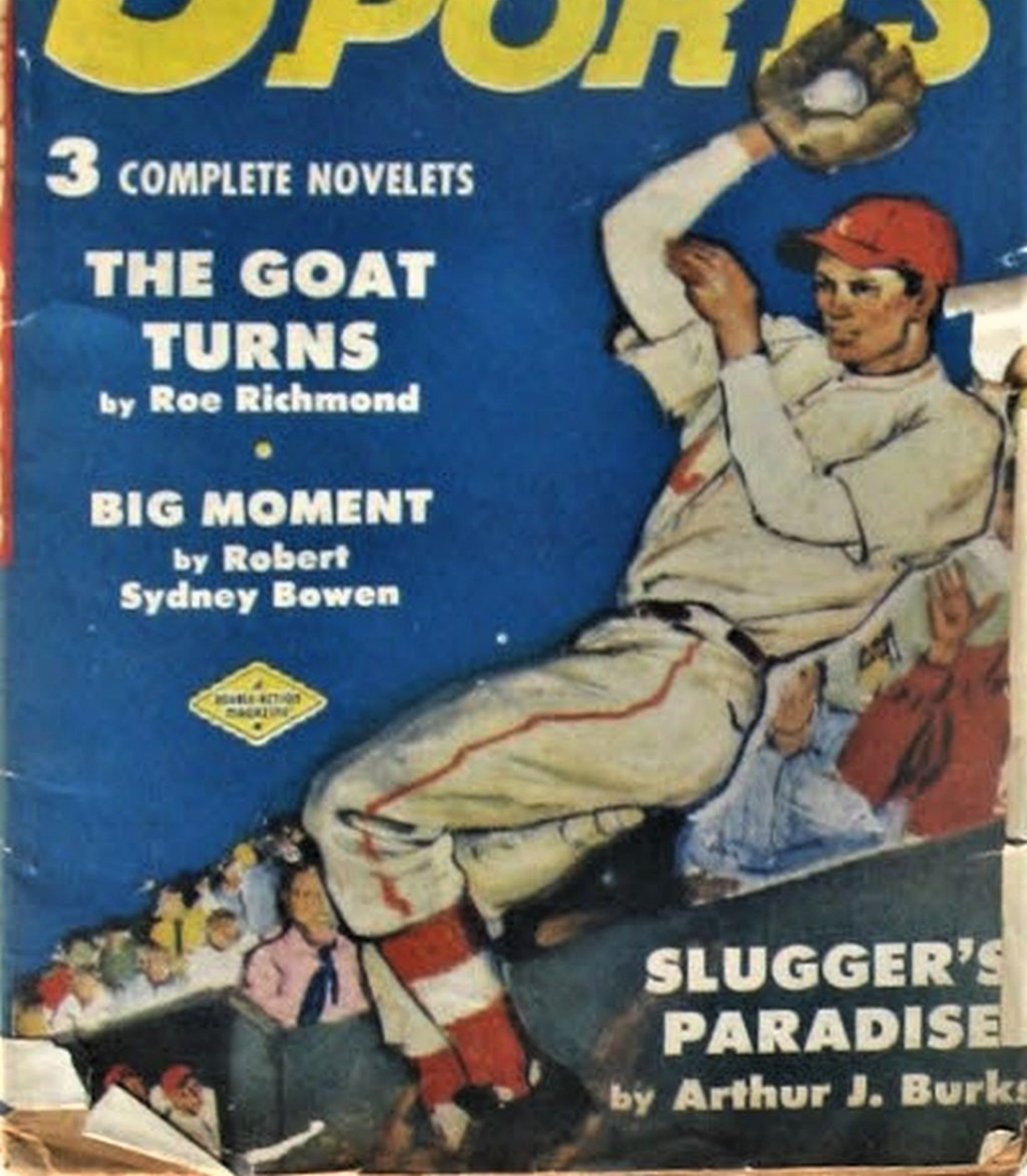
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by Robert
Sydney Bowen



SLUGGER'S PARADISE

by Arthur J. Burks



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SUPER SPORTS

Volume 7

Number 4

July, 1949

Robert W. Lowndes, Editor



Three Complete Novelets

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when the ballpark kids join the fans in jumping on the series bum!

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was more than Leaf oldtimers could take, but just what they needed!

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... the latter being one unworthy character known as Felony Jones!

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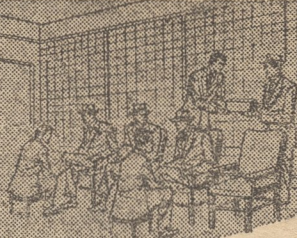
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The Goat Turns

by ROE RICHMOND

(author of "The Swede")

It was hard enough to take the regular fans' yapping, but when the kids began to boo, Bill knew he either had to make a comeback or get out of baseball for keeps!

THIS IS a funny business. Here we just win a pennant and are heading into the World Series, and I lead the league in the three big departments. Tops in hitting at .357, runs batted in with 119, and homers with 43. I should be sitting on the roof of the world; instead I am on the griddle like a ham.

You'd think nobody ever flopped in a Series before, the way people write and talk; you'd think I was the first big shot that was ever a Series' goat. I guess they don't remember Cobb and Ruth and the rest of them. They were as bad as I was two years ago when I only got four lousy singles in 22 trips for the disgraceful mark of .182.

But I'm not on the pan just because I was a bum in the Series two years back. They're taking me apart for this season, after I lead the league in everything that has to do with batting; they claim I drive in my runs after games are won or lost, and I get my homers after the race is all over. In other words I am no good in the clutch. After a season like I just had, they got the nerve to hand me that.

They don't mention the hits I lose on account of the shift, or the ones I am robbed of, or the line drives that go right at somebody in the field. If I can't hit in the pinch it's a wonder that everybody walks me when we've got men on the bases. If I'm such a soft touch why don't they pitch to me in spots like that? That's only one of the things I want to know from these wise guys that write for the papers.

They been on me ever since I came

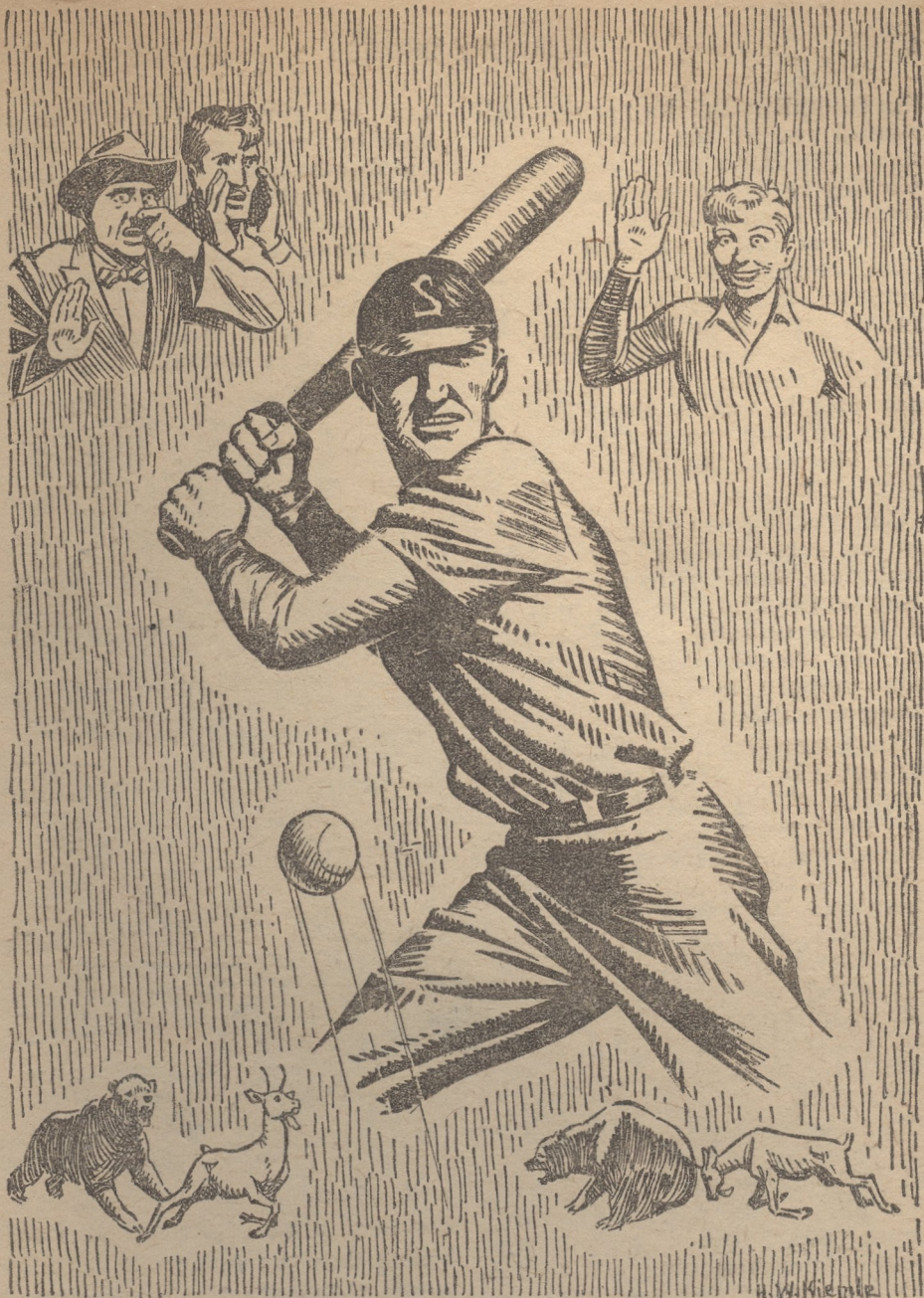
up, and it's a living wonder I haven't laid a bat over some of their heads before now. It started with the first one that interviewed me when I joined the Saints. I wasn't hitting at the time, and when I'm not hitting I'm not nice to anybody.

"How does it feel to be a big important national figure?" this bird opens up on me and pours more of the same stuff, as if I'm some kind of a freak they just dragged into civilization.

"Get the hell outa here!" I yelled at him, after I stood all I could.

He went all right, but fast, and he told all the rest of them about me chasing him out of the clubhouse, and it's been war ever since. Of course I get all the worst of it. They just sit back in the press box with their beer and cigars and lambaste the hell out of me, and I got no way of coming back at them. I wouldn't mind so much if they hadn't got the crowds to booing me at home and on the road. What really hurts is they've got the kids to riding me, too. When that happens I could kill the guys that write that stuff. I like the kids better than grownups and when they give me the business it cuts all the way through.

ON THE eve of this Series the papers are full of pieces that would blister the ears of a stone statue: "WILL BALLARD FLOP AGAIN?"... "ODDS ON BALLARD TO REPEAT AS GOAT"... "PREDICT BALLARD TO BLOW AS IN '46"... There are cartoons of me wearing a big set of horns, stamped



Complete Baseball Novelet

with a question mark, leaving a sinking shipload of teammates, looking at a bat labeled .182, holding a moneybag tagged "\$60,000 Salary" and waving away the winner's split in the Series, all that kind thing... It is enough to burn many a cooler man than me.

I had licked myself two years ago by trying too damn hard. That's what stopped me, not those pitchers. And what worried me now was that I'd get mad and beat myself again by pressing so much. You got to stay loose up there to hit them. It isn't

like football or fighting; you got to be relaxed to get the wood on them right. The Bears didn't have enough pitching to bother me, but I'd cook myself if I tightened up.

We had plenty of power at the plate. Merrill, the shortstop, and I furnished the right-hand punch. Nip Yarosky, the center fielder, and first-baseman McCord supplied the left-handed strength. Joe Rush, the second sacker, was a sharp lead-off hitter, and the rest of the boys got their blows too. We had a good ball club.

Our pitching was apt to be erratic but we were all right in the field. Rush and Merrill were a great keystone combination. Jim Gray was one of the best backstops in the business, and Nip Yarosky could go get 'em with anybody in center. We were strong down the middle.

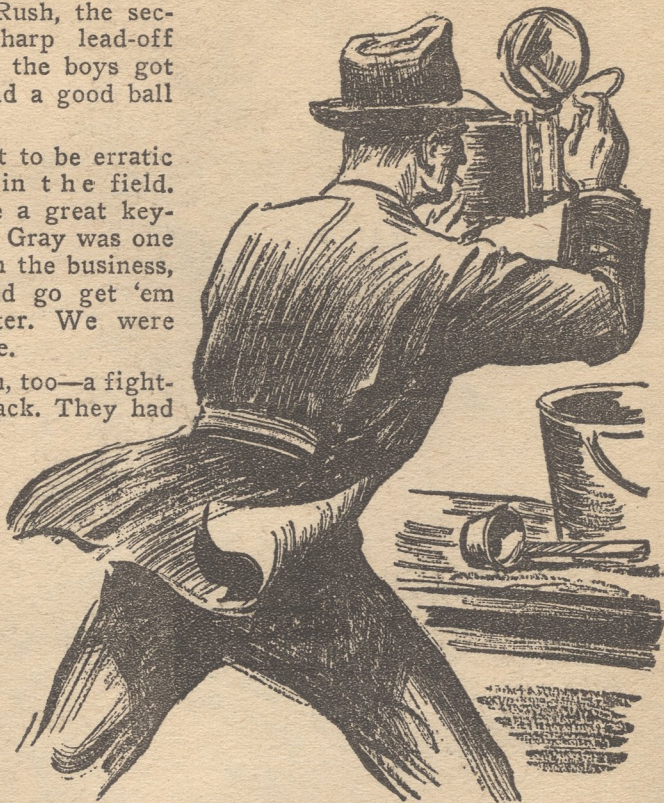
The Bears were tough, too—a fighting outfit from way back. They had a couple of left-handed powerhouses in Brenn and Herrick, while Tonkin and Lever could hit a long ball from the right side. Shortstop Stubbs was smart and fast, hard to pitch to. Pelham and catcher Budd were liable to explode at any time.

Their mound staff was rated better than ours by most of the experts. Wink Winetsky, a big rawboned, strong-armed, jutting-jawed boy, was supposed to have everything. Red Durkin was a fireballer bad news when he was hot, and old Tyler Orson had a lot of slow stuff an da crafty brain. Pat Frawley was an in-and-outer, a fine curve-ball artist when he was right... They had three topflight southpaws in Harry Sutcliffe, Monk Mezerer and Lefty Lyman.

Our own pitching corps was nothing to brag about really. Gillard, a shrewd old veteran, was the steadiest chucker we had, and little Tommy Tyron was a nice curve-baller. Jeffers and Sugar Kane had their days, both on and off,

and Jeff had speed enough to fog them by the batters if his control held up. Ace Auerbach and Tippy Condon were a couple of pretty fair left-handers, capable of throwing shutout ball on occasion. Sam Zakal, another lefty, was most valuable in a relief role.

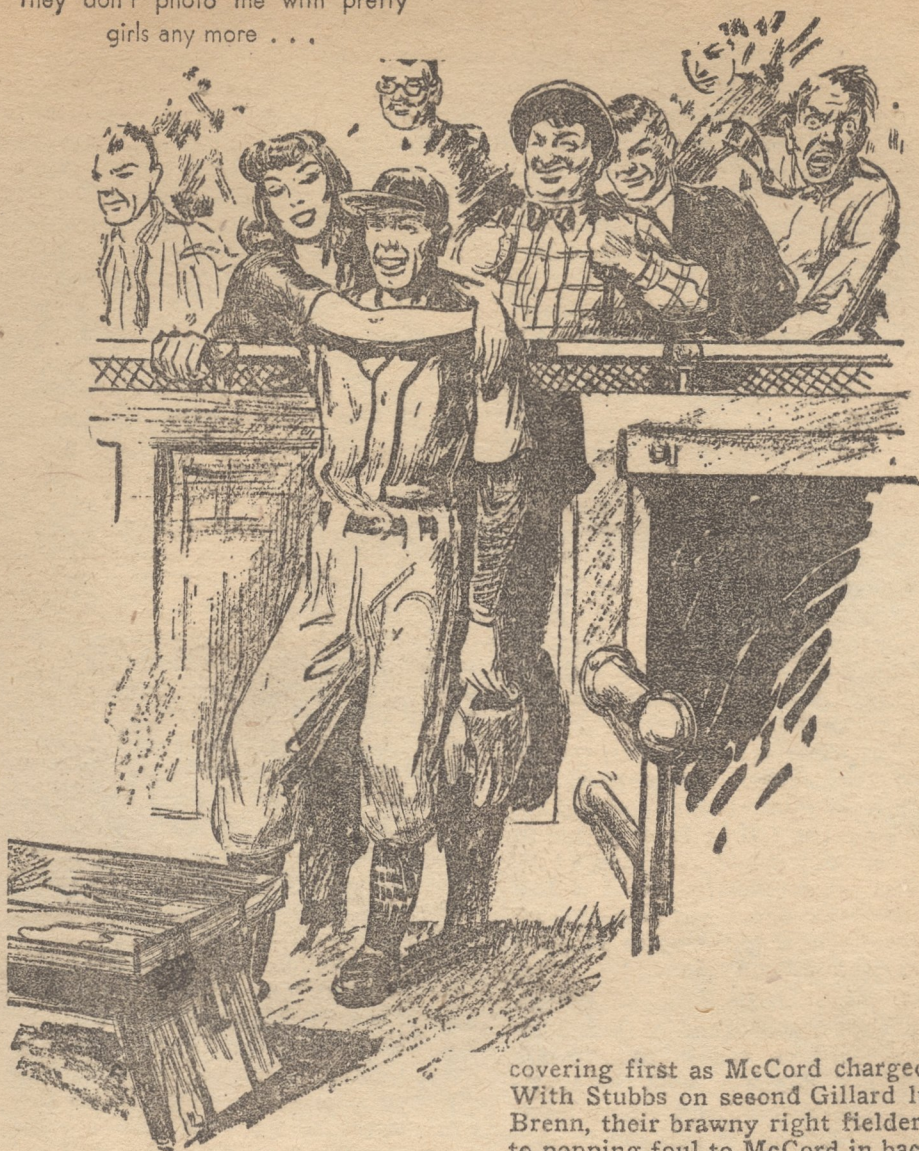
The bright boys of the press said the two teams were quite evenly matched. The outcome might very



well depend on the batting performance of Big Bill Ballard. If I was hitting them we would win, in other words. If I was beating the breeze and popping up like I did two Octobers back we would lose.

They hung it on me for fair and I wasn't too happy about it. But I tried to stay calm and cool and detached. I didn't want to whip myself again. If I blew another World Series they'd certainly crucify me. Cobb and Ruth had failed in one but that was all. If I flopped in another they'd ride me right out of the major leagues.

They don't photo me with pretty
girls any more . . .



Chapter Two

WE OPENED the Series at home with Gillard working for us and Winetsky up for the Bears.

They got a run in the first. Stubbs led off by drawing a free ticket, and Tonkin sacrificed. Third-baseman Hy Hamity threw him out to Joe Rush

covering first as McCord charged in. With Stubbs on second Gillard lured Brenn, their brawny right fielder, into popping foul to McCord in back of first base. But Herrick, their towering first-sacker, hammered a line drive out my way in right field. I couldn't quite get to it and it dropped in there for a basehit. My throw to Jim Gray at the plate beat Stubbs in, but the umpire called him safe and the Bears had a run. The crowd in the right-field stands and bleachers started chewing my ears off right away. The thanks you get for winning them the flag...Lever bounced to short and Merrill nailed him at first with a perfect peg to McCord.

Joe Rush went up to lead off for us,

short, stocky, freckled and cocky, full of fight and fire, Joe forced Winetsky to the full count, finally grounding to True at third and almost beating it out. Merrill slammed a single through the left side of the infield, and the fans livened up. Nip Yarosky, our long lean center fielder, pulled one to right like a bullet but it shot straight into Brenn's glove out there.

I went up with two out and the tying run on first, half the mob cheering and the other half booing. Winetsky was awful careful not to give me anything good. I got hold of a low outside ball and hit it back almost through the middle. It felt and looked like a sure single, but Stubbs came up with it behind second. He never could have got me at first, but he did snap it to Lever in time to force Merry at second. So instead of a basehit I got only a fielder's choice, and our loyal rooters booed me all the way out to right field.

Pelham, their center fielder, was up to start the second. Pel clipped out one of those hump-backed quick-sinking liners that fell in front of me in right. Nobody could have caught it, but the wolves howled as if I had muffed a soft one. I was getting madder by the minute, in spite of all I did to try and keep steady.

Old Gillard took True on strikes. Budd, their broad squat catcher, busted one hard on the ground toward right. Joe Rush scooped it neatly and flicked it to second. Merry Merrill grabbed it on the run and twisted away from Pelham's block to throw to first. McCord stretched and mitted the ball for the double play that retired the side.

IN OUR SECOND McCord singled to right, but Calhern flied out to Tonkin in left field and Hy Harrity went down swinging. This Winetsky did have a world of breaking stuff along with his fast one. Jim Gray got a solid piece of one but his liner burned right into True's glove in back of third. The Bears still had us down, 1 to 0.

Gillard took care of Winetsky on a roller to the mound in the top of the

third inning. Stubbs stroked a curving drive out my way and I caught it after a hard run. The faithful fans gave me a big mock cheer. "Whadda yuh know, he caught one! All by himself he caught it!" I tried to close my ears but some of those leather lungs would carry through anything... Tonkin tapped to second and Joe Rush tossed him out to McCord.

Winetsky whiffed Gillard in the last of the third. Joe Rush beat out an infield hit for our third safety. But Merrill banged into a swift double play, Stubbs to Lever to Herrick. We couldn't seem to get a man past first base.

The Bears scored again in the fourth. Brenn blasted a double off the bleacher-wall in right-center to begin with. Herrick hit one well but Nip Yarosky snared it in center, and Brenn didn't dare to run on the Nipper's great arm. Then Lever lined one to left and Brenn slid across before Calhern's throw bounced into Jim Gray's mitt. Lever made the mistake of trying for second and Jim's peg to Rush cut him down by fifteen feet.... Pelham pounded one over first base but McCord took it with a sweet back-handed stab and tossed to Gillard for the third out.

We went into the bottom of the fourth trailing two runs with Yarosky up and me waiting in the on-deck circle. The loose, lithe Nipper lashed a double down the right-field line, and I moved into the rectangle under the usual mixture of boos and cheers. Sore as I was I hadn't tightened up yet, and I put the wood squarely onto one of Winetsky's slants. It rang like a bell and felt like a million dollars, but Tonkin only had to shift a couple of steps in deep left field and that line drive was in his hands. Twice I had hit them right on the nose, and still I had nothing for two. The way the stands sounded you would have thought I struck out. I stalked back to the dugout ready to do murder.

McCord, our stylish first-baseman, was up there. Winetsky went ahead of him with two strikes and tried to fog the third one by. Mac unloaded on it with an ear-splitting crash. The

ball soared high over right field and settled into the upper-deck of the stands. McCord trotted around the bases behind Yarosky and it was all tied up at 2-2.

Winetsky proved that he was not too upset by getting Calhern on a pop-up and Harrity on a hopper to Lever at second. But Mac had put us back in the ball game, and the spectators were so happy they forgot to razz me as I went out to my position.

In the fifth Gillard made short work of the tail-end of their list, taking True, Budd and Winetsky in order, with Yarosky making a fancy catch of Budd's bid to right-center... Winetsky in turn did likewise with our last two men, Gray and Gillard, and Lever robbed Joe Rush with a leaping clutch of a scorching liner.

The head of their order was up in the sixth. Stubbs scratched a safety off Joe Rush's fingertips in short right. On the hit-and-run Tonkin grounded out to Joe, but Stubbs coasted to second unchallenged. Brenn blistered one on a line to me that stung even at that distance, and my her-worshippers gave me another make-believe cheer.

Herrick, the left-handed clean-up clouter, was passed to set up a force play and get at the right-handed Lever. But this strategy backfired on us when Lever lammed a triple over Yarosky's head into the far center field corner, chasing in two runs and putting the Bears up, 4 to 2.

Pelham punched one over second that looked like another hit and another run, but Merry Merrill came up with a magnificent top and throw to nip him at first and end the half-inning.

THEY WERE still applauding Merrill when he went to bat in the last of the sixth. In most cases like this the guy strikes out but Merry didn't; he smashed one off third-base-man True's knee for his second single of the afternoon. Yarosky flied out so deep in left-center that Merry slid into second after the catch, well

in front of Pelham's long peg.

When I dug in at the rubber this time it was all booing and no cheers whatsoever. And this trip I did tighten up a little, enough so that I popped a high infield fly that came down at last in Lever's waiting hands. The jeering noise of the mob withered me as I ducked back into the dugout swearing to myself.

They passed McCord then to take Calhern, but Cal crossed them up just like Lever had done to us, only Cal's was a single through the hole into right field. Brenn heaved the apple in, fast and accurate, and it was close at the plate. But Merrill's beautiful slide swept him around in back of Budd, and Merry's left toe scraped the rubber before the catcher's lunging tag reached him. We were one run behind now.

Hy Harrity hit into the dirt and was out, Stubbs to Herrick. The Bears were on top, 4 to 3.

The top of the seventh opened with True fouling out, Harrity picking it off the rail of the third-base boxes. Budd broke a hot single through McCord, but old Gillard made Winetsky hit into the ground to Merrill. Merry flipped to second, Joe Rush pivoted and pegged to McCord for the twin-killing.

Everybody stood up to stretch in our seventh but it wasn't lucky, although Jim Gray jolted a single to center as a starter. Gillard popped out. Joe Rush flied to Brenn in right. Merrill lined to Pelham in center.

For the Bears in the eighth Stubbs slapped one to Harrity at third, and McCord made a graceful long-stretch pick-up of Hy's poor throw to rub out the runner. Tonkin looped one to short left and Calhern came in fast to snatch it off his shoetops. Old Gill seemed to have everything under control now... But the big broad-shouldered Brenn belted one on a line over my head, and all I could do was turn around and watch the fans scramble for the souvenir as it rocketed into the lower right-field stands.

Herrick also got hold of one but Nip Yarosky took his with a pretty running catch near the bleacher-wall

in right-center. The Bears had a two-run advantage, 5 to 3.

Yarosky led off in the last of the eighth with his second double of the day, a ringing blow to right-center. I went up for the fourth time with a runner on base ahead of me. This trip, as if by prearranged signal, the park was nearly dead silent as I took my stance, and it hurt much worse than the booing... Winetsky threw everything he had at me this time. I struck out swinging, swinging my head off. The racket started then.

McCord doubled past first base into the right-field corner, and Yarosky scored easily. With one out we had the tying run halfway home. Calhern waited and walked, and we had the potential winning run on first. Hy Harrity gave it all he had and got a good piece of the pill. But Lever speared his line drive and tossed to Stubbs at second to double McCord. We were still down, 5 to 4.

Gillard was still strong and smart in the ninth. Lever flied softly to Calhern. Pelham lifted an easy one out to me—and I damn near dropped it at that. True bounded out to Merrill in the shortfield.

We were up for our last chance. There were five men ahead of me, and for once I was glad I wouldn't get to bat again. Nothing for four today, and every time there had been a runner on the paths... But the rest of the boys were still scrapping.

JIM GRAY drove straight back through the middle into center field for his second hit. Gillard batted for himself and bunted Jim along to second. One away and the tying run at the halfway station... Joe Rush was a fighter, always at his best in a crisis. Now, with the chips down in the last of the ninth, Joe Rush slashed a single between third and short. Jim Gray wasn't very fast but he got off to a flying start and the coach waved him on around third.

Tonkin's throw was good but the bounce pulled Budd off balance into the baseline. Jim Gray went into him like a runaway truck and they fell together in a rolling tangle. The ball

dribbled away in the dust as Jim's hand found the rubber, and the crowd went crazy as the crouching ump spread his palms to the ground. All evened up again at 5-5, and Joe Rush was on second base.

I was praying for Merry to connect with one. If he didn't they were bound to put Yarosky on to get a crack at me. And the way I wasn't hitting today I'd be the Series' goat in the very first game... The way I felt must have showed in my face, because Neely, our manager, leaned over me.

"If they get by Merry and pass Nip," he said. "I think we'd better try a left-hand batter, Bill."

"I guess so," I mumbled, relieved and ashamed at the same time. "I'm not hitting 'em today."

"Don't worry, Bill," said Neely. "You'll hit before it's over."

I wish I could have been as sure of it as he sounded.

But they didn't get by Merrill... Winetsky seemed to have lost his grip and his stuff. Even from the bench you could see that one was right in the slot without much on it. Merrill teed off on it, free and easy with plenty of whiplashing wrist, and the ball rode on a rising line to left-center. Only the fence would stop that one. It struck well up on the wall and caromed off. There was no need of the fielders chasing it.

Joe Rush crossed the rubber with the winning run. Merrill turned first base and swung back toward the dug-out. It was all over: Saints 6—Bears 5. The spectators were pouring onto the field, wild and jubilant.

We had won the first one, but I hadn't been a bit of help to the team.



Chapter Three

THE NEXT day was dark, overcast and dreary. Neely started Jeffers, figuring his fast one would bother them in the gloom, and the Bears

were using Red Durkin for the same reason. Both of them got through three innings without any trouble, but in the fourth Jeff's fireball seemed to be just what the doctor ordered for the visiting club.

Tonkin started it with a single after one was out. The burly Brenn doubled against the foot of the bleachers in right, and I held Tonkin at third. Jeff slipped a third strike past Herrick, but Lever walked to fill the bases. Pelham cleaned them with a triple to the flagpole in center, and the bears had us down, 3 to 0.

I went up in our fourth with two out and the bases empty. The first trip I had flie' out to left. This time Durkin tried to throw the first one past me. I hit it on a line over True's head into the left-field corner. It was an easy double if I hadn't slipped halfway between first and second. I recovered and went on but when I slid into the bag Tonkin's throw was waiting for me in Lever's glove. The crowd gave me an awful going over as I ran out to right field. At least I had a hit in the Series even if it didn't do any good.

Jeffers seemed to settle down then, but we couldn't get him any runs off the Redhead. In the seventh the Bears broke loose again. Stubbs bounced a fluke single over Harrity's head. Tonkins went out but Brenn was safe on Joe Rush's error. Herrick hit one into the right-field seats and they had three more runs and a 6-0 lead. When Lever lined off the left-field fence Neely jerked Jeffers, and Sam Zakal trudged in from the bullpen to get the side out.

We still couldn't get to Red Durkin, who was having one of his good days. My third trip I popped to shortstop Stubbs and gave the customers another chance to exercise their throats, which they surely did.

Red must have eased up a little in the eighth, for McCord, Calhern and Harrity singled in succession. Jim Gray doubled down the line in left, and we had three runs. They were coming in clusters of three today.

Zakal held the Bears in the ninth and we went up for our last raps.

With one gone Merrill hit an outside pitch to right-center for two bases and Yarosky drew a pass. I was up there with an opportunity to put us back in the ball game. I hit one hard enough but it went a mile high and Pelham waited patiently under it in deep center. What I had heard before was nothing compared to what I got this time.

The fans were already leaving by the thousand before McCord grounded out to Lever. The Bears had evened up the Series with a 6-3 decision.

The weather cleared and brightened for the third game, and both clubs had left-handers on the hill. Tippy Condon for us, Harry Sutcliffe for them.

They got to Tippy for a score in the first round. With two down Brenn and Herrick, the big one-two punch of the Bears, doubled in rapid order for the run.

Joe Rush led off with a single for us, but Sutcliffe stopped Merrill and Yarosky. I usually murder left-handers, but by now the fans and the sports writers had me beaten down. I stood in there like I was hypnotized and watched a third strike cut the platter.

We tied it up in the third when Merrill homered high over the left-field wall. We went ahead in the fourth when Hy Harrity doubled behind Calhern's single for a 2-1 edge. But they regained the lead in the sixth with Lever tripling in back of singles by Brenn and Herrick.

They led 3-2 into the eight, icing it then and chasing Condon off the slab. A ticket to Lever, singles by Pelham and True, and Budd's homer into the bleachers did it. The Bears went on to win, 7 to 2, with Harry Sutcliffe setting us down.

I went nothing for four again. In thr' games I had one hit in twelve trips, and that one had come with the bases empty and done nobody any good... I was plenty glad we were getting out of town for the next two games.

* * *

I THOUGHT maybe I'd be all right in another ball park away from

home. As a rule the booing didn't bother me so much on the road. I knew that the best ones always get it in other cities. The Babe did, and DiMag and Williams... When you're out of town it's practically a tribute, but when you're at home it hurts. Especially after you've won as many ball games for them as I have.

When I'm not right I feel worse about it than anybody in the stands ever could. When I'm not hitting them I'm the lowest man alive, and I know it without them telling me about it. I suppose they buy their tickets and have a right to holler, but I don't understand why I'm always the one they are on. I was always well-liked until I came up to the big time with the Saints.

But I wasn't any better in the Bear's park than I had been in ours. By the fourth game I was all tightened up and trying so hard I couldn't do anything right. I was gripping the bat too hard, striding too hard, swinging too hard. Licking myself just like two years ago. Old Tyler Orson made a monkey out of me all afternoon.

We won that fourth game, no thanks to me, and evened up the Series. Little Tommy Tryon did a nice job of curveballing on the Bears, and they couldn't get anything solid off him. They wouldn't have scored if I hadn't let that single go through me for three bases.

Our guys didn't do too much to Orson's slow fluttering stuff either, but they got to him for three runs which was more than we really needed that day. Joe Rush's single and Nip Yarosky's clout onto the right-field roof were enough to win. Merrill's double and McCord's single gave us the extra run. We took it, 3 to 1.

Getting walked once, I don't know why, I had only three official times at bat. In the Series I had one for fifteen. No matter who won out now the goat's horns were firmly fixed on my head. I was so disgusted with myself and so sick of baseball I felt like running off somewhere and hiding until it was over. I had been down some two seasons ago, but this time I

was really on the bottom.

I had left so many runners stranded on the bases it made me sick to think of it. One writer said if I had hit anything at all the Saints might have taken four straight. And he was right as rain. If ever there was a complete washout I was it.

The boys were swell though. They knew I felt bad enough and blamed myself enough without any outside help. They didn't use the needle a bit, just tried to act the same as always, as if everything was fine... But they couldn't help me, nobody could. It was up to me, I had to do it myself. And the more I tried the worse I was.

They tried to help in a lot of ways. Neely with his confidence in me, Joe Rush and his kidding, Merrill and Jim Gray with their quiet friendliness. But none of it did any good... I thought if I could have seen my dad and mother I'd be all right, but they were both dead. I was like a lost, homesick kid, only there wasn't a home to go to.

Before the fifth game I went up to Neely. "If you want to bench me, Ed, it's all right with me," I said. "I sure won't blame you."

"Forget it, Bill," Neely said. "You'll hit yet, I know you will." I got a chance to in the first inning when Yarosky doubled with two out. Wink Winetsky was back on the hill for the Bears. They hadn't been pulling the shift on me much in the Series, but for some reason they moved into it this trip. Somebody in their dugout must be psychic, that's all I can say.

Winetsky thought he could overpower me, I guess, but I tagged one of his fast ones fair and square. It went on a line to left field, a clean single against any ordinary defense. Shortstop Stubbs, forty feet back on the outfield grass, jumped and speared that humming drive. How can you beat anything like that?

SUGAR KANE was throwing for us and he was hot for three innings, but they began to batter him

in the fourth. Tonkin trimmed the right-field line with a double, Brenn walked, and Herrick hammered one into the balcony of the stands in right. They had a nasty habit of getting three runs at a clip.

Lever kept it going with a two-base blow to left-center. Pelham punched a single out my way. When I threw for the plate the ball got away from me and sailed twenty feet over Jim Gray's mitt. Kane left the mound and Sam Zakal came in and put out the fire. But the Bears were up, 4 to 0.

There were two men on when I went up in the sixth. They shifted part way but they didn't need to. All I could hit was a high foul that Budd caught behind the plate for the second out. McCord came through, however, doubling off the scoreboard to bring in both runs. It looked better with the score 4-2.

We tied it up in the eighth as Joe Rush beat out a bunt and Merry Merrill rifled a 440-foot homer into the left-center bleachers. Yarosky followed with a triple to right-center, and I had a chance to lift us into the lead. But I was gripping the bat hard enough to squeeze sawdust out of it and I went down swinging. The count stayed at 4-4.

Until they exploded in Zakal's face in their half of the eighth for three big runs. That was sufficient to sink us, 7 to 4, and give the Bears a three-two edge in the Series. All they needed was one more game, while we had to win the next two. We were going back home to wind it up, and that made it all the worse so far as I was concerned.

That is, if it could possibly be any worse. Big Bill Ballard, who had led his league in batting, had one hit in nineteen times at bat for the Series. . . I didn't feel as if I could go back and face those hometown fans. I just couldn't do it. I was whipped, hopeless, and no help at all to the Saints. The best thing I could do was quietly disappear. Like a wounded animal I wanted to crawl off out of sight into a hole somewhere. I decided to miss that train the team was taking tonight.



Chapter Four

I STOOD AT the bar nursing a beer and watching the clock. The train back East left at 8:06 PM. I expected to feel relieved after the hands crept past that hour, but I only felt guiltier and more like a fugitive than ever. Leaning on my elbows I twirled the glass and wished I was a real bottle boy so I could drown my troubles, but I never went for the stuff. I kept my head down and my hat tipped low over my eyes. I felt like a criminal and probably looked like one.

They were talking about the Series along the bar. I tried not to listen but couldn't help hearing some of it: "How do you figure this Ballard?... No good, no guts, he can't hit 'em when they count... His teammates must love him. Ballard gets all the salary and publicity, and they have to carry him on their backs... He ain't worth sixty grand in sixty years, dead or alive... Merrill, Yarosky, McCord, they're the boys that deliver, they're the ball players on that club... If you ask me Ballard's nothing but a big yellow bum!..."

I started toward the last speaker, caught myself, turned and walked out of the place. Picking up my bag at the hotel I got into a cab and told the driver to go to the station. I didn't know where I was going from there. I had a funny, light-headed, unbalanced feeling, and I wondered if I was getting screwy or what the hell.

In the station I walked past the gates leading to the tracks and read the steps listed on each bulletin. Then I saw it on the board at Track 15: Perkinsville, the town where I was born and went to school. Then I knew why I had come here and where I was going. The train went at 9:22 and I was on it.

I don't know why I wanted to go back home all of a sudden. There was nobody left there that I cared

about. My folks were dead, my sister was out in California, one brother was in Texas and the other, the kid of the family, had gone down with a Flying Fort somewhere over Germany. I had lost track of the boys and girls I knew in high school. I didn't want to see anyone there, I just wanted to see the place.

It was about 4:00 AM when I got off at the little station, which was empty and dark except for the agent in his lighted office. He peered out at me as I stood on the platform. A new man on the job, nobody I knew ... I looked down the curving slope of Main Street, empty under the lights. The town looked smaller shabbier, meaner, every time I saw it. I walked up the hill toward the street we had lived on.

The house that had been home was desolate and rundown and needed painting. The grass on the lawn was tall and tangled with weeds, matted with dead leaves. The porch rail sagged and a broken window had been repaired with cardboard. It had been a nice place when we had it. I wondered who lived there now. It made me feel like crying to look at it.

I walked all around the streets in the early morning darkness and it was like a ghost-town. A cold breeze stripped the leaves off elms and maples along the way, and I was the loneliest man in the world. For a long time I stood staring at the house Elsa Miller had lived in. My first girl—she had taught me to dance and we had gone together through high school, planning to get married as soon as we could... The last I knew she had married a guy who ran a gas station and they had two or three kids.

I wandered around the square with its triangular green where the bandstand and the Civil War statue stood and the fountain still tinkled, the same brick and wooden business blocks around it. I went past the library and churches to the red-brick high school and the athletic field where I had started as a shortstop and pitcher for Perkinsville High... I walked all over town, and it was

like I was the last one left alive.

I'd never realized before how lonely I was. I had been independent and cocky, thinking I didn't need anyone but myself... But I was wrong. I should have got married, I should be raising some kids of my own by now. All the players, except some of the younger ones, were married. I wasn't so young any more, getting along into the 30's. A man needs something, somebody besides himself.

The sky was graying and the bag was dragging on my arm when I walked back through the deserted square to the old hotel and finally roused the clerk to show me to a room. I was tired enough to go to sleep without worrying about baseball or anything else. There was no game today. I could rejoin the Saints in time for tomorrow's game—if I should want to. But I didn't really figure on going back at all. I was through.

* * *

I CHECKED out after lunch and stood on the hotel porch waiting for the one taxi the town had. No one had recognized me yet, and I didn't want anybody to. I still felt like an escaped convict and I wanted to get away before I saw anyone I knew.

A boy about 12 years old was sitting on the steps with tanned arms on his blue-jeaned knees. His blond hair was tousled and sunbleached almost white, and his eyes were bright blue in his brown face. His clothes were worn a little ragged but his face and hands were scrubbed clean and he looked like a nice kid.

"Hi, Whitey," I said.

"Hi," he answered, regarding me solemnly with those blue eyes.

I was trying to remember where I had seen eyes as blue as that, when his sudden eager voice startled me. "Hey!" he said. "You're Bill Ballard, ain't you?"

"What makes you think that?" I asked.

"I seen enough pictures of you. I know you're Bill Ballard. But what you doin' here? Did you get fired yesterday?"

"No, not exactly. Although I deserved it."

"You still got two games to hit in," the boy said. "You know somethin' Bill? I got a bat you used when you was in high school. My dad gave it to me; he used it too."

"Say, is your name Glenway?" I asked, beginning to remember about those blue eyes and that yellow hair.

"That's right, Scott Glenway. After my dad."

"Sure, I played ball with Scotty. He was good too. The best high school catcher I ever saw. How is big Scotty now?—I'd sure like to see him."

The kid looked down at his scuffed shoes and shook his tow-head slowly. "He's dead, Bill." I could just barely hear his voice.

Dead? It wasn't possible, it couldn't be true. Not big blond Scotty with the bluest eyes and the biggest laugh and the quickest fists in the world. Scotty, who could do anything with a baseball, a football, or a basketball. He had been the best all-round freshman athlete at Ohio State, but he got married and dropped out of school, I had heard. And now he was dead.

I put my hand on the boy's head. "I'm sorry. I didn't know," I said. "Was it—the war?"

"No, Dad was in it but he came back. It was after... He just got sick and died. Some people said he drank too much, but it wasn't that, I know... I know he wanted to be a big leaguer, Bill, like you."

"He could have been," I said. "He was good enough."

Young Scotty looked up at me and nodded. "Sure he could of... But Bill, you're goin' to play tomorrow, ain't you?"

"I don't know," I said, honestly and miserably.

"What d'yuh mean, you don't know? Listen, Bill, you got to play! You got to beat them Bears, Bill." Little Scott Glenway jumped to his feet and clutched my arm. "You better catch that afternoon train, too."

"All right, kid. If you say so," I told him.

"You're goin' to hit tomorrow and

the next day, Bill," Scotty said. "You're goin' to bust 'em, I *know* you are! I been tellin' everybody so here. They laugh at me but I don't care."

* * *

A SUDDEN idea came to me, and all at once I felt better. I liked this boy, as I had liked his father. And I guess I needed him, too... I said: "Scotty, how'd you like to come with me and see the last two games?"

His blue eyes got very wide and his voice was an awed whisper. "Gee, Bill!... You really mean it?"

"Sure I mean it," I said. "I want you to come along, Scotty. I think I can hit a few for you. Will your mother let you go?"

"With you? Sure she will, with you. I got to change my clothes and get ready, Bill." The blue eyes were dancing now, and his face was all lighted up.

"Here comes the taxi," I said. "We'll go to your house, then to the station." I felt alive for the first time in two weeks. Alive and keen, ready and eager for anything. I wasn't alone any more.

In the cab young Scotty Glenway sat on the edge of the seat, too excited and happy to sit back and relax. "Can you get me in all right, Bill?" he asked.

I laughed. "Right in our dugout, Scotty."

"Gee-miny!" he cried.

"What's your mother's name, Scotty?" I inquired a little later.

"Elsa," the boy said. "She knows you too, Bill. She and Dad used to talk about you a lot."

* * *

IT WAS A good thing I had the kid with me when I went into the club-house that next afternoon. Neely was ready to blast my head off, and the boys were set to freeze me out. But none of them could stay sore with little Scotty Glenway around. I introduced him all around, explained myself to Neely, and everything was all right by the time the bell rang.

"You look like a new man, Bill," admitted Neely.

"I am, Ed," I said. "I'm all right now."

"I couldn't believe you'd run out on us," Neely said. "I never gave up on you, Bill."

"I'll try and show you how much I appreciate that, Ed," I told him.

We had our best southpaw, Ace Auerbach, on the firing line. The Bears were using a high-powered left-hander too, the big rawboned ugly-faced Monk Mezerer.

They got two runs in the opening round. Stubbs walked, Tonkin bunted safe, and Brenn's single to right took a crazy hop and shot ten feet over my head for a freak triple. Auerbach bore down and took the next three in order. The crowd blamed me for that ball bouncing over, but today I could laugh at them. I was a changed man and no mistake.

Joe Rush smashed a single off Herick's knee behind first base, but Merrill and Yarosky failed to advance him. I took my stance in the batter's box and for the first time in the Series I was right, loose and easy and relaxed, limber as a buggy whip.

Monk Mezerer had no way of knowing, of course. Sneering scornfully he dusted me with the first pitch, and then threw a screwball at me. I was swinging as it broke away and I got the wood on it, solid and hard. It sounded like a rifleshot and went out like a bullet over left-center. My arms tingled to the elbow as I leaped for first base, but there was no need of hurrying on that one. It cleared the wall in deep left-center with plenty to spare and vanished somewhere among the distant rooftops. I jogged around behind Joe and it was evened up at 2-2.

Joe and McCord and the batboy grabbed at my hands as I crossed the pan, and little Scotty Glenway came tearing out to meet me as I went toward the dugout. "I told yuh you'd hit, I told yuh, Bill!" the kid was yelling.

"I can't miss with you here, Scotty," I said. "That's only the beginning, boy."

There was no more scoring until I came up in the last of the fourth. Yarosky doubled to right. I hooked one past third base that almost tore

a leg off True. Yarosky scored standing up and I slid into second with a two-bagger. McCord fouled out and Calhern whiffed, but Hy Harrity singled to center. I beat Pelham's peg to the platter with a slide that turned Budd upside down in the swirling dust. We were out front, 4 to 2.

Ace Auerbach went on turning back the Bears, aided by some glittering glove work on the part of Merrill, Joe Rush and Yarosky.

In the sixth Nip Yarosky singled Monk Mezerer was bearing down on me with all he had now, but he couldn't stop me today if he'd had twice as much stuff. I tied into a high hard one and drove it against the bleacher-wall in dead-center near the 450-foot mark. Nipper scored and I went into third standing up. The crowd was roaring now as if they'd been pulling for me right along. It was better than the booing but it didn't mean too much. What counted was that look on little Scotty's face and the light shining in his blue eyes.

McCord flied out to medium right. I scored after the catch with a fast sprint and a long slide behind Budd. It seemed so good to be running the bases again that I was happy as a kid. Our lead was 6-2 now.

The Bears couldn't touch Ace Auerbach after that first inning. We got a couple more for good measure in our eighth. Merry Merrill singled and stole second while Yarosky was fanning. Then I got hold of an outside pitch and rode it on a ringing line into the right-field stands.

It finished that way, 8 to 2, and the Series stood even at three games each. Everything depended on the final tomorrow.

For once in a World Series I had something to do with winning one. Four for four that afternoon, two homers, a triple and a double. I had driven in six runs and scored four times myself. It made quite an improvement in my record for the Series. I now had five hits in twenty-three trips.

"It was all for you, Scotty," I told the little guy. "I was hitting them for you."

"All right, Bill," he said gravely.

"Tomorrow I wish you'd hit some for my dad."

"We'll do that, Scotty," I said.

"You know, I never saw a big league game before," he murmured. "And now I see a World Series and meet all the players and sit right in the dugout and everythin'. If it's a dream, Bill, I don't wanta wake up."

I laughed and mussed his yellow hair. "It's the real thing, son."

"Dad was always goin' to take me to a game," said the boy, turning serious and kind of sad. "But he had to work hard and we didn't have much money, so we never got around to go."

"You'll see a lot of 'em now," I promised.

"I hope so," Scotty said. "But what I want most is you to win that one tomorrow, Bill."



Chapter Five

IN THE morning I woke up in my hotel room, remembering I wasn't alone and looking over to the next bed, which had always been empty except when one of the boys moved in for a night. It was empty now but it had been slept in. I turned to the tall windows and there was Scotty hanging over the sill looking out at the sunlit city. It was a clear golden October day. Scotty heard me get up and whirled around smiling brightly.

"Boy, this is great!" he said. "This is somethin'!"

"After breakfast I'll drive you around to see the town," I said.

"You don't wanta get tired out before the game, Bill."

"I won't," I said. "I feel as if I would never get tired again, Scotty." It was true, even the first thing in the morning, I felt fine and strong and glowing. As if I could lick the world and nothing could stop me. Just give me that bat in my hands and set the Bears up in the field. It didn't

matter who was throwing, I would knock his ears off.

I bought a bunch of papers and we had breakfast in the hotel coffee shop. Scotty was so anxious to read about the game and look at the pictures I had to keep telling him to eat up before it got cold. He laughed his tow-head off when he saw the cartoon captioned, "The Goat Butts Back." It showed me as an angry goat flattening a big bear.

"That bear sure looks surprised and scared," Sandy said. "And them stars he's seein'—homer, homer, triple, double."

I told the kid I felt like buying some clothes, and when we came out of that shop he had a whole new outfit on and he looked mighty sharp. New shoes, dark brown gabardine slacks, smart tan sport coat. And they had two boxes to deliver to the hotel. One with his old suit, one containing a brand new suit and all kinds of accessories.

"I feel like a dressed-up sissy," Sandy muttered.

"You got to dress like a big leaguer," I said, "if you're going to go around with big leaguers."

"I'll get used to it," he said. "But gee, Bill, you hadn't oughta buy me all this stuff."

"It's the most fun I ever had shopping," I told him truthfully.

Then I got the car out and we drove around the city seeing all the points of interest. He was a smart kid all right. He knew more about the historical landmarks than I did. He must have got that from his mother. Elsa had been the top student in Perkinsville High. We had a lot of fun and Scotty got a kick out of everything, but he was glad when it was time to have a light lunch and get out to the ball park.

And so was I, for that matter. I knew I was really all right, again because I could hardly wait to get hold of a bat and go after those Bears.

The boys in the clubhouse were all happy to see Scotty again and took turns talking to him. They figured he was lucky for us, but I was one up on them there. I *knew* he was. But they liked him for himself, too.

"That's a great, kid," Merrill said. "And he sure knows baseball."

"His old man was a big leaguer," I said. "Even if he never got up here."

* * *

IT WAS A perfect setting to decide the championship of the world in. A warm bright autumn day, the stands and bleachers crammed with about 50,000 people, the green-and-brown patterned field in ideal condition. After the fifth game the Bears had been confident of cleaning up the Series. Yesterday had been an awful shock to them. Today they were grim and dark and purposeful in their slate-gray road uniforms.

Old Gill Gillard, after plenty of rest, was back starting on the slab for us. Pat Frawley, something of a surprise choice, was in for the Bears. Of course if Pat was in peak form he could be as tough as anybody in the majors. Frawley had a fantastic assortment of curves and a very fine fast ball.

The Bears threatened in the first frame, but Merrill and Joe Rush reeled off a double play to stop them in their tracks.

Joe Rush grounded out to Herrick unassisted, but Merry Merrill lined a single over second base. Frawley fired three strikes past Nip Yarosky, and I stepped to the dish and dug in with my spikes. The crowd greeted me as if I had always been their favorite son, their pride and joy. I took a low curve for strike one, and Pat wasted the next pitch. I fouled a sinker and then he was inside for ball two.

Pat had all his stuff today all right. The next throw came up like a fast one and ducked sharply away. I went after it but only got a small piece of it. The ball skipped straight at Stubbs and he tossed me out.

In the second Lever sliced a safety through the hole into right. When Pelham pulled one through the same place Lever tried to go around to third. I went charging in to pick it up and pour all of my 190-pounds into the peg to third base. The ball bounced past the flying Lever into Hy Harrity's glove, and Hy laid it

on the bag for Lever to slide into. The fans gave me a good hand on that play.

Old Gill tightened to strike True out. The speedy Pelham tried to steal second, but Jim Gray's throw was accurate and Merrill made the tag as Pelham skidded in with his cleats flung high. Merry and Pel exchanged a few heated remarks while the dust cleared, but the umps moved in to break it up before they started punching.

There was no scoring until the first of the fifth inning. Pat Frawley seemed absolutely unhittable today, and I had fanned without even fouling one on my second trip. Old Gillard was always in trouble, but until the fifth he managed to get out of it with the help of stops by Harrity and McCord, catches by Calhern and Yarosky.

Stubbs opened that fifth with an infield scratch and Tonkin sacrificed him to second. The husky Brenn belted Stubbs home with a double off the bullpen screen. The rangy Herrick tripled to right-center scoring Brenn. Lever boosted a high one out to me and Herrick headed home after the catch. I threw a long strike to Jim Gray at the rubber, and Jim rode Herrick down into the dirt inches short of the plate. When Herrick kicked at him on the ground Jim pushed his mitt into Herrick's face. The umpire and other players had to untangle them and pry them apart. The Bears had jumped ahead, 2 to 0.

It was the last of the sixth before we got back at them. Joe Rush rapped a single to left field. Tonkin loafed a little on it, and Joe streaked down the line and slid into second, stretching it into a double. Anybody ought to know better than loaf on little Joe. But Merrill was called out on strikes, and Yarosky popped foul to True.

I WENT UP and settled into my well-spread stance, planting my cleats, limbering my arms and shoulders, holding the bat way back. Pat Frawley had stopped me twice and I didn't worry him a bit. The audience was already beginning to boo me

again, but it didn't bother me any more. In the dugout Scotty Glenway had told me this was the time to wallop one.

I fouled off a couple and Pat had two quick strikes on me with only one ball. Instead of wasting another he tried to cross me by coming in there with a fast curve. But I wasn't guessing up there, I was ready for anything, and I stepped into it swinging, whipping everything from ankles to wrists into the stroke. The bat sprang in my hands and the explosion shattered the sunlit air. I never hit one any harder or better in my life.

It went on a blurred rising line over center field. The velocity seemed to increase as the ball carried onward, clearing the barrier well above the 450-foot sign, sinking into a heaving sea of humanity high in the bleachers. For a moment the crowd was stunned and awed by that tremendous blow. Then the thunder broke loose and shook the earth as I circled the bases behind Joe Rush to even the count at 2-2.

When Lever led off with a single in the seventh that was all for old Gillard. He shuffled toward the dugout while Neely called Jeffers in from the bullpen. Jeff's speed should give them some trouble after they'd been looking at Gill's slow stuff for six innings.

Jeff breezed by Pelham and True, but catcher Budd banged one into the right-field corner for two bases and Lever scored to put them one up, 3 to 2... Jeff whiffed Frawley with just three pitches.

In our seventh we loaded the bases but failed to register a single run, as Pat Frawley pitched himself out of that hole with rare courage and icy calmness, a fast ball that blazed and curves that did supernatural tricks.

The Bears came clawing back in the eighth. With one out Tonkin tripled to the center-field flagpole. Brenn basted one over my head and it looked like a homer, but it soared high enough so I got back there and leaped high against the wall to snare it away from the cash customers in the right-field stands. Tonkins scored after the putout, of course.

Herrick hit hard on the ground toward left, but Merry Merrill robbed him with a miraculous stop and throw. With the Bears on top, 4-2 it looked very bad for the home team.

Yarosky was up in the last of the eighth, and I was kneeling in the on-deck circle. The Nipper was hitless so far today and he didn't like that at all. Long and lean and deadly, Nip Yarosky lashed a 412-foot triple off the bleacher-wall in remote right-center.

I went up burning to get hold of another one, but Pat Frawley fooled me completely with a change-of-pace and I popped weakly to Herrick at first. McCord came through in the clutch, however, singling solidly to right from the run.

Calhern beat out a high hopper to second-baseman Lever, and it looked like we were going to tie it up, at least. But Pat Frawley braced himself and bore down to retire Harrity and Gray and close the inning. Going into the ninth we were trailing, 4 to 3.

The Bears were bent on building up their lead in the last inning. Lever hit a bullet over third base, but Hy Harrity came up with a diving bare-handed stab and threw him out, McCord stretching nicely for the throw. Pelham pulled a double past first base, and they were threatening again. But Jeffers unleashed his fast one to send True down swinging for the second out.

Then the dangerous Budd blasted a single through the right side of our infield. As I went in to meet it I knew Pelham would be trying to go all the way home. Set to throw I scooped the ball and whipped it in toward the platter on a rifled line. It bounced into Jim Gray's mitt ahead of the runner. Jim straddled the line and Pelham smashed into him at full tilt. The collision threw them both sprawling in the dust, but Jim Gray held onto the apple and the ump's arm swept overhead in the out sign. My third assist had saved a run, but it was going to take some last-ditch batting to save the ball game.

IN THE LAST of the ninth we were still one run down. Elrod

pinch-hit for Jeffers, but Pat Frawley got him out on a fly to Tonkin in left. The Bears were just two outs away from the championship.

Joe Rush strode to the rubber, short and square, cocky and tough, slit-eyed and freckled. Frawley dusted him. Joe jumped up and offered to bend his bat over Frawley's skull. Frawley broke a screwball away from the stocky left-hander. Joe Rush slashed it between third and short. Stubbs got to the ball but there was no chance of getting Joe.

Merry Merrill took his stance, slender, graceful and clean-cut in the batter's box, a willowy right-hander with amazing power. Pat Frawley worked on him with great care and precision, but Merry was a money player too. Merry slammed one straight back through the middle into center field.

Joe Rush was off to a flying start, turning second in full stride and tearing for third. Pelham's peg was strong but Joe beat it with a wild reckless slide that knocked True down and sent the dust geysering fifteen feet beyond the bag. Merrill rounded first and kept running, sliding behind second and hooking the sack as Lever caught True's throw.

There they were, all set up for Yarosky with one out, the tying run on third, the winning run on second. Time was called while the Bears held a conference. Pat Frawley left the game, and southpaw Harry Sutcliffe came in to pitch to the left-handed Yarosky. And Sutcliffe, scorching the air and breaking off impossible curves, struck the Nipper out. Two on and two away, 50,000 people sitting in strained silence.

It was on my shoulders now and this time I was glad of it. But they weren't going to let a left-hander work against me. Sutcliffe was sauntering off the field, his duty well done, and wily old Tyler Orson, the crafty veteran right-hander with the uncanny butterfly ball, was coming in to take care of me.

Tension was so thick and heavy in that park you could feel it and taste it. I walked back toward the dugout

as the old-timer warmed up. Scotty Glenway came out on the steps and shook a small tanned fist at me. I nodded and tried to grin back at him, but my face was so numb I couldn't tell whether I grinned or not. The suspense was unbearable. A few days ago I would have been beaten already. But not today, not as long as I had a strike left.

Just like in a storybook, I thought wryly. Last inning of the last game of the World Series. Two out and the tying and winning runs on base. Old Tyler Orson against big Bill Ballard. In a few minutes now one of us would be a hero, the other one a bum. Three-thousand dollars for each player riding on every pitch. Grover Alexander and Tony Lazzeri all over again... A cold chill quivered up my spine. That old man had struck Tony out.

They were ready now and I stepped in and set myself, bending my knees a bit to ease the tightness, rolling my shoulders, stretching my arms. Old Tyler Orson was calm and stolid.

The first one fluttered outside and I almost lunged after it, but checked my swing in time. Ball one. The second pitch swerved in and down on the corner, and I fouled it past third base on a line. The next one came up a little faster and dipped. Following it all the way in I laid back and waited to the last possible split-second, then cut away with my wrists lashing as my arms whipped the wood around.

The ball flashed on a clean line over shortstop and skimmed the turf into left fields. Joe and Merry were racing homeward as I ran down the line to first.

Joe scored the tying run and the coach was waving Merrill on around third. Tonkin trapped the ball on the ground and straightened to heave it in. A fine throw but the bounce pulled Budd slightly into the diamond. Merry shot behind him in a long sweeping slide as Budd spun into a desperate dive. But Merry was across the rubber in a billowing dust-cloud when the catcher landed on top of him, and 50,000 people were going

insane in the stands. There was the ball game and the Series:

Saints 5—Bears 4.

* * *

OUR CLUBHOUSE was the happiest place in the world after that one. I was the man of the hour, of course, but I shook the boys off and pointed to Scotty Glenway.

"The little guy there," I said. "He really won the Series and he's going to get a split for it."

"I don't want no split, Bill," said Scotty. "I seen you do it, that's all I want."

Neely said: "I think we'd better have Scotty for a batboy next season. The way he can turn a goat into a hero, we need him around."

"I'll hit four-fifty then," I said. "I'll break every record in the books."

"What do you say, Scotty, you want a job with us?" asked Neely.

"Maybe." The kid smiled, shy and

sober. "I'd just soon be a batboy until I get big enough to play."

The boys whooped it up joyously around Scotty, and photographers took pictures of him surrounded by players and then of him and me alone. I guess he was the proudest kid in America. And I was the happiest man.

Merrill came over and clapped me on the back. "You all set for that hunting trip we were talking about, Bill?" he wanted to know.

"I'm not sure yet, Merry," I said. "I've got to take Scotty home, and... Well, I'll let you know about it."

Merry grinned wisely. "You been acting very fatherly, Bill. You thinking of making it legal?"

"It's about time you settled down," said Merry. "If the rest of the family does you as much good as Scotty you'll hit five hundred next year and break Ruth's home-run record."

THE END

The Strangler Pays His Debt

REMEMBER the mighty Strangler Ed Lewis, the great grappler who won the world's heavyweight wrestling championship in 1931 from Ed Don George? Well, this is his story, the story of a dread affliction, a turn to God, a miraculous cure, and now the Strangler paid his debt to his Maker.

Twelve years ago Strangler Ed Lewis was stricken with trachoma and blindness. The man who wrestled in some 6200 matches over a period of 44 years—and grossed more than \$15,000,000!—then came to grips with his most terrible opponent.

When the light left his eyes he turned to an inner light, a spiritual light. And, as he tells it, when all seemed hopeless and helpless, then help came.

"Yes, help did come," says the Strangler. "It came through cleansing my mind and heart first. It came surely from God, for when I began to think right, my blindness left me. Today I can read and drive my automobile."

And today the Strangler is paying his debt to God. He's paying it in schools and churches, colleges and universities, boys' clubs and reformatories and civic clubs the length and breadth of the land. His grappling with juvenile delinquency.

"If I can justify my existence by doing some good for the youngsters who go bad only because there is no one to show them the right way, I will be satisfied," Lewis says.

"The problem is leading youth into positive instead of negative thinking. I am trying to instill in them that if they do their best every hour, and their best every day, they will have no fear of the future. Fear is what puts a limitation on everything.

"I have studied metaphysics for a long time. From that study I have my own story to tell the youth—that life is a series of moving mountains and overcoming obstacles. The more difficult the obstacle, the stronger one becomes after hurdling it."

—John Winters Fleming

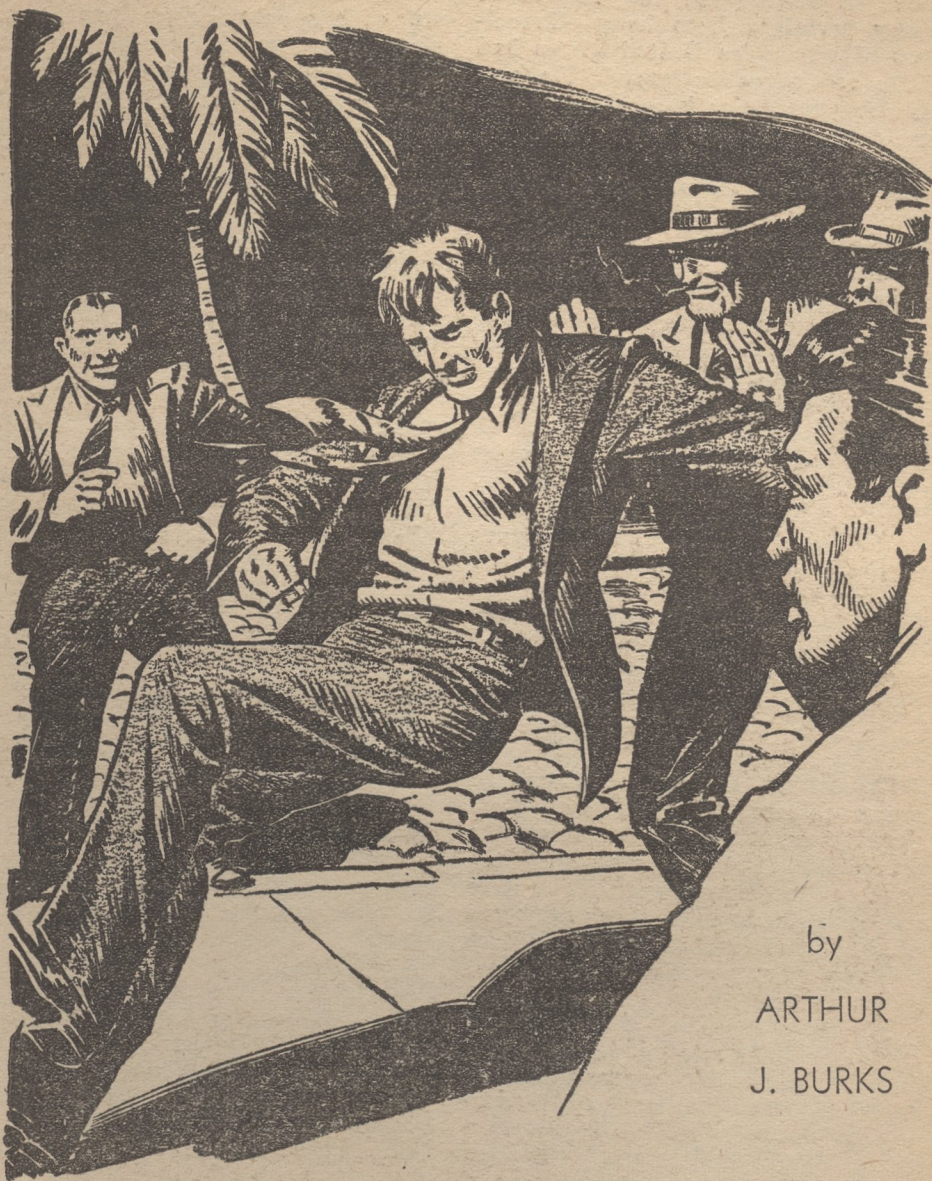
Jake Ouster could
still hit hard.



H.W. Kienle

A Powerful Novelet of Red- Leather Courage

SLUGGER'S PARADISE



by

ARTHUR

J. BURKS

*Sure, I'm a bum, now, but
I still got sudden death in
my dukes. You talk big
— let's see you stand up
to me for ten cantos —
I'll bet you can't take five!*

DAVID KERR swung around the turn from Avenida Nazareth, headed toward the towering old Opera House, enroute to Fifteenth of August Street. It was good to be alive and healthy on this particular evening in Belem. He had watched the sunset over Guajara Bay,

managing to forget that he was a stranger in a strange land and as such, outside the pale. He didn't believe in waving the flag as did so many travelers from home—Travelers of whom the United States had little reason to be proud. He was thinking how nice it would be if all one's foreign friends were as proud of knowing Americans as Americans were proud of themselves and their country. Most Americans overdid it; there were more subtle ways.

But how could a boxer, a fighter, a *pug*, know or make use of them? That Kerr, near the top of the world's welterweights, liked good books, was well educated, widely traveled, and had half a dozen decorations for the work he had done in the war, didn't change facts. One kept very quiet about being a boxer, in Belem, because, to these people, striking with the fists was degrading. Knives, with all the bloodletting they could manage, were correct for Brazilians who had differences to settle. Yet they liked to *watch* boxing matches, just as they might like to watch bull fights or cockfights, with no desire to be bulls, bullfighters or fighting cocks.

David Kerr stiffened as he saw the group coming. He had heard them come around the corner from the Street of Cabs, loudly singing, plainly somewhat in their cups. They were mimicing the sounds which came out of the Opera House, where a famous soprano was warbling her highest notes.

The soprano and her listeners could not help hearing. Kerr did not feel that any of it concerned him, except for a peculiar circumstance having to do with pride. There were twelve of the singers, all husky men, their arms locked so that they formed a cordon across the mosaic of the old stone sidewalk which ran east and west past the Opera House. They swayed right and left as they came. Their laughter was boisterous, inconsiderate. One cracked voice, speaking impossible Portuguese, rose above the others.

The accent, David Kerr was sure, was American!

The revelers were pushing men, women, children, off the sidewalk. Walkers scooted to safety to right and left as the men came marching on, with apparently no destination, no mission save to disturb the general public. The arm-locked men were simply not giving way, even to walkers who were frail. A pair of black-habited, white-cowled nuns scurried off to the right, and the revelers laughed. Kerr realized that as he advanced and the revelers advanced, a collision was sure unless he, like all the others scuttled off the sidewalk, into the grass to the right, or into the cobbled street to the left. Either thing was humiliating...

Yet, he kept telling himself afterward, he would have done that, let them go their own way, but for one thing: one of the men in the advancing cordon spotted him, called out: "Here comes an American, *and he's not drunk!*"

How often, in the past two months of his travels, Kerr had heard that stale joke from the lips of all classes of Brazilians, every last one of whom had been sure that *all* Americans were constantly engaged in trying to absorb all the liquor that could be found—and doing it in public where the most people could see them. And Kerr knew they had grounds for this opinion.

Even then Kerr would not have provoked collision had not the hoarse voice he had first noticed, broken in: "One of my own countrymen!" it said "And *sober!* What do you know?"

Now there was no retreat. David Kerr, though foreign, had as much right to the sidewalk as anyone. He had been willing to turn the other cheek, but not when to do so would humiliate both of them.

DAVID KERR stopped when they were almost in contact with him, and the unexpected happened. The men swung around him in a circle—and fists were smashing him in the face. Under the lights, below the towering, umbrella-like old mango trees, he saw the face of the man who had slugged him. His heart went a little sick; he knew the man:

Jake Ouster, middleweight trial horse, who might have been middle champion of the world if he had played the game square and refused at least a small percentage of the drinks that had come his way. Once Kerr had regarded Ouster as a great fighter, one to look up to, to idolize. Then there had been a scandal and Jake had disappeared from the public view, dropped out of the public prints.

Now, here he was, an expatriate who probably lived by cadging food and drinks from young roisterers who regarded him with utter contempt. To them, educated though they probably were, Jake Ouster was America; he was the men of the United States.

Kerr put up his hands automatically. The whole thing was utterly regrettable, but he couldn't just stand and take a beating. Jake Ouster drove a left at his face, his right cocked for a savage, accurate cross. David Kerr dropped easily under the left, dodged the right, and hammered a tattoo on Ouster's belly. He lifted a right uppercut to Ouster's chin, and the onlookers cheered. Ouster's head went back. He teetered on his heels a moment. But he had been a good fighter in his time; the blows showed the man instantly that he faced class; any liquor that clouded his brain must have been driven clear out.

"Ah!" said Jake in his villainous Portuguese, "a professional! An American welter traveling *incognito*! Well, he needs to be taught a lesson! Deal him to me, friends, like a deck of cards!"

The words didn't make sense at first, not until the bystanders, most of whom were as large as Ouster, all of whom were taller and heavier than David Kerr, grabbed Kerr and pushed him into the meatgrinder of Ouster's fists. It's one thing to fight a man in the division above your own; it's still another thing to be fed to him by many hands, the hands of people who enjoy seeing you take a licking! To top it all, Kerr dared not lay hands on the others.

"Strike a Brazilian with your fists! how many times had he been told

that," and you're lucky if you live to get out of Brazil! You're *through*, no matter what comes after. The insult is unforgiveable; your victim and all his friends will be after you with knives—the weapons they consider sporting. Fists are considered cowardly."

They hurled him at Jake, and David Kerr's salvation lay in the fact that Jake himself was inside the ring the men formed. A crowd was gathering, a curious crowd, composed largely of children who should have been home in bed.... If he knocked Jake out, fast, now, and then ducked out and away, not too deep an impression would be left on them.

That roving reporters who invariably exaggerated a verbal altercation on the street into a "Disgraceful Riot" would come running to this magnet of interest Kerr regarded as certain. He concentrated on knocking Ouster cold and was amazed, in the next thirty seconds, to find that Jake was top condition. Had Ouster been training? Why? He had trained on beer and strong drink for some of his most important professional fights; did he drink any less now that he no longer fought professionally? Probably not, yet his fists were hard, his punches accurate.

THE WATCHERS were placing bets, big ones, on the outcome. Jake was chuckling with glee as his fists wove a pattern of grace and certainty. He drove sharp lefts to Kerr's face, too fast for David to catch them all, smashed him in the midriff with driving rights.

"Probably isn't bad, in his own weight division," said Ouster. "But the good little man doesn't live who can whip a good big man; every little man who has tried it has been hammered into a fog—just as I'm going to hammer this fellow!"

Kerr ducked, spun, side-stepped, used every ruse he knew to keep the heavier fists of Ouster from smashing him to the hard sidewalk. The Brazilians, who could see in this only a bit of juvenile showing off, thrust out their feet, tripped him, pushed him into the flying fists.

"You're a fool, Jake!" snapped Kerr. "These people don't admire you; they regard you as a drunken bum!"

Ouster crossed a right to David's chin that buckled his knees. He would have dropped had the man followed through, but Jake was stopped by Kerr's use of his name.

"I don't use that name here!" he said, using English for the first time. "How do you know it? Who are you?"

The crowd was laughing at Kerr's almost-helplessness, paying little attention to his efforts or his words. There were probably some among them who knew English, but right now all they knew was "sport!" They fed him to Ouster again, and as he pulled Jake's head down with his left hand and drove a right into the middleweight's face, he made answer. "I once thought you were one of the greatest middleweights in the world, Jake, and so you were. Millions of others thought the same thing. Now you're just a bum, a laughing stock and a stench to your country."

"And you're a flag-waving preacher!" said Jake, fighting his way out of the clinch, smashing David over the heart with terrific righthand punches. "What do I care about the U. S. A.? I'm a legal resident of Brazil, where they know how to treat a man. The U. S. A. hung my professional hide on the fence to dry. For all of me they can give it all back to the Indians!"

It wasn't the first time David had heard disgruntled, expatriates of all Nations use those very words. They never ceased to fill him with fury. He lost control of himself for a few moments, and when the savage flurry of his fists ended, Jake Ouster was sitting on the pavement, staring up at him in amazement.

"Who are you, anyway?" he demanded. There was blood on his mouth and nose. He sat in a pool of light from the overhead electric, and David noted his bulbous ears, hallmarks of the fighter who has taken many around the head because he believed in boring in, carrying the fight to the adversary, rather than

covering, retreating, *boxing*. There was no doubt that Jake had been, and still was, a *fighter*, proud of his ability with his fists, totally unable to understand why any "foreigner" should look down his nose at a man whose fists were as clever and hard and accurate as almost any others in the world.

Jake Ouster, even when beaten, had never needed to apologize for his fighting heart and his ability. "Who are you?" he repeated, jumping to his feet. "I'd bet you're only a welterweight. The welterweight doesn't live who can deek Jake Ouster! How come I don't know you?"

David drove a straight left at Ouster's nose. Jake parried it.

"You forget, Jake," said Kerr, "you're a legal resident of Brazil! How could you be expected to know what goes on in the boxing world at home? Your home, Jake!"

SOMETHING in David's use of the word "home" drove Jake Ouster berserk without making him lose control of his temper. He kept using the word as he closed in on David, furiously commanding the others not to trip or push Kerr, and hammered him to his knees. David's head spun as if he had rolled over and over down a long steep hillside and was clinging to the world to keep from being hurled off into space. He fought back for all he was worth, but he had spent thirty days out of training, coming leisurely over the Andes from Lima and down the Amazon. In the heat of the tropics it was easy to go soft.

David went down, all the strength pouring out of him. He spat blood. Ouster backed away. Three of the spectators hilariously over David were counting in Portuguese.

"I'm David Kerr," David told the middleweight. "I fight the welter champion next year."

"Never heard of you!" said Ouster. David tried to get up, slipped back. Jake was now ordering the onlookers back. "This man is a good fighter, just out of training!" He snapped at them. "Let's put him on at the Quema Club! He's not heavy

enough for me, but he'll do; it's better to collect for a fight than to pull it on the street for nothing!"

Ouster bent over David Kerr, grasped his shoulders, pulled him to his feet. "I fight at the Quema Club, kid," said Jake Ouster, "when they have anybody to throw in against me. They don't always have. When they don't..."

"When they don't," said Kerr grimly, "you go hungry!"

"That's right. To me you're not just an American who'll draw a crowd with me; you're a meal ticket. What do you say?"

"Only this, Jake: since when have you been beating up welterweights?"

There was a slight flush on Jake's face now. He shrugged, shaking his head like an angry bull. "A guy has to live. I never learned to get along for over a week without grub! Anyway, even if you're just a welter, you're a world's champion heavy-weight compared to the bums they usually feed me—if they can find any at all! Beachcombers, every last one of them!"

"Like yourself, Jake," said David coolly.

"I'll knock that idea out of you at the Quema," said Ouster. "What do you say?"

"That it's time you and I became halfway decent examples of Americans a-traveling. Where do you live? I'll come see you about details."

"The Quema Club's Fight Committee will fix it!" said Ouster hastily. "Where do you live?"

"At the Grande Hotel."

"I'll see you there when I've got rid of these sports!... And if I don't seem to be very sorry for this exhibition, try to think of my side a little!"

Ouster snapped at his friends, who parted to let David Kerr through. David looked at his wrist-watch. Unbelievably he had been detained only five minutes. His head still spun.

He crossed to the Grande Hotel, washed up in his room, came down to dinner. He had scarcely ordered when Ouster slipped into a chair

across from him; David Kerr pushed the menu to him.

S 2 S

"YOU'RE a welter and not in shape," said Jake through a mouthful of steak, "but you knocked me on my, on my..."

"So I did, Jake, didn't I?"

"And if you beat me at the Quema," Ouster continued, "I'm through! And when a foreigner is through down here he's through in such a way you couldn't understand; he'd far better be dead!" Jake Ouster glared at Kerr. "So you might as well know I talked as fast as I could to get you thrown in with me before you could get into training. I can't take risks! You can't get into so good shape in two weeks!"

"I can always take a plane back to the States, Jake," said David, grinning.

"But that grin tells me you won't! You wouldn't let a fellow-American down!"

David's voice was sharp now. "Don't say we're fellow-Americans! Not after the way you've behaved and what you've said to me. You can't have your cake and eat it. You told me you were a legal resident of Brazil, and that you didn't mind if the United States were given back to the Indians! Now, as far as I'm concerned, you're stuck with that! That's not all. I'm going to get into shape in two weeks; I'm going to knock you out in—how many rounds are you supposed to fight?"

"Ten!" said Ouster. "Nobody ever stayed over one with me unless I carried him. I've carried some awful tankers as far as the fifth!"

"I won't carry you to the fifth, Jake," said David Kerr grimly, "if I can salt you away before."

Ouster looked at David Kerr steadily.

"For a man my size to be beaten by a welter," he said softly, "would be

like volunteering for the hot squat. But you're not going to beat me, kid! You won't last five, I promise you! That's good steak, too! Now, how about buying me some drinks? Most Americans do!"

"Here's one that won't!" said David grimly. "And if I smell liquor on you any time between now and the night of the fight, or in the ring, I'm going to refuse to fight and explain to reporters exactly why! That will sort of finish you, too!"

"I can't live without liquor!" said Ouster.

"You're going to try your best until after the fight, anyway; if you do, I'll buy you a case if you still think you have to have it!"

"I always *did* have to have it!" muttered Ouster. "Just one!"


"Not one. And the reason you're here in Brazil, cadging food and drinks, is that you always believed you had to have liquor. *That's* your biggest fight. Your next biggest fight, and part of the same one, is to prove that you're worth respecting—in any language."

Ouster stared. "What do I care for these people? Not a one of them would lift his fists in a fight if his life depended on it. Knives! That's all they know! And what have they done for me? Less than my home people did—and they heaved me into the gutter!"

"You heaved yourself into the gutter, Jake! Americans like to make heroes of their champions and near-champions. They reached the place where they *couldn't* make a hero of you."

"For ten years I showed them courage, guts, good fights. Then, because I slipped here and there..."

"And threw a couple of fights!" interrupted Kerr.

 USTER flushed, but went on as if he had not heard.

"...they dropped me like a hot potato, even my best reporter friends. I couldn't get a semi-final in a hick-town club!"

"So you came here, thinking maybe your name..."

"I took another name," said Jake.

"I kept my own history, the best of it, but I took another name."

"What name, Jake?"

"My right one, which I never used in the ring at home. Never mind what it is just now. I'm going to be Jake Ouster when we fight at the Quema Club. And I'm going to ask you a favor: don't try to find out what my family name is. My family doesn't know where I am, probably thinks, and hopes, that I'm dead!"

David Kerr stared at Ouster. Did Jake believe for a moment that a professional fighter who was bound to know his own profession, would be ignorant of Ouster's right name? Just at the moment David could not remember it, but it would come to him. If Jake, though, could feel shame, and wish to hide it from his family, there was hope for him, and it was that hope for which he had been probing.

"Suppose you tell me about your stay down here," suggested David over coffee. "How long have you been here?"

"Two years. Seems like ten. I'll tell you about it..."

It wasn't a pretty picture, but it was a common one. Ouster had landed in Brazil with all that remained of his last professional purse. He had gambled away most of it, drunk up the rest with the help of young men who didn't mind if he threw away money on them. Jake had traveled up the Amazon to Iquitos, had fought several times at Manaos for small sums, knocking out sailors, beachcombers and other riffraff, finding it almost impossible to make the fights interesting. He had fought at Santarem, if what he had done could have been called fighting. One night he had even taken part in a battle royal, knocking out four men in as many minutes, for a purse of fifty dollars. He had been offered a steady job at Santarem, which he now wished he had taken because it was for a weekly fight and a percentage of the gate, but he had hoped, on the strength of the "reputation" he had built up in Iquitos, Manaos and Santarem—which proved to be utterly

non-existent—to be able to command good purses in Belem.

There had been other street brawls. He had been in prison several times. He had become bitter, blamed it all, not on himself but on his erstwhile fight fans in the United States, who had dropped him like a hot brick, without giving him a chance to explain or defend his professional conduct.

"Was there a good explanation?" asked David Kerr. "Or a sensible defense?"

"What did it matter, since nobody cared if I had either?" asked Ouster. "I hate everything the United States..."

DAVID KERR raised his right hand to silence the bitter, savage, self-pitying derelict.

"Jake," he said, "did you ever hear of *The Man Without a Country*? It's a book. I have it; it's one of my favorites. It's the story of another man, not as famous as you were, but an officer in service—just as you are right now, unofficially, while you're in a foreign land—who thought he hated the United States. I'm going to make your reading of that book one of the conditions of fighting you. Now, Jake, what do you use for sparring partners?"

Jake's laughter was bitter. "Guess!" he said. "What have I got to pay 'em with? So far I haven't needed to put on the gloves from one fight night to the next. I told you they've all been bums!"

"I'm no bum, Jake," said Kerr gently, "and if your pals hadn't fed me to you, as you ordered them to do, I might have knocked you out—as I intend doing in the ring. Remember, my friend, in that Quema Club ring, I presume, there won't be a bunch of roisterers to feed me to you! You're going to need sparmates; so am I. We're professionals. If for no other reason than our own personal pride, we've got to do it right! Do you think it will do anything for me professionally, or you, if I step into a ring and knock out a bloated bum? Or am knocked out by him? It's going to be clean, on the level, and as appealing

to men's hearts as we can make it, Jake, or there's going to be no fight!"

"Are you a missionary?" snapped Jake Ouster.

"I am exactly that!" retorted David Kerr. "So are you! So is every American traveler! How about sparmates? I need some, too!"

Jake Ouster relapsed into sarcasm. "Why don't I peel a few thousand off my bankroll and send to the States for Petey Hainz and Bat Keller, my two favorites? You, being in the chips, can of course, send for your regulars, if you feel you need that sort of training to knock off a has-been! I'm pleased you don't have sparmates! Of course, we could practice on each other!"

"Even Brazil would think that a bit funny!" said David. "Jake, I don't want to pry, but where do you sleep?"

Ouster flushed. "I've got a cot behind the kitchen in the Quema Club," he said. "I manage all right. It's lucky I bought a lot of clothes when I had the cash; they come in handy enough now."

"I've got some letters to write, some wires to get off, Jake," said Kerr. "Beat it now, and start training. Remember, no more public brawls, no more liquor—if it kills you!"

"You've never known what it means to be dry," said Ouster, his voice grown strangely, horribly hoarse, "if you've never wanted a drink as badly as I want one. I won't promise not to drink. I'll just keep you from smelling it; any doctor will tell you that for a man like me to stop short off..."

David Kerr thought there might be some truth in what Jake Ouster said. He hesitated, extended two two-hundred-cruzeiro bills to Jake Ouster: approximately twenty dollars. Jake stared at him, a question on his lips he feared to ask. David didn't help him. Inside him David believed that before morning Jake would be out cold; he only hoped he wouldn't be on the street or in some back alley somewhere.

"This is a loan!" rasped Jake, rising. "I'm going to pay it back out of

my next purse! Sometime, somehow, I always pay my bills!"

"The bills you have to pay can't be paid with money, Jake," said Kerr. "But you're right, you'll pay them sooner or later, whether or not you want to! Beat it now, and it would be better if we didn't pal around together. I've some ideas about you, and this fight."

Ouster didn't offer his hand, though he started to, thought better of it. He strode from the dining room. Men and women looked after him, most of them approvingly; Jake Ouster, at thirty-two, was a magnificent figure of a man, as nearly perfect in his class as David Kerr, at twenty five, was in his.

DAVID KNEW that he ran an excellent chance of getting knocked out quickly; Ouster was no fool when it came to fighting. There would be no great honor for Jake to knock out a welterweight, even in the first round. For every second Kerr remained on his feet, Jake would lose face with the fancy, the men who knew something of fighting in the ring. David, on the other hand, would increase in stature with every round he stood up to the man who had come within a fight or two of facing the middleweight champion of the world. Before he had become a champion, three years ago, Jake had knocked David Kerr out in five rounds. The public had been clamoring for a title fight between the two when Ouster had gone haywire—talked and fought himself right out of the fight picture.

But he could still fight, and welterweights had no business with middleweights in serious contests. Only overstuffed welters had ever given good accounts of themselves against middleweights, unless the welters were unusual and the middleweights mediocre.

And Jake was not mediocre, given a spot of training.

Was David Kerr unusual as a welterweight? He didn't kid himself; Fate had led him into a trap. But for one thing, he didn't regret it: out of

all this somehow he was going to rehabilitate a fighting man, and induce those Brazilians who held him in contempt to respect him, both as a man and as an American.

David went up to his room, uncovered his portable typewriter, grinning as he thought of all the fun that had been poked at him by newsmen who insisted he was going intellectual on the fight game because he wrote letters to his friends on the machine, when fighters, they said, were not supposed to be able to write!

David walked the floor a little, smiling, then wrote a radiogram, first, punched a button for a messenger, sent the radiogram down to International. The radio said:

Get passport fastest way possible with Brazilian visa. Airmail letter follows with instructions, David Kerr.

Then he sat down to bat out with two fingers the "instructions" he felt were necessary. That airmail letter, he told the clerk later, must get out to New York on the night plane, to be in the addressee's hands the second day following.

David gave much thought to the next three brief airmail letters. He wished he were literary, to get across what he really felt about what he had to say to those newspaper men. But he expressed himself simply, and wasn't sure, when he read himself back, but that his very simplicity didn't produce the desired effect. Kerr would have been an unusual fighter if he hadn't known a little about publicity.

He almost forgot to get out radios to his New York manager, but took them down himself, later that night. Excitement was rising in him, as it always did when he was planning fight strategy. It was no act, he planned, or series of acts or gags; he intended to knock Ouster kicking as quickly as he could—in the first ten seconds of the first round if that were humanly possible.

"I wonder what Jake would do if

I insisted that he come into the ring wearing Brazilian colors! He probably *would* knock me kicking!"

NEXT DAY four natty young Brazilians came to David, representing the exclusive Quema Club, and offered him a contract to fight Jake Ouster, ten rounds, two weeks hence, in the Club ring.

"I'll do it on the following conditions," said David Kerr. "That the club members pay not less than one hundred American dollars each, twenty percent of the gate to go to Jake Ouster. The man is a great fighter; as a professional boxer myself I cannot fight a man who is worth less than the sum I have mentioned!"

The young men gulped. "You spoke of other conditions?"

"American reporters are to be admitted!"

One Alberto Perez laughed. "There are no American reporters in Belem!"

"There will be, come fight night!" said David grimly.

The contract was drawn, signed. Kerr doubted if club members *would* pay that much for tickets, but he had established Jake's worth, anyway. During the next three days David did road work, shadow-boxed, jumped rope. Then his sparmates, happy over the adventure of travel by air, arrived from the States.

David was eating ice cream near sundown of the third day when Jake Ouster slid into a chair beside him. He looked pleased.

"What do you know, Kid?" he said. "My luck must be in! Bat Keller, my old sparring partner, is on the beach, too! We just got together—and that about stops your clock, Kerr! You didn't have anything, to do with his being here did you?"

"Would I be likely to connive at my own decapitation?" asked Kerr, relieved that Ouster didn't press the matter.

The fight was eleven days away. Jake looked good, his face and eyes clear. He bought himself some *assai* ice-cream, which David thought an odd thing for a drinking man to do. He opened his mouth to ask Jake

about drinking, closed it again. He preferred not to know.



THE QUEMA Club was one of Belem's ritziest idlers' clubs, supported by wealthy men who liked to know where their sons spent their time and money. It was a three-story sprawling building on *Avenida Nazareth*, the top floor cut up into rooms for the use of men who preferred to live at the club. The ground floor was spacious and entertainments of many kinds were held there, usually strictly stag. During the dry season, when rains were few and far between, the enclosure back of the ugly yellow building was used for boxing bouts. Some of Belem's most widely-traveled wealthy had been introduced to boxing in England, France and the United States, had in turn sold it to Belem's Quema Club members.

The verandah was packed with the oldest club members, the grounds jammed with men of all ages. Lights were strung high on trees and a cluster hung above the center of a regulation ring set in the center of the grounds.

David Kerr offered no protest when he was the first into the ring after a trio of indifferent preliminaries during which six perspiring young Brazilians fanned the air with gloves the use of which they knew but slightly.

All looked curiously at David as he entered the ring with his own handlers. The referee was to be a Brazilian, and that gentleman, exercising the local prerogative, was taking his time about arriving, since, it was clear, proceedings could not start without him. David Kerr knew of this more or less traditional trait of the temporarily important.

The onlookers didn't cheer, didn't take note of David's presence by so much as polite applause. David shrugged it off; if they had paid even half the ticket prices he had

insisted on they were entitled to sit on their hands.

One of the spectators spoke up, after the wait became oppressive.

"What sort of secret arrangement provides for the meeting of a welter and a middleweight?"

David grinned, not minding. "You've heard of catchweights, haven't you? Hasn't Jake Ouster been fighting all my predecessors at catchweights?"

The Brazilian didn't return the grin; he half turned his back as if he hadn't been much interested in the first place.

Ouster came down the aisle from the clubhouse. When David noted the new trunks worn by the middleweight, and the brief sash which Brazilians had insisted on, he grinned to himself. The trunks were yellow and green, as was the sash—the national colors of Brazil!

There was a gasp from the club members, then a burst of applause as Jake crawled through the ropes. Jake crossed the ring to shake hands with David Kerr.

"What's eating these people?" he asked David. "They never cheered me before, even when I half killed people to please them—and hold my job!"

David grinned. "I guess maybe they think you're one of them. Haven't you any idea yourself?"

"Not one." Jake started to turn away.

"Where'd you get the fancy new trunks and sash?" asked David.

"Somebody sent them to me a couple of days ago, airmail from the States!" said Jake. "Did you have anything to do with it?"

"You're suspicious, Jake; you think I have a finger in everything."

"I've been wondering about a lot of things, about Bat Keller going on the beach at just the right time; at the New Deal which came to the club for me; and now, these laddies giving me such a big hand! Why, if you know?"

"I'll tell you, right after the knock-out, Jake!" said David grimly.

"If you're able," replied Ouster,

turning to his corner as the referee crawled gracefully through the ropes. The timekeeper sat below the bell, stopwatch in hand. David nodded to three newspaper reporters brought to the Club through his efforts. They grinned at him. One of them held up his hand, thumb and forefinger forming a circle. The story David had suggested, the "line" he wished to follow, the signal said, was okay. The other two men nodded; they would follow through.

THE REFEREE called the two men to the center of the ring for instructions. Kerr stared at Jake Ouster, who grinned and blew his breath in David's face. "Not a drop, kid," said Ouster.

"I'd forgotten about it," said David.

"It's killing me, but a deal is a deal!"

"Will the two gentlemen of fisticuffs," said the referee, "be so kind as to remain silent while their superior, the referee, tells them the rules?"

Both men grinned at him, nodded.

"When there is a knockdown, the man standing retires to a neutral corner while the count continues," he said.

"And if both men are knocked down at the same time?" put in Ouster.

The referee looked startled. "Does it ever happen?"

"Don't worry," said Jake grimly. "it won't happen tonight. And I know about going to neutral corners; my opponent doesn't need to know!"

The referee glanced down at Jake's trunks and sash, started to speak, thought better of it—to David's vast relief—and waved the two to their corners. They had shaken hands and were to come out fighting.

Seconds were out, handlers out. The bell sounded.

Jake Ouster, professional, only two years away from being one of the world's great middleweights, whirled from his corner. A gasp went up from the audience. David inferred they had never seen this particular Jake Ouster in action. Jake looked as

sure of himself as ever he had when David had sat in the distant seats in Madison Square Garden or the Yankee Stadium and watched him face the gong; as ever he had when David had seen his motion pictures and studied them for the almost perfect fighting style.

There was no doubt about it; Ouster was out to end the fight as quickly as possible.

For David Kerr, a vast responsibility rode in the fight. It went further than this comparatively small club and the picayunish purse that went with this battle. It extended to all the world, but especially to all Brazil and all the United States. Men's honor and nations' honor were in it, and whatever one may think about such things. They were there. They had a weight that could not be ignored. He only hoped he had made no mistakes anywhere. Not that he was afraid of losing. To lose to a middleweight would cause no embarrassment to his place in his own division. Welters were not supposed to whip middleweights.

Ouster was trying to maneuver him into a corner. David was fast, faster than Jake, but he lacked the larger man's terrific punch. He darted in like a rapier thrusting, stabbed Jake on the nose three times, started to cross a right, then jerked back to avoid a right that would have taken the top of his head off. A great cheer rose from the watchers. Several jumped to their feet; others shouted at them to sit down.

David darted in again, shot his left twice to Jake's nose, smashed a right to the jaw, missing the button. Jake rubbed his reddening nose with the thumb of his fighting glove.

David's back was against the ropes and Jake was grinning at him, closing in, getting him set for the kill.

"I'm four points up on you, Jake," said David Kerr. "I hope the referee can add 'em up"

"It only takes one of mine to balance all the points..." and there Ouster swung his right, a short, sharp uppercut which had won fights for him. Kerr couldn't evade it entirely; he felt himself going down,

but pushed Jake away before the larger man could land again. David staggered away from the ropes feeling as if one of his legs had been suddenly amputated. His legs had gone rubber; he had to look down to make sure he had them both. Then he was down, flat on his face, and the crowd was yelling itself hoarse.

The referee picked up the count at four as Kerr rolled back and forth, fought back to his hands and knees, got up to one knee.

"Six!" shouted the referee, swinging his arm wildly.

The ring was spinning, would not stand still. In a neutral corner Ouster danced high on his toes, his face grim. He had not expected David Kerr to rise again, and even though his face whirled on his shoulders and there were several faces, David could read bitter disappointment that a mere welterweight was getting up in in time.

I've got to bicycle, and plenty fast, thought David. And that's just what he expects me to do, because it's the only wise course—if my brain isn't too addled!"

"Eight! Nine!" shouted the referee.

DAVID WAS up, still rubberlegged, staggering, and Ouster was moving in with deadly efficiency to finish the job. David waited for him to come, as he had waited for the referee to wipe the resin off his gloves. The referee hadn't done it, hadn't known perhaps, and Jake didn't remind him. As far as Ouster was concerned David could have a pair of horseshoes in either glove.

David backpedaled, Jake after him. Now the whole membership of the Quema Club, all the visitors and guests, were standing, shouting for Ouster. To most of them the few pounds difference in the fighters were of no importance whatever.

David ducked under Jake's flashing fists, managed to escape annihilation by sheer luck, outsped Jake to a distant corner, slid out of it to Jake's left. His head had cleared; his legs were all right again. He knew that he was in as good shape as he had any right to expect.

David stepped in, shooting the left again, again, again—to Jake's nose. Jake grabbed him, tried to hammer his midriff inside. David smashed Jake on the jaw, felt his body tremble.

"That knockdown almost did the business, Jake," said David, against the man's shoulder. "But you won't get the chance again; you shot your bolt!"

Jake snorted. David danced away, shooting that left again, again, a third time. The crowd had gone crazy. Their man—theirs because he wore the national colors of as patriotic a country as exists on the face of the globe—had downed this upstart.

David shot the left, crossed his right.

The bell rang, ending the first round. As the two men sat on their stools David grinned at Jake. Jake was frowning, didn't grin back. His breath came in shuddering gasps. He was taking longer to get his second wind than David. Too much dissipation, too little exercise, was taking its toll. Jake knew; Jake also knew that he stood an excellent chance of losing the fight if he didn't catch David Kerr in this round or the next. David knew, too, that these two rounds were the most important of his life—and perhaps Jake's.

The warning buzzer, then the bell.

Jake came out swiftly. David looked down at the middleweight's knees. They were not shaking, but firm, steady. Jake caught his glance, grinned. David drove his left into the middle of the grin, buried his right, with all his power, in Jake's belly. Jake grunted, bending forward. David missed a right aimed at the button by so little he could scarcely believe he had missed. Jake swung viciously. David stepped inside and allowed his body to roll with the impetus of the blow, inside the arm. The crowd shouted, clapped, stamped its feet. Now the voices came plainly through.

"Kill him, Jakobo!" they shouted. "Smash the American into the dust!"

David grinned. "How does it feel to be a Brazilian, Jakobo?" he asked.

"Your people like you!"

"Only one thing will make me feel

good, kid—to knock you loose from your pins, for keeps!"

"You missed your big chance, Jakobo! I've got my second wind; don't you wish you had some?"

David darted in, his feet and arms twinkling. He shot three lefts to Jake's head, dropped a right on Jake's jaw. Jake sank away from him, his knees sagging. David stepped in close, landed twice again. Jake's legs were trembling now. David grinned at him.

"I'll carry you to the fifth, Jakobo!" he said.

"Don't do me any favors, kid," said Ouster, no doubt whatever in his voice. "Remember it only takes one of my rights in the right place!"

He swung the right as he spoke, and though David dropped under it, the crowd yelled itself hoarse for "Jakobo!" David shot lefts and rights to Jake's belly, lifted a swift uppercut to the point of Jake's chin. Jake staggered again. He was trying to corner David when the bell ended the second round. David stood and watched Jake to his corner. Jake turned, scowled at him.

He was still scowling when he came out for the third round. David had now shut out everything except Ouster and the need to cut the big man down. He was conscious, as from a far distance, of the screams of the crowd. He escaped Jake's punches by miracles in which even Jake began soon to believe. He kept his left in Jake's face. His right dropped repeatedly on Jake's chin. The left side of Jake's face began to swell. His nose was bulbous.

DAVID was down in the fourth round. It could have been a slip, but the watchers almost tore up their own club grounds. It was not until the fifth that Jake lost his feet for the first time. David clustered a barrage of lefts and rights to Jake's chin. The big man slid easily forward as if kneeling voluntarily. He remained on his knees, weaving, trying to keep from falling forward, not ready yet to rise.

"Take nine, you fool!" snapped

David as Jake tried to get back up.

But Jake didn't; he was on his feet at six and David was working on him like a hunting dog worrying a bear. At that point the thing on which David had coldly planned began. Jake Ouster, whipped, and knowing it, fought on, using that courage which had been his stock in trade, which had so endeared him to the hero worshippers at home. When, near the end of the fifth round, he went to his knees again, then fell on his side, he was scrambling back up, forgetting, or not caring, what it meant to a man his size to be floored by a welter-weight. David watched the reporters at their typewriters, hammering out that story he had already predicted for them because he had known Jake Ouster better than Jake knew himself.

Ouster came into the sixth round, fighting, his steely grey eyes cold as death. His hands and arms were plainly heavy, but he walked into the fists of David Kerr as if they were feathers being spun about his head. His own punches were off balance, lacked force, but Ouster stepped in, staggered back from David only when driven to it by David's fists, moved in once more.

Ouster was taking a double humiliation; he was taking a beating before these people, and from a man smaller than himself.

Jake was down twice in the seventh, once in the eight, twice in the ninth. David began to despair that he could keep the big man down. Jake never ceased for a second to march in. David began to dread dropping those savage right handers on the man's jaw. He knew what such blows did, in time, to even a big man's brains.

David's throat was filled and choked with the other man's dogged courage when, near the end of the fight and the tenth round, big Jake Ouster went down and was counted out—still trying to get up and march back for more. When he was counted out and David's hand had been raised, David stepped to the ropes and held up a hand for silence.

"You have just witnessed raw cour-

age of which any nation in the world should be proud. This man Jake Ouster is a great fighter—who needs more time to get into proper fighting condition. If he had had such time it is doubtful if I could last three rounds with him. You saw how close he came to finishing me off in the first round! It must be a source of pride to you that he wears the colors of Brazil!"

A tremendous cheer went up at this. David turned and grinned at Jake in his corner. Jake's battered face expressed a variety of emotions.

"Jake Ouster," David went on, when the cheers would allow him, "can whip any man of his weight in the world. Brazil could not find a better representative to the United States!"

Cheers again. David felt Jake behind him, but did not turn.

"I have a proposition to make Jake's wealthy Brazilian friends!" said David. "I'll meet them in the Club house as soon as I have bathed and dressed."

Then Jake spun him, big hands on his shoulder. Jake's eyes were ablaze with fury. "I didn't know these were Brazilian colors!" he raged. "You've crossed me up!"

Now you have given the United States back to the Indians, Jake!" retorted David. "Would you like to fight a good middleweight now, or get another crack at me a month from now?"

"As far as I'm concerned," grated Jake Ouster, "there is just one man in the world I want to whip and you're it! Why wait a month?"

David grinned. "It took me ten rounds to down you! I need the extra training!"

Ouster didn't grin.

~ 4 ~

JAKE OUSTER was excluded from David's conference with the Brazilian promoters. They were deeply hurt, they made it clear, because Jake had been tricked into entering the ring in the colors of Barzil.

"And he did the colors full honor," David told them. "He'll do them more if you'll listen. First, I'll give Ouster a chance to regain whatever prestige you and he feel he has lost, by fighting him one month hence, but on condition that you back him for a comeback in the United States, regardless of the outcome of the fight. I'll ask my own manager to co-manage him with you in the States. That I beat him tonight, I assure you, was only because he is out of condition. If you agree to this I have one other stipulation: he is not to know what I'm doing about all this until after our next fight."

It had never occurred to the Brazilian promoters that a man who had once been a famous fighter in the States could be again; they were delighted with the idea.

Jake Ouster expressed himself coldly; he wished, he told the promoter, to get another crack at David Kerr.

David trained as he never had before, knowing that Jake Ouster was doing the same. Jake studiously avoided any possible contact with Kerr. Several times the two would have met on the streets of Belem if Jake hadn't crossed over. Several times David saw the bigger man in crowds and noted that his face was smooth, unlined, richly colored. Jake's fury at what he must regard as betrayal had strengthened him to lay off the liquor. Dave grinned, but he was serious, too; Ouster, at his best, might easily kill the lighter man in the ring.

There had been extravagant stories about the fight in the Brazilian newspapers, with all due stress on the courage with which Jake had marched into the hail of fists that had destroyed him. David knew very well what Jake thought about that: *welterweight* fists! Jake's attitude of mind suited David Kerr.

David decided that he must think of himself from here on, avoid being knocked out yet give a decent account of himself. In Jake's mind it must seem as if David had tricked him even out of his nationality. Nor could Ouster, in the circumstances

refuse to accept the role in which David had cast him without giving mortal offense to all Brazil. David had trapped the man. That he had done so deliberately, for his own good, would take some realizing on Ouster's part.

NOT UNTIL, one month later, trained to the keenest possible edge, when they faced each other in the same ring, did Jake speak to David Kerr. "I hope the ring is big enough for tonight's foot race!"

The referee was giving instructions. David ignored Jake, looking out over the faces of the Brazilians, seeking certain faces of people he had especially insisted be here. Then he looked back at Ouster. "Samuel Finn!" he said quietly to Jake. "Your brother is here! Behind and to your left!"

Jake whirled, in spite of the referee's attempt to keep him facing David. He spotted Peter Finn, whirled back.

"That does it!" he said. "You've meddled enough. I'll change these gloves for axes if the promoters will stand for it! And what's your manager doing here?"

"Seeing that I get a square deal, Sam'el," said David.

"Shake hands," said the referee, "come out fighting!"

Jake slapped at David's extended gloved hands. David noted that the larger man wore still the Brazilian colors.

Then, there was the bell, and the beginning of a fight at catchweights that every Brazilian who saw it would talk about while he lived, would report in detail to his grandchildren until, bored to death with it, they walked out on him. Brazilians, all Latins, knew bullfights, and cheered the most graceful matadors.

Tonight Jake was the bull, David Kerr the underdog matador. Jake Ouster was the middleweight he had been. In the first round he refused to dodge David's best punches; they fell on his chin like rocks, and the chin was like rocks, too. David knew he had been allowed almost free shots

at Jake's jaw, to know he couldn't knock the big man out. But David had already known that.

While the crowd yelled itself hoarse, David evaded the rushes, never awkward; always straight, direct and merciless, of his larger opponent. He shot lefts and rights like machine gun bullets. So did Ouster, and though David rolled and rocked with the blows, taking no more than a quarter of their force, he was close to dizziness and rubber legs by the time the fourth round ended.

Jake was grinning with confidence. David grinned back; they had now reached that pinnacle of exultation where weights, enmities, everything is forgotten save the joy of doing battle with a worthy opponent. If Jake had been a welterweight, or David a middleweight, this would have been one of the most important matches in the prizering. But who cared about catchweights when crowns were not at stake?

David slipped to one knee in the fifth, took nine because he needed the time. Jake stood easily in his neutral corner, watching. There was a little frown on his face, but not of worry this time. Jake's breathing was as steady and unhurried as David's.

David came to his feet and Jake was on him. "How's the liquor, Jake?" asked David.

"Do you think I'd risk missing your button with a right for one drink or a dozen, or even a quart? I haven't touched a drop. I'm saving the binge until after this fight!"

"You can go without, can't you, Jake?"

"If I hate a man enough—and I do!" said Jake. "How'd Pete get here?"

David didn't answer until the middle of the next round, for Jake smashed him in the face as he asked the question, and for David, the night and the ring filled with stars. He fought out of the clinch and worked off the ropes in desperation.

"I told him where you were, Jake," said Kerr. "Would he have come if he held anything against you?"

"I told you once not to do me any favors!"

ONCE, STANDING toe to toe, the two men smashing each other with rights and lefts that sounded like muffled drumbeats, David had to tuck his jaw into his shoulder to make sure that when the flurry ended he wouldn't be lying on his back, being counted out.

The bell.

A stillness, a tenseness of waiting, filled the grounds as the two faced the middle of the ring for the seventh round. The Brazilians had seen six rounds of superb fighting. David had several times looked squarely into the face of his manager, watched that worthy chewing a cigar to shreds. Peter Finn's face, noncommittal at first, began to glow with pride. His brother was showing himself to be as fast and clever as a welterweight and if he caught this will-o'-the-wisp, David Kerr was a goner. Everyone in the place, including David, knew that.

But when the seventh ended, and the eighth, and the ninth, David Kerr was still on twinkling feet that moved as fast, eeling him out of danger, as his fists. Should he gamble, the last round? Ouster seemed to be as strong as during the first round. The difference in weight was showing up with appalling clarity in the closing rounds.

David gambled, up to a certain point, in the tenth round. He fought at close quarters, giving ground because superior weight drove him back.

He clinched and Jake snarled in his ear. "What's this getting you, anyway?"

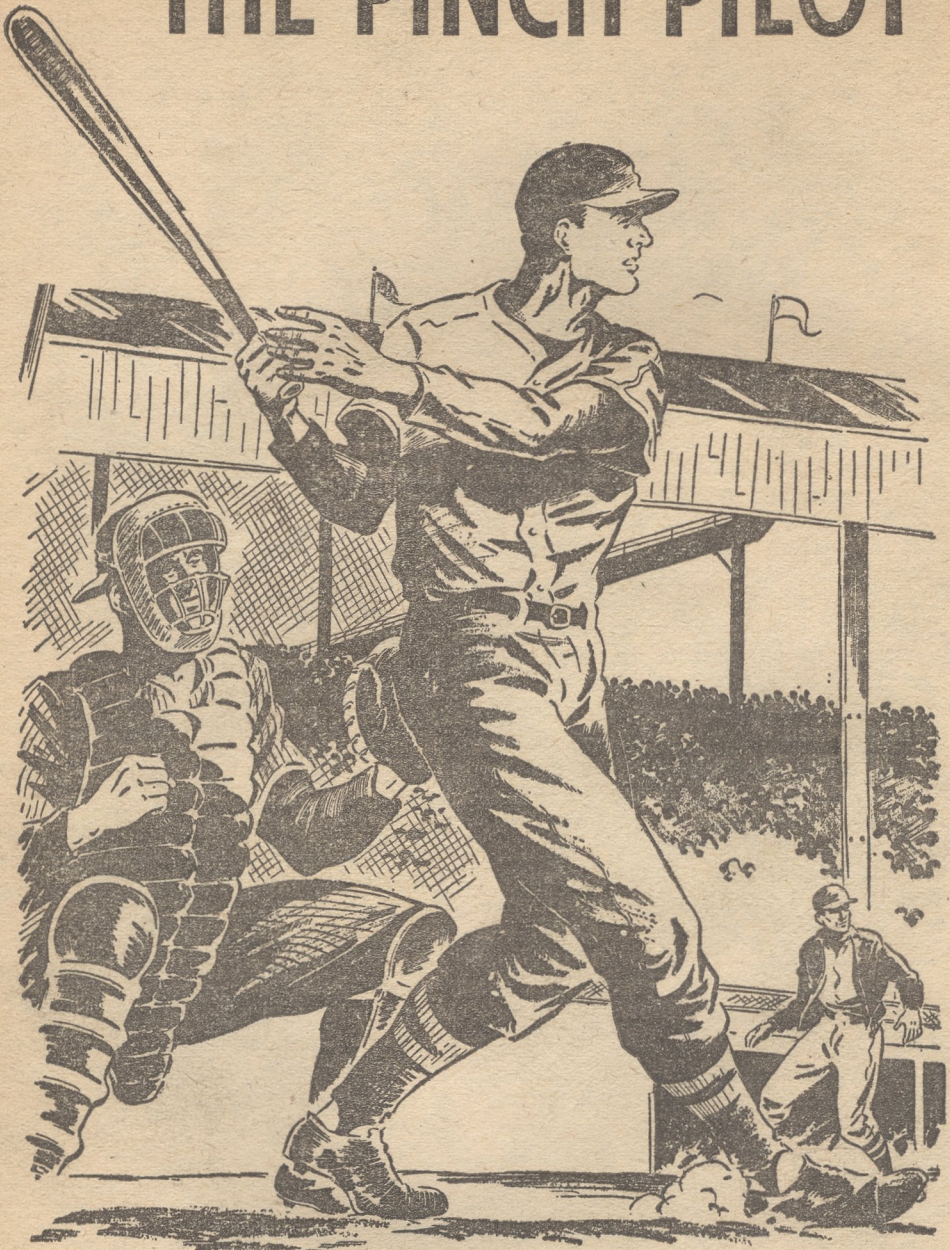
"I'll tell you after the bell," said David.

"And what's it getting me, if I knocked you out with the next punch?"

David didn't answer that, either. There was no time, for the middle of the round passed, and the two men were standing toe to toe, fighting like wildcats, throwing everything they had into it, punching, hooking,

(Continued On Page 37)

THE PINCH PILOT



THE LAST-PLACE Leaf regulars were getting into their playing togs when the word reached them that old Tim Brody was dead. The owner-manager of the Leafs, Mister Baseball himself since before even the oldest of the Leaf veterans could recall, kindly, patient

Tim Brody had finally been retired for keeps, assist to a bum ticker.

A black pall of gloom descended over the Leaf dressing-room. At first, they refused to believe it. Tim Brody gone? The walls could come tumbling down, from Jericho to the Yankee Stadium, but old Tim Brody

would go on forever, coddling infrequent wins out of his tail-end nine, the best defensive team in either loop.

"Holy smokes!" shortstop Larry Barney commented, when he swallowed the lump and found his voice. "Old Tim can't be dead. The third base box'll look plumb naked without him and his rolled up score card."

Potsy Reynolds, one-time slugging outfielder going to fat, gulped hard. "This means the outfit'll go up on the auction block for sure! That sweet, simple old lady, Ma Brody, won't have no use for a baseball team. She'll hafta sell out." Dismally, the right fielder added, "Gosh, what's she gonna do without old Tim? She used to sit out there in his private box every game, just waitin' for it to be over, so's she and the old guy could go off home together."

Big Duke Webb, the nearest thing the Leafs had to a slugger, weakest sticking cleanup man in both loops, shook his head unbelievably. "Aw,

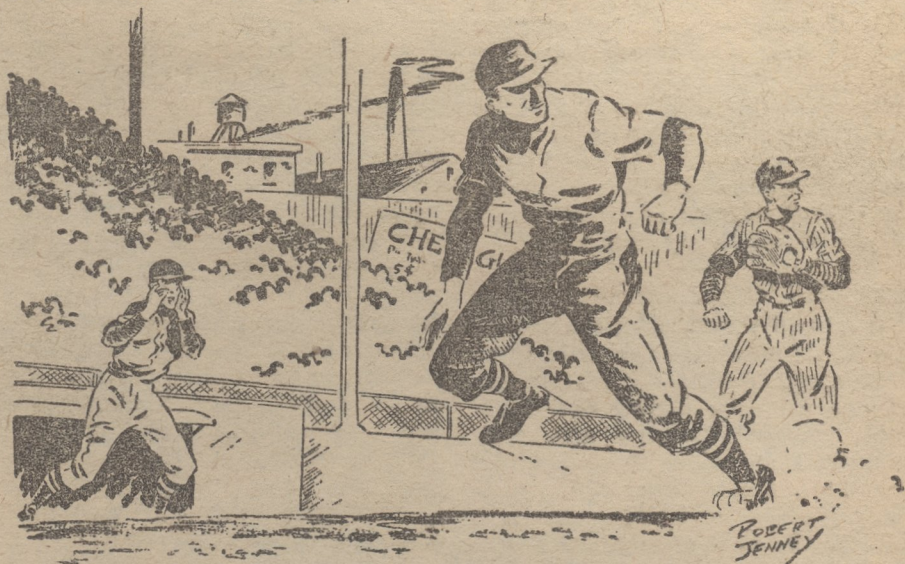
it just can't be true. Another minute or two and old Tim'll come on in here with that old score card in his hand and tell us who's gonna do today's chuckin'."

Just as he finished those words, the door to the dressing room opened. All eyes leaped hopefully to look for Tim Brody but it was head coach Bill Eggers, Tim's greying sidekick through many a season of baseball.

Choked up, he muttered, "I got word from Ma Brody to carry on until things're decided. Ma sent word for us all to do our best for Tim, just like he was still here carrying on." Eggers blew his nose, announced hastily, "Jim Whitfield will do the pitchin' today," and retreated.

Not too many minutes later, when the Leafs took the field against the league pacing Titans, the stands were buzzing the sad tidings. The fans were just as fond of easygoing Tim Brody as were his faded stalwarts, the Leafs.

All season long, the Titans and the



Complete Baseball Novelet

by NORMAN OBER
(author of "The Bull Story")

When Tim Brody passed on, the Leafs wondered if everything was finished — but they hadn't counted on Ma Brody taking over, and they didn't know Ma!

second-place Owls had been teeing off on the Brody men, fattening their margins at old Tim's expense, always delighted to visit Leaf Stadium where the pickin's were easiest in the league. This day proved no exception. Morales low, stunned at the absence of old Tim from the box and the dugout, the Leafs submitted meekly to a flashy no-hitter, served up by Chickering LeRoy, fancy young Titan fireballer.

It was a fast game. Leroy's mates chalked up seven markers for him in nine innings, with solid drives to the deep pastures, too deep for the fielding, genius of the Leaf outfield. As usual, though, despite their crippled states mentally, local play was flawless defensively. There were no miscues and the Barney to Maguire to Buffalo combination, short to second to first, worked perfectly four times. But Whitfield and his relief Connie Loyola were touched up liberally and this defensive play served only to keep the score from running up higher.

The Titans, pocketing the series opener, went on to make it three straight over the hapless tail-enders. Each game, the stands held fewer fans and gloom settled more deeply over the abject Brody nine.

WHEN THE triumphant Titans pulled their stakes, the second place Owls moved in for their share of the spoils. As a result of one loss and one idle day during the Titan sweep, the Owls had lost ground to the leaders. By taking four in a row from the Leafs, however, they stood to gain it all back with interest.

Before the Owl opener, the Leafs, dressing for the game, received word to rush things, a lady was coming down to see them. Soon after, the entire Leaf squad, iron men regulars and bench weary subs alike, found themselves confronted by Tim's wife, little old Ma Brody. The players exchanged speculative comments as white-haired Adaleine Brody was led by head coach Bill Eggers to the center of the room.

Injun Joe Buffalo, the towering first sacker, whispered his guess to

right fielder Potsy Reynolds. "She's probably gonna tell us who's buyin' up the team. It's a cryin' shame she has to be bothered with business details at a time like this."

The kindly, wrinkle-faced wife of Tim Brody, Adaleine, better known to the squad as Ma Brody, cleared her throat and spoke softly as soon as Bill Eggers got them quiet.

"You all know about Timothy," she began, her eyes misting over momentarily. Some of the players found their handkerchiefs and there was a flurry of nose-blowing. Even big, tough Potsy Reynolds couldn't help downing a great gulp.

Ma Brody went on, "I want to read you boys a note Tim left with his will. Then you'll understand why I'm here." She produced the note, cleared her throat again and began reading, while the players shifted uncomfortably from foot to foot.

"Adaleine," she read, *"don't give the Leafs away to just any hard-headed businessmen that come along. Whoever takes over my boys, make sure they're straight-shooters who'll use the team right and keep it a good, clean outfit. And most important of all, try to make it somebody who'll make 'em into a winning team again."*

A surprised murmur went around the room. The last sentence was something of a bombshell. Old Tim had labored tirelessly to perfect his team defensively. When the team's hitting fell off, he had centered his strategy around tight fielding, contenting himself with less power than any other team possessed in order to achieve that end. Heavy guns had just seemed to have drifted out of Tim's philosophy as the years had overtaken him and his favorite lineup. Someone had to fill the cellar every season and as long as Leaf play continued flashy afield, neither old Tim nor the fans had seemed to protest too much the batting defection of the outfit.

Ma Brody put down the letter. I've had half a dozen offers, none of them outstanding. All of 'em involve re-making the team and Tim didn't want to cut his friends loose that way." She paused, then continued, "I'd like to have waited a spell before

coming down, after Tim went. But things here call for a quick decision and I'm not minded to let Tim down. I don't think his old friends are, either."

The players eyed Ma Brody with new respect. It took plenty of courage to move into the picture so soon after her bereavement. "What do you figure to do, Ma Brody, Mam?" catcher Joe Julio asked.

Ma Brody's eyes took them all in. She said, "Brace yourselves for a shock, boys. I've decided to run the team myself for a while!"

A STONISHMENT exploded noisily all over the room. The first among them to react coherently was Patsy Reynolds, the beefy right fielder. Wringing his thick hands that resembled a pair of great hams, the one-time mauler who had seen service with six major league clubs, exclaimed, "A dame...excuse me, Mrs. Brody, a l—lady running a ball club?" Livid, he thundered, "Begging your pardon, Ma'm, I ain't never worked for no gosh-a-mighty woman before and I don't aim to begin now!"

The little white-haired lady narrowed her gaze, eyeing the brute of an outfielder steadily. "There's six other teams in our farm system," she told him quietly. "You can have your pick of 'em, Patsy, all of 'em run by men."

Patsy's jaw dropped a foot and a half. He swallowed, crimsoned further, and exploded, "Tim Brody's gone and all glory's bust loose! No woman can take over no baseball team!"

Giving the others the same steady gaze, Ma Brody said, "I've been watchin' this team and the rest of the league play baseball from the stands for over twenty-seven years. I never interfered with old Tim during his lifetime, but I'm going to move heaven and earth to fulfill his last wishes. I'm not sayin' how long I'll hag-ride you boys, but I'm gonna have my try at givin' old Tim a winner." She stepped down after that.

Everybody began yelling at once. Ma Brody walked to the doorway and threw back the words, "Bill Eggers

calls the turns today. Tomorrow, I'm taking over. Anybody who won't work for a woman can be packed by then. And I'm warnin' you now, the only man whose job's safe is a slug-gin' man!"

She was gone. All hell broke loose in her wake. The middle aisle between the opposing rows of lockers suddenly turned into a wailing wall of offended, harried masculinity.

"What?" Patsy Reynolds demanded, his voice a helpless moan, "will the Commissioner have to say about these disgraceful, unnatural goings-on?" Hopefully, he answered his own query. "He won't stand for it, that's what he won't! Never in a million years!"

The Leafs celebrated this startling development in their careers by succumbing to a slashing fourth straight loss, this time at the merciless hands of the run-hungry Owls. But that was only the beginning of the controversy.


The sports pages, hitting the streets before supertime, set up a unanimous caterwauling and editorial groaning over Ma Brody's overt invasion of baseball. Over the evening meal, the public at large echoed the sentiments lustily. Many a fork was shaken at many a housewife by many an outraged husband, accompanied by the admonition, "Wait'll the Commissioner gets wind of this. He'll put a stop to that tomfoolery, wait and see!"

Fans, scribes, players themselves in both loops, demanded that the high commissioner of the game instantly rule Ma Brody, baseball's first and self-appointed woman (shudder) manager, illegal bogus, out-of-the-question!

That evening, however, after a long phone conversation with Ma Brody, the commissioner refused to veto her plans. Stunned, baseballdom bowed its head, muttered bitter phrases about the end of a great sport, and accepted Ma Brody's coup with dire predictions and uneasy resignation.

In the words of one lady's day regular, spoken heatedly to her irate husband, the core of the matter was poetically put. She informed him,

"The Leafs can't sink any lower in the standing, you can bet your best pair of pants on *that*, mister!"



Chapter Two

THE NEXT afternoon, as the Leafs made ready for their second contest with the Owls, a strange thing happened. Fans who had, only the night before, threatened never again to cross the woman-cursed threshold of Leaf Stadium, found themselves irresistibly drawn there by gametime. Something they hadn't reckoned on at a mid-week contest made it difficult for them to get in, at that. A horde of female fans flocked down, ready to defend their kind with shouts, fingernails and, if necessary, uncooked suppers!

By playing time, there wasn't an empty seat in the stands. Besides that, two sections of foul territory were roped off to accommodate the standees.

There was a violent mixing of cheering and booing when the Leafs showed up for practise. Ma Brody's initial appearance was greeted by a chorus of catcalls and demands, shrilly masked by soprano applause. As one old-timer put it, "There's somethin' sacrilegious about Tim's long-visored cap bein' parked on top of that woman's noggin!" It looked odd at that, parked at a rakish angle over grim-faced Ma Brody's white locks.

The controversial little lady stepped defiantly out of the dugout and took up a defiant position on the grass as her unwilling stalwarts took the field, every one of them red-faced with embarrassment. In spite of his threats of the day before, Patsy Reynolds, his face reddest of all, sulked out to right field. After a lengthy consultation with his ego and his wounded pride, he had decided to out-ride the storm. Public indignation, he was convinced, would force an early reversal of this nightmarish happening.

Patsy had decided, too, that a tower of strength like himself might accomplish more to hasten such a reversal by remaining on the firing line than by retreating to the ignominy of the minor leagues. No, Patsy may have seen his best days, but it was his most earnest hope that, woman or no woman, the minor leagues did not yet beckon.

Lefty Appleton took the mound for the Leafs. The round-faced hurler seemed the only man on the field impervious to the upheaval. Long credited as a potential twenty-game winner with a more powerful team, Lefty, cool and deadpan, took his final warmups and got ready to pitch his first game, and, for that matter, *the* first game under feminine direction.

Ma Brody knew as well as anyone what a spot she occupied. She looked around the infield and made her first gesture. She motioned Injun Joe Buffalo, the first sacker, over towards the first base line, for the first Owl hitter. Resentful for a moment, the big half-Indian suddenly felt a grudging respect. Somewhere in the cobwebs of his own mind he recalled the habits of this wily leadoff.

"I'll be hanged," he mused, "if she ain't right. Off a southpaw, this character kisses 'em up the line here!" Injun Joe knew all at once that twenty-seven years of watching the Leafs play their opposition had given Ma Brody a wealth of game lore.

Lefty Appleton drew the string out full length on the top of the order. The count went to 3-2 before he fed the hitter a knee-high knuckler the batter caught fading and belted up towards first. Injun Joe felt something besides elation as he took it without stirring a single step for an unassisted putout. "Smart old lady!" he thought, wondering if anyone else had caught the incident.

UP IN the press stands, scribes exchanged glances. What had happened was not lost on them. "Ma Brody," one gum-chewing writer opined, "seems to know baseball onions from the kind they cook over a hot stove!"

For the second Owl, Ma remem-

bered a special weakness he had against lefties. She played her field straight away and let Appleton feed him three in-curves, all of which he missed. Fans began mumbling their complaints more quietly. Not a few shut up altogether.

Through the first few innings, it became crystal clear that Ma Brody had a memory like an elephant. Watching her shift her players was a thing of beauty, even to hard-crusted men who refused to admit it. But it was only when the team came up to bat that Ma really came to life with all cylinders. During the Leaf offensive innings, she really threw the book at the Owls.

In the last of the first, she greeted shortstop Larry Barney with the command, "Get on!" He did. After working a full count out of the Owl moundman, he surprised all hands by bunting a third strike, catching the infield asleep and beating out the dragger by a mile.

Sonny Masterson, the left fielder, was second in the order. Tim had stationed the outfielder here because, big as he was, Sonny was the best bunter on the team. It was sensible baseball. If Larry Barney could have gotten on more often, Sonny could have moved him along more often. But the conception of the strategy wasn't off...not on a Tim Brody nine. Where else could an outfielder gain distinction at the plate for bunting?

The Owls moved in on the grass for Sonny's bunt. Ma Brody scratched her nose and the hitter did a double-take. Then he stepped in to take his licks. When the Owl hurler pecked at corners until the count went to 2-2, Masterson followed the boss's orders and hit away. Holding back on it just a trifle, he arced a liner right over second for a clean hit, Barney, off at the swing of the bat, sliding safely into third on the single. Out of position for the play, the Owl infield didn't have a prayer at getting either runner.

The crowd began getting noisy... but not the kind of noise that had preceded the game. This was the healthy kind. And why not? The Leafs had

two on and nobody out. Injun Joe Buffalo, the first sacker, was at the plate.

The first sacker had proceeded to the plate with his head down. Now he stood and faced the pitcher. He hit the cement twice with his wood and got ready to square off. Ma Brody called time.

Surprised, the batter wheeled to face his manager. Adaleine motioned him to come over to her. When he did, she told him in low tones, "Don't ever do that again, Injun Joe. When you go to bat, you look to me for your signal. Try to forget where I am and you'll be watching the game from the stands while you pay off a fine."

Buffalo crimsoned and bawled, "I just can't bring myself to take no orders from no lady, that's all!"

"Get in there and hit for the fences, Injun Joe," Ma Brody commanded. "You once had it and you'll have to have it again to stay with the Leafs."

THE CROWD echoed impatience and subsided only when Injun Joe was back at the plate. His ears were still red. Not a few onlookers guessed what had taken place between player and manager. Injun Joe took his stance and glowered at the Owl pitcher, who was grinning from ear to ear. "From that monkey," Injun Joe swore inwardly, "I will be damned if I take any blamed cheek!"

From the Owl bench floated the words, in falsetto, "All right, mamma's boy! Do like mamma told you!"

Another voice wise-cracked, "Hurry back, so's you can sweep out the dug-out nice and tidy!" The Owls were losing no time taking advantage of the discomfort of their rivals.

The batter had been set again. But when those words reached his ears, he wheeled, furious, his bat poised in space. For a moment, it looked like he aimed to go over and use it on several Owl skulls. But he regained possession of his temper and dusted his bat handle calculatingly, his eyes flashing ominously.

The umpire, impatient, yowled, "Play ball here!" Injun Joe moved very slowly back to the plate. He gestured easily with his bat, his heav-

shoulders grinding muscle and flesh. Buffalo was sure-fire sore.

"That's better, mamma's boy!" came the taunt from the Owl dugout. "Now let's see mamma's boy strike out like a good boy!"

Injun Joe's eyes were riveted to the ball, in the hand of the pitcher. He stood, motionless now, and waited.

The first pitch was a prudent smoker. The order had evidently been to dust the big man off. Injun Joe took the pitch about a fiftieth of an inch from his blouse and held his ground, still waiting. The next pitch barely nicked the outside corner for a strike. Injun Joe knew it was good but didn't move his club. He was waiting for something better.

The count went to two-all. Then the Injun saw a sweeping sidearm come zooming off the mound, curving right at his mid-riff. Taking careful measure of the pill, he stood his ground, even as fans screamed warning that he'd be beaned. The ball broke and shot across the heart of the plate.

Buffalo's bat was already making its circuit when the pitch broke. Venom, shame, outrage combined with skill as bat and ball met head on. The noisy explosion produced the longest drive of the first sacker's already long career, a wallop that barely began dropping as it cleared the highest seats of the center field bleachers.

A stunned, delighted citizenry leaped to their feet almost with the crack of the bat. They didn't stop screaming until the lumbering Leaf completed his circuit of the sacks. Few people on the field were unoccupied enough during those hectic moments to notice the happy gleam of triumph that crept momentarily into Ma Brody's eyes, nor the mist that started to moisten them before she forced both these sentiments into the back of her mind.

Duke Webb, the cleanup batter, stepped up to the plate. He looked the old lady square in the eyes and took his orders. In his mind was the thought, "If she can get a clout like that out of that aging first sacker, I'm with 'er until hell freezes over.

There's nothing I can see that's wrong with winning ball games!"

The fans, not unhappy at the three-run homer they'd just seen uncorked, settled back to watch Webb take his turn. "Four hundred feet if it was an inch!" one dumfounded spectator said of Buffalo's drive.

FROM THE Owl bench, the words trickled up, "Dukie boy, didja wash in back of yore ears before the game?" The Owl pitcher, not a fool, cast apprehensive eyes at his own dugout. If he dared follow his own instincts, he'd have advised his mates to keep their big mouths shut. Hadn't Injun Joe just slashed three markers through their sarcastic lips?

Duke Webb, unlike his teammates, was a fairly capable hitter. Generally of even disposition, he did not take kindly to the remark. Equipped with a half-mouthful of tobacco juice, he squirted it to windward, in the direction of the Owl bench. Then he stepped to the right of the plate and took his crouch against the Owl port-sider.

Undaunted, the bench spoke up again. "Better take your hanky-wanky and wipe the plate real clean before you swing!" one of them yodeled gleefully. "Mamma won't like that ever-so-dusty plate!"

In the stands, men repressed their grins and ladies made highly unlady-like responses to this treatment. At the plate, Duke Webb took a hitch in his pants and waited, as had Injun Joe, for a pitch.

The first one was high and wide but the Duke was impatient. He threw a foot clear across the plate and lunged at the ball, meeting it high, with a wild, wicked upswing. The top end of his club met the pill with murderous chopping impact! On a high straight line, neither gaining nor losing appreciable altitude, it sailed right at the lower seats in left field, for the second consecutive homer of the first inning! The stands turned into a solid wall of shrieking and the Owl pitcher shrugged his own boss an apologetic gesture. When they hit that kind of a pitch, what was there to say?

Duke Webb made the circuit and the score stood at 4-0 with nobody out. It was a new Leaf team, it seemed, beyond a shadow of a doubt!

Potsy Reynolds stepped up to the plate, feeling like an actor scheduled to go on right after a superior act. With the crowd quieting down to see what he'd do, Ma Brody's most outspoken opponent approached his task with distaste and turmoil. He went down, swinging hard at a third strike, and retired to the bench to glower privately... and to plan.

Chuck Maguire, under orders to keep hitting hard, latched onto a slider and larruped it to third for an unassisted putout, hard hit but at the fielder. A moment later, the inning was over. There was a din of applause as the revived Leafs, all but a few, that is, took a hitch in their uniforms and marched out to their fielding positions, less embarrassed now by far!

The game moved on swiftly. Lefty Appleton hailed his four run margin as practically without precedent in his entire Leaf career. He gained in speed and confidence as the game continued. A few more attempts at humor from the Owl bench boomeranged and finally the smart tongues fell silent.

With Appleton setting 'em down almost in order inning after inning, the Leafs, tight as drums afield, continued hacking away at Owl slants, not without success. By the bottom of the eighth, they had put together four more runs to romp home impressive 8-0 victors. Not a soul in the park was sorry he'd come to that game.

Over dinner that night, Ma Brody's managerial debut was the talk of the town. Many a feminine, "I told you so," greeted many a hungry husband with his first course, or, at the very least, before dessert and coffee.

Everywhere, fans couldn't wait for what the next day would bring. Overnight Leaf rooters, so certain the day before that Adaleine Brody's misguided intentions would be disastrous, had had a change of heart.

As one laughing young lady sang to her abashed boy friend on the par-

lor sofa that night, "What a difference a day makes!"



Chapter Three

BEFORE the night was out, something else happened. It took place in the downtown hotel where the Leaf players lived during their off-the-road stands. It followed by some hours considerable tiptoeing about, much hasty whispering and not a little beckoning of fingers throughout the evening.

Finally, at one in the morning, after the final bedcheck was over, a number of silent figures slipped from their rooms and gathered noiselessly in one room, where the occupants were not sleeping but waiting to receive them. The rendezvous for this nocturnal get-together was the room jointly occupied by Potsy Reynolds and Rusty Barrett. In all, there were nine men in the room, eight players and the assistant coach, ratty-eyed Doc Chase, when the roll was called.

Potsy Reynolds took charge. Without ceremony, he grunted, "It's clear to us all why we're meeting. And it better be just as clear that nobody's gonna open his big mouth to anybody about this meetin' ever bein' held." He looked around, trying to read the minds of the eight men in the room with him.

"The fact is," Potsy went on, "this outfit gotta get rid of that old dame right away, before we become the laughing-stock of the majors! We gotta agree on a plan to ease 'er out easy, so's nobody's feelings won't be hurt and at the same time so's we can get ourself a he-man for a manager."

Doc Chase quickly assented, squinting nervously about. "Potsy's dead right, boys. Ma Brody's a sweet, harmless old lady, but this here is the way we make our living. And after what happened in today's game, it oughta be clear we gotta act fast before it's too late to do anything!"

Duke Webb spoke up tersely. "I see Bill Eggers isn't in on this confab. Shouldn't somebody get him in on this?"

Potsy jumped to his feet angrily. "What the hell are you talkin' about, Duke?" he demanded. "Bill's too thick with her! He's got the notion the best way to respect old Tim's memory is to string along with what she's tryin' to do!"

The Duke's voice took on a sarcastic edge. "Damn funny, Potsy . . . damn funny. I had an idea we all felt the same way!" The Duke looked around the room. "I had a notion we all owed Tim plenty for his patience with us, most of us past our peak. I kinda thought it'd be nice goin' out with a helluva big last splash!"

Potsy growled, "Lissen, you bird-brain. Just because you accidentally poked one outa the park today, you think..."

Duke moved towards him, but Doc Chase quickly got between them. "Wait a minute," the assistant coach growled, "this isn't getting us anywhere. Let's keep the peace and hear all sides. What does everyone else think?"

There was a mixed grumbling. Backstop Joe Julio shrugged and said, "It's a fact it's downright embarrassin' takin' orders from a woman that way. But the way things went today, I..."

RUSTY Barrett, Potsy's roommate, interrupted. "You're a dope, Julio. She's a nice old lady and all that but get wise to yourself. After workin' for a woman, do you think there's one of us could hold up his head and get a job with any *he-man* outfit? We hafta think of ourselves. I been readin' the out-of-town papers. Around the country, they think we're one sweet helluva big joke, that's no lie!"

Larry Barney spoke up. "Rusty's right. I have nothing against Ma Brody and I'd like to do right by old Tim. But there's not a word in old Tim's will or that note either that says he wanted his club to be took over by a dame! And he never said anything to me or any of us that we

could take to mean he'd stand for it if he was livin' today!"

Sonny Masterson, the great bunting outfielder, nodded his agreement, and Chuck Maguire, the second sacker said, "That's the way I feel, all right!"

Doc Chase rubbed his hands and soothed, "Why, the chances are, poor old Tim's turnin' over in his grave right now!"

Potsy Reynolds turned to Injun Joe Buffalo, who had kept silent until now. "She gave you quite the roast-in' today before you hit that homer. How do you feel, Injun?"

Buffalo scratched his chin uncomfortably. "I'm not so sure I like havin' a woman boss any more than the rest of you," he finally said. "But I don't think we got any business meetin' this way and scheming things that ain't gonna do the club any good. Personally, I thought it was kind of swell winning the way we did, today."

"Rover boy in person!" Rusty Barrett sneered. "He gets his first solid hit in five seasons and right away, he's a company lawyer!"

Duke Webb threw in, "Just the same, I'm with Injun Joe. This whole idea's got a bad odor about it. My suggestion is..."

Doc Chase, hatred gleaming in his eyes, snapped, "Better save it, Webb. The question is, are you and Buffalo gonna run and tell teacher on us? We're seven to two against you. Are you gonna stand with us or turn rat on your own teammates?"

Webb thought a moment before answering. Finally, he warned, "You guys are mistaken if you think you can put anything over on Ma Brody. She showed me today she's got plenty upstairs. No, I'm not ratting on you, but I'm gonna clear out of here before anything else is said so I won't have anything to rat about." Turning to his first sacker, who had already gotten to his feet, he invited, "What say, Injun Joe? Wanna take a walk or can you still stand the stink in here?"

INJUN Joe spoke in a low voice, anxious to make things peaceful again. "Lissen, fellers," he pleaded.

"Let's quit this meeting, all of us. Ma Brody's an old lady. She'll be quittin' before long of her own accord. If we go out and give her the games, she'll probably..."

Potsy thundered his disagreement. "Not on your life, she won't! Like thick-heads, we go and give her the best game in five seasons today. And from the look I noticed on her face, she was so dern satisfied that we'll never get rid of her! I say we gotta take action now...right away!"

Injun Joe poked a stubby finger at Potsy's healthy mid-riff. "We gave her a good game? What did you do but go fan the breezes? I didn't notice you did anything much but occupy space and louse up a few good chances to score!"

"That!" Patsy stammered, "was... was only because I got more sense than the rest of you!"

Duke Webb smelled the rat. Looking from Potsy to Doc Chase, he said, "Boloney! There's nothing you two guys want except the good old days, with a soft job and no demands for something you can't deliver any more...punch!" Abruptly, he walked to the door. "I'm getting out. Anybody's got brains will get out with me!"

Injun Joe Buffalo lumbered after him. Looking back, he snapped, "We'll keep our mouths shut, I can see by your faces that's worrying you! For my part, I'm keepin' quiet because I don't want you on my conscience. The way I see it, whatever you do, the old lady'll outsmart you."

With those words, Injun Joe passed Duke Webb into the corridor. The two slammed the door behind them. As soon as they left, Doc Chase explained what he and Potsy had decided should be done, starting with tomorrow's game. Six of the eight regulars were in the room. Among them, they could effectively cripple the team's offense, simply by refusing to hit where hits might mean runs.

"Everybody," Doc Chase explained, "will work like the devil during these accelerated batting drills Ma Brody's ordered. During the warmups, give the best you've got. But when we

play, don't hit for money, none of you. The fielding will hold up, but we won't win games. When we lose enough, the old lady'll retire and... here's the good news... I've got a buyer waiting to take over the outfit, lock, stock and barrel!"

Doc Chase looked triumphantly around as a surprised murmur arose. "Yep, under the new setup, I'll be manager and I'm promising now to look after each and every one of you boys!"

"That!" Rusty Barrett agreed, "sounds like pure horse sense!"

"You're damned right it does!" Potsy assented. "And everybody gets taken care of except those two jelly-kneed guys that just walked outa here. As soon as the new management's in, they're out!"

Sonny Masterson and Larry Barney hadn't been all sold on the proposition, but this latest news brought them quickly into line. There was a small amount more of talk among the men, Doc Chase cautioning, "Remember, this is our secret. If Ma Brody or Bill Eggers, or, for that matter, Buffalo and Webb or the bench boys find out I'm fronting for a buyer, there'll be hell to pay!"

The others promised to keep the information to themselves. Most of them were far more cordial to Doc Chase than they'd ever been before, a fact not lost on the little man. As the meeting broke up, Potsy murmured, not without satisfaction, "Starting tomorrow, we begin getting that little old lady right outa our hair where she belongs!"

Rusty Barrett added, "And we'll be able to be self-respecting ball players again, not a mess of mamma's boys with ribbons tied to our cleats!"



Chapter Four

THE LONG batting drill of the following day left little to be desired.

If Duke Webb and Injun Joe Buffalo

seemed to take their work a trifle more seriously than the other regulars, the fact made no impression on Bill Eggers or Ma Brody. Everyone was on his toes, particularly the long-suffering bench warmers of the outfit, who took especial delight in trying to impress the old lady into thinking of them, should one of the brittle old-timers break a leg.

Coming in off the field to loaf around the dressing room until game time, the Leafs were astonished at what they found in the center of the room. "What?" demanded Sonny Masterson, "is that all about?"

Before long, the whole team was surrounding a table, on which were two luscious looking chocolate cakes, a knife resting between them. Potsy Reynolds smacked his lips and lunged for the knife. "Who's birthday is it?" he demanded.

Head coach Bill Eggers grinned and informed them, "It's something Ma Brody whipped up early this morning... one cake each for the boys that smacked those homers yesterday. And there's more where they came from, she wants me to tell you."

"Divide it up!" Potsy said, wielding the knife. A hand closed over his wrist. It was Injun Joe.

"I'll take that knife," he said quietly. "If you want cake, hit your own home runs!" With that, the half-Indian deftly sliced up both cakes, receiving a nod of assent from Duke Webb. Then he flourished, "The squad's welcome to all they can get... all but the regulars. They earn their own cakes or they don't get any!"

A howling mass of men descended with war whoops and flailing hands. All but six men and one coach took part in the proceedings. Sullen, Potsy Reynolds and the other regulars took Injun Joe at his word. The substitutes made short work of the cake, with considerable noise-making during the eating. Injun Joe barely rescued three slices, one for himself, one for Duke Webb and one for Bill Eggers.

"Yessirreee!" Duke Webb intoned, using his tongue to get the last few crumbs of his lips and into his mouth, "This workin' for a woman has its

points! It sure does have its points!

"You said it!" half a dozen eager subs chimed in. "Baseball never was like this!"

THE GAME that followed this activity was a far cry from the one of the day before. Pat Sears took the mound but found himself hurling for a different outfit from the one that had exploded eight runs the day before. He held the Owls for three innings, vainly looking for more of yesterday's fireworks. But his mates were pulling their punches, all but two, and a hot Owl hurler was doing very nicely against them.

Sears cracked in the top of the fourth and the Owls chased a quartet of tallies across the plate before Ma Brody, worried and thoughtful, sent in Connie Loyola. Connie put the fire out and there was a cheer of delight as Injun Joe Buffalo, third up in the fourth, hit his second homer in two days, to get back one of the runs. But Webb skied deep to end the inning and the rally was short-lived.

The game was played in a hurry. The Leaf bats were silent, though their field play was, as usual, brilliant. In the seventh, after the Owls took one more run from Loyola, Injun Joe doubled and Duke Webb doubled him across the plate. But Potsy Reynolds popped out and left the cleanup man stranded. The game ended with the Leafs behind 5-2. For the fans, who had turned out in almost as great numbers as the day before, the game was a dismal failure from every standpoint.

The Leafs dropped their next two, also, even though Ma Brody patiently baked two more cakes for homers produced by Buffalo and Webb for hapless scores that couldn't bring victory.

The fans took it all in and began grumbling, as did the press. The Leafs, suddenly pressed back deeper into the shadow of the cellar, were back in form after the briefest interlude of glory.

The Cubs came in for a series. For a moment, the Leafs looked promising again. Lefty Appleton, in rare

form, shut out the visitors while those two awakened sluggers, Buffalo and Webb, put together three one-man rallies for a trio of single tallies. All the scoring was due to their bats, the remaining guns being, as during these recent games, strangely silent.

The next two Cubs contests were one-sided defeats for the locals. At this point, with Ma Brody slated to take her charges out for her first road tour, one that loomed as a black pit facing the Leafs, the sport editorials began a consistent clamor that Ma Brody withdraw, acknowledge her failure and leave the team to Bill Eggers until new owners could be found to buy up and revive the hopeless outfit. This, the press maintained, Ma Brody, owed the loyal fans, over and above anything she may have felt she owed the memory of her husband. One editorial boomed assistant coach Doc Chase as a good possibility for manager to succeed Ma Brody on the basis of unconfirmed rumors about a combine allegedly prepared to spend huge money to rebuild the club—if Ma Brody would only sell out.

Ma Brody stuck it out through four more defeats in a row, on the road, before taking action. With polite hints changing to bold-faced demands in the local press, she knew the time had come for drastic action. And that's what she took. She gathered her squad for a conference in the visitors' dressing room at the home of the Blue Sox.

Potsy Reynolds was all grins. "This is it," he muttered to Doc Chase, "or I'll eat my cleats!"

Ma Brody began, with no fanfare, "Well, we're not doing so well, are we? Since the first day I took over, when we looked right smart, we've been looking worse and worse. In practise, a right lot of ye look like sluggers, but in the games, we can't seem to get the hits when we need 'em. Only two good hitters on the team, it appears."

Potsy Reynolds stepped forward and spread his palms. "Gosh, Ma Brody, Mam," he said, "things're sure awful. And don't you think us guys

ain't been tryin' out there! Because we've been doin' our best, all of us!"

MA BRODY ignored him. "I had high hopes you boys who'd been with Tim the longest would come through and give 'im what he wanted. I was countin' on you but I guess that was a mistake. Nobody can do what's not in 'im to do and I'm sure you boys have done your best."

Doc Chase suggested tactfully, "Well, not to imply anyone's kick-in', Mam, but some of us have always felt this game is and should be strictly for the menfolks. Maybe, if..."

Ma Brody cut him short. "I'm willin' to b'lieve a lot of things, Doc Chase, but I'm not ready yet to acknowledge that. I'm not lookin' for pennants this year...that's past us this year. But I'm lookin' for a team that fights, 'cause that's what Tim asked for. And I'm gonna keep tryin' until..."

Potsy couldn't believe his ears. "Keep tryin'?" he repeated. "Ma'am, if you'd only give us a man-boss, we'd..."

The little old lady talked right over his words. "I've realized one thing during these batting practises. There's a whole lot of offensive power we've developed, offensive power that's been warmin' the bench. We've kept our best fielders workin' too hard, even though the years are catchin' up with some of 'em. But from now on, all that's changed!" Then she announced to the astonished squad, "Here's today's lineup!"

Consulting a list, Ma went right down the line. Skipping only Injun Joe Buffalo and Duke Webb, she coolly benched the entire first team, substituting weaker fielding but younger, more powerful, and though she didn't know it, uncorrupted players...of a like their predecessors were not.

Doc Chase exploded, "Hell, Mam, you can't do that! We'll be laughed right outa baseball! That's a million dollar outfield you just put on the bench!"

Bill Eggers put a hand on Chase's shoulder. "Seems like you're forgettin' your place," he said quietly. "Ma Brody can do whatever she blame pleases with this outfit. She owns it."

Behind this, the room was full of talk. Six startled players were huddled together, protesting and expostulating, while six younger men were looking as though the sun had just started shining on them personally and no one else.

Over the hubbub, Ma Brody, who had just torn up the books on baseball with a shrieking sound, announced, "Lefty Appleton's pitching today. I'll be watching the hitting today. And if any of you youngsters makes a boot or two, I don't want you worrying. Get the runs. Before long, you'll be smooth as silk in the field. That'll come. But I want to see the results of all the battin' drills we've been staging. I've been waiting until I thought you men were ready!"

Duke Webb winked broadly at Injun Joe. "I said she was to smart for 'em!" he whispered. And Injun Joe smiled his agreement.

THE ATTENDANCE in the Blue Sox park was high. People out in the other ball towns were pouring through the gates to behold this baseball phenomenon. As dismal as their showing had been, the Leafs were making money for their hosts everywhere. Today was no exception. Mostly men, the crowd urged Ma Brody to give up from the moment she appeared. When the lineup was announced, however, everyone was too flabbergasted for words. They rejoiced at the prospects of an easy win for the Blue Sox and regarded the lineup as evidence that Ma Brody was really on her way out.

"She's gone clean off her nut," one fan growled. "I came here to see them Leafs field. Those palookas she's usin' today'll be all thumbs!"

But the Leafs won that game! The substitutes, who had been taking advantage of the batting drills to sharpen up their eyes, assaulted four Blue Sox pitchers for a total of eleven

runs. Everybody hit. Despite three infield boots, which cost the Leafs two unearned runs between them, the revitalized nine walked off with an 11-2 victory, Lefty Appleton giving up no earned runs. Boots, the new outfit proved, were not everything. The Blue Sox rooters were extremely thoughtful as they left the park.

Much later that night, Injun Joe Buffalo was startled out of his sleep by his roommate, Duke Webb. The Duke shooshed him and urged him, "Get into your robe and follow me!"

Trying to shake off his sleep, Injun Joe dumbly climbed into his robe and slippers. "What's up?" he demanded.

Duke Webb led him out into a dark, chilly corridor. With fall coming on, the nights were getting cooler. Silently, the two slipped to another door, far down the corridor. Inside, they heard voices. "Who is it?" Injun Joe whispered.

"Just listen!" the Duke commanded.

Subdued but audible voices came through to them. Patsy Reynolds was speaking. "And that's the pitch, fellows! We practically have her out of baseball, but now she's using you kids for the patsys and trying to hang on awhile longer. And meanwhile, none of us can hold up our heads because the whole of organized baseball keeps sayin' we're bein' run by a blame woman!"

Doc Chase spoke next. "Like I say, I have buyers all ready to take over. And when I'm manager under the new setup, we'll look after the whole six of you. You won't be sorry you played it our way!"

"I'll be damned!" Injun Joe muttered. "Let's crash in there and blow that room wide open! Tryin' to pull the wool over them youngsters' eyes!"

"That's what I was hoping you'd say!" Webb whispered. "Let's go!"

A voice stabbed out of the darkness, a tired old voice, low but insistent. "Wait a minute, boys!" Both heads wheeled. It was Ma Brody, fully dressed and looking all her many years.

"I'm just human enough," she whispered, "to want to hear what the young sprouts say first."

Duke Webb almost swallowed his uppers. "You *know* about these guys?" he demanded. "You *know*?"

Ma Brody shook her head in the affirmative. "I'm not sure I know everything," she whispered, "but things've happened to make me keep my tired old eyes open a mite wider. I gather there's been meetin's before this one. I'm glad to see you two boys weren't invited." Then she motioned for silence and leaned close to the door. The three of them listened.

CHARLIE Solters, the new short-stop, was speaking. "I don't know about the others," he said, "but I'm not buying your proposition. Personally, I'm damned surprised to see what's been going on. You guys owe Tim Brody's widow a helluva lot more than any of us youngsters do, but here you are, conspiring, conniving against him and Ma Brody like they were your enemies!"

Another voice chimed in, young and strong. It was Harris Slate, rookie right fielder who had displaced Potsy Reynolds earlier that day. "You must think we're awful suckers," he threw in. "You guys aren't fooling me! You want us to cooperate with your scheme because you're dead scared. You all laid down on the job and Ma Brody crossed you up by benching you. If we don't play along, you're through. And after what I've just heard, I say it's high time."

Ma Brody, outside the room, sniffed back a queer little sob. "That's tellin' 'em!" she murmured. Suddenly, she grabbed Injun Joe and Webb and said, "Quick! Run for it!"

They were barely able to get out of sight before the parade shot down the corridor. Six young fire-eaters, fed up to the eye-teeth with what they'd just heard, muttering their disgust, passed where the three conspirators were trying to keep hidden. When they'd gone, Ma Brody hissed, "We won't say a word, any of us. It's

not time yet. Good-night!" And she disappeared.

Moving fast to be out of the corridor before the other players, the veterans, emerged from Potsy's room, Webb and Buffalo got back to their rooms.



Chapter Five

ANY DOUBTS the veteran sextette might have had about the meeting of the night before disappeared during the next day's game. The young lineup swept right on through the Blue Sox for a second straight rout, carrying elated Connie Loyola to victory by a lop-sided count of 13-2. There were seventeen hits for a total of twenty-eight bases and the anxious youngster made only two errors in the field, an improvement in one day.

After the game, Ma Brody announced weakly, "I'll have to open a regular bakery if you boys keep up with those home runs! But there'll be four cakes ready tomorrow if I have to stay up all night bakin' 'em!"

There were homers aplenty and chocolate cakes aplenty during the rest of that road tour. The Leafs took on the Titans and the Owls, bearded both in their own lairs, sweeping clean a total of seven games between them. By the time the triumphant Leafs returned to an aroused, unbelieving home town, they were in seventh place and pressing for sixth. Ma Brody, center of the most heated controversy in baseball, was now suddenly the crowned lioness of the league.

When the Browns and the Bulls followed each other into town, the Leaf mound staff was beginning to find itself as it never had before. Strengthened by an inspired offensive at the plate, the pitchers began chalking up impressive totals in the won and lost column, mostly the former. At the end of these two se-

ries, the Leafs found themselves in fifth place.

And they continued to win. Mathematically out of the running for the pennant, they nevertheless reached the great climax of a great year on Labor Day, dropping the enraged Titans in a terrific twin-killing. There was no stopping the Leafs, who found themselves in third place after that doubleheader. They could rise no farther. The leaders were too far ahead. But their reaching third place gave the fighting young team as much elation as though they had clinched the bunting, at that.

Their post-game celebration centered around a huge cake, baked by Ma Brody herself. She waited until the last of it was gone before making her breath-taking announcement.

"Boys," she told them, "it's a good time to start planning for next year's pennant. You've got the stuff and I'm bringing up six fresh youngsters to wind up the season with you. The best of 'em, will stay and help you get that pennant next season. These six new men will replace Barney Masterson, Reynolds, Maguire, Barrett and Julio, who leave for minor league posts tomorrow!"

IT WAS several minutes before the furor died down. Out of it came Potsy's wail, "You're tradin' your husband's best men down the river, Mrs. Brody!"

She answered, "We won't go into that, Potsy. I'll only say that the idea of you six men quittin' cold on me and not hittin' was somethin' that fooled yourselves more than anybody else. You men didn't quit on me... you banded together to get rid of me because you knew inside you had no places on a team with fight in it.

Each one of you movin' downhill fast, you thought you'd protect your jobs by easing me out. But you didn't *really* quit hitting on me, boys. You'd quit hitting a long time ago and wouldn't admit that even to yourselves."

"Doc Chase is leaving us tomorrow, too," the incredible old lady went on. "I'm afraid the farm hasn't got any openings for him, but he's a resourceful man and I'm sure he'll make out."

There was more furor over this announcement, but it was nothing to the reaction that greeted Ma Brody's last words, which were. "Gue's that's all, except I'm leaving tomorrow, too!" When it was quiet enough, she explained, "Bill Eggers winds up the season as your manager. I've done what I hoped to, given Tim a fightin' winning team. No point my stayin' on now. Besides, I've always believed this is a man's game! A woman's place is in the stands!"

And that was that! True to her word, Ma Brody, the woman they couldn't throw out fast enough, stepped down of her own accord... and they hated to see her go. But she'd done her job. She made over those Leafs singled-handed, into a fighting team that went out and chopped down their opposition with their bats, not their gloves. She taught 'em a lesson they never forgot, that you can win with runs, that runs come first, that runs bring pennants. They proved that the following year, under a he-man boss. But they gave all the credit to that she-woman of 'em all, old Tim Brody's wife, Ma Brody, best baker of chocolate cakes and best moulder of men in Leaf history.

THE END



MR. PIGSKIN COMES BACK

by DAVID C. COOKE

The Owls battered
another one
across early
in the
second
half.



*Yesterday's football glory
won't make any touch-
downs today, Mister; it's
today's guts and power
that counts — if you think
you've got it, let's see it
out there on the field!*

HE WAS big, black-haired
and as tough as a mule steak,
— this Steve Madson. He had
played pro football so many years
that some swore he was switched to-
gether with rawhide and had an inflated
rubber bladder under his thick
skin. He was synonymous with the

game, and no died-in-the-bleachers fan ever mentioned the word "football" without instinctively thinking of him. He was Mr. Pigskin, in person.

The trouble was, they thought of him in the past tense, for Steve had not played football for an entire season. They told him that he was too old, that he wouldn't be able to take the gaff any more. They told him that he had been written into the histories with Knute Rockne, Red Grange, and Jim Thorpe, and that he should rest on his laurels.

They said a lot of other things, too, and most of them were complimentary. No one told him the real reason they didn't want him, but they realized that he knew the score just the same. No matter what else you might say about Steve Madson, you could never call him a clunk-head.

And then that telegram had come from Al Eastman, along with train fare to the Ramblers' home field. Steve hadn't understood at first what it was all about, though he'd been thankful for the opportunity. But now, as he stood before the beefy and loquacious Eastman, he was almost wishing that the telegram had never arrived.

"So you're the great Steve Madson?" Eastman was saying sarcastically. "Mr. Pigskin, in person. Humph! You look more like a broken down tackling dummy with half the sawdust spilled out."

Steve's ears turned crimson and the little black eyes above his broken nose narrowed dangerously. He said with labored slowness: "If you're aching for a fight, Mister, get up on your feet. There's still enough sawdust left to take care of a mug like you."

Eastman grunted in disdain. "I doubt it," he said. "But I'm not interested either. You're just a meal ticket for me, Madson, and I can be one for you too if you want to string along."

Steve didn't like Eastman, but it sounded as if the guy was offering the break he so badly needed, and he said, "What's your proposition, Mister?"

"Just this," Eastman said. "I've got a good club and a squad of good players. They've got as much moxie as any others in the business, but they

just can't turn in winning scores. Last year they took only two games on a full ticket, and if it goes like that again this season we'll lose money faster than we could give it away."

Steve nodded, his ears returning to their normal color. "And you want me to—?"

"I want you to put some fight in them," Eastman said. "Get them out there and drive them with a bull whip till they fall on their faces, then yank them up and drive them some more. Think you can do it, for a thousand bucks?"

STEVE ALMOST grabbed for the offer, but then he pulled on the brake. A thousand dollars was a lot of money—more than he had seen in one lump for two long years. But there was something about the way the deal sounded that he didn't like, something that smacked too much of cut-and-dried business.

He said: "What about a contract and a game guarantee? A thousand bucks isn't much for a whole season."

Eastman's thin lips split in a grin, showing cigar-stained teeth. "There'll be no contract and no guarantee, Madson," he said. "I want you for two, maybe three games. You do your job, you take the grand, and you fade. After that I don't want any part of you."

Anger flared white-hot within Steve and he snatched his battered gray fedora from the top of Eastman's polished oak desk.

"Then you can go plumb to hell, Mister," he graded. "If I'm not good enough for the Ramblers, I'm not good enough for your lousy thousand bucks." He clamped the hat on his head and started to barge from the office.

But Eastman stopped him before he reached the door, saying quietly, "Where do you think you're going in such a rush, Madson?"

"Back to New York," snapped Steve. "Any objections?"

"How far do you think you'll get without dough in your pockets?" Eastman said, grinning. "And what kind of excuse will you give Viv after you get there?"

Steve suddenly stopped, his hand on the doorknob. In his anger he'd forgotten that he was broke, that Eastman had sent him only one-way train fare. And he'd also forgotten about Vivian, about the way she had been counting on this deal. The realization came that, like it or not, he had to take Eastman's offer.

But how had the burly coach known about Vivian? The way he'd used her name it sounded as if the acquaintance had been more than casual, but Steve could not remember ever meeting or even hearing of Al Eastman before.

"I warned Viv ten years ago that someday you'd be just another broken down athlete without a job," Eastman went on, as if reading Steve's thoughts. "But she wouldn't listen. She was young and carefree, and you were going great guns at the top of the heap. You were big time, and I was just a second-string hooper. Funny how things have changed, isn't it, Madson?"

And then Steve understood. Eastman had been the male half of Vivian's old vaudeville routine—only in those days he'd called himself Albert East and had worn a little mustache on his lip.

"I went back to football after Viv turned me down and married you," Eastman went on bitterly. "I kept waiting for you to fall, and when the Bruins threw you out two years ago I knew you'd made your last headline. You're just a two-bit stumblebum now, Madson, and if you want the price of a meal ticket you'll come back here and listen to me."

STEVE SLOWLY took his hand from the doorknob. He was eating humble-dirt as he'd never eaten it before. But he knew he had to do it. He had sworn to take care of Vivian, and he didn't know anything except football. This was his last chance of the season.

So, with a heavy heart, he sat and listened while Eastman gave the orders that he hoped would transform the Ramblers into a winning team. But Steve knew that, whether they helped the squad or not, those orders would make him look like a prize Number One heel in the eyes of the players.

The following afternoon Al Eastman

took Steve down to the field and introduced him to the team. "Fellows," he said. "I want you to meet Steve Madson, the man they call Mr. Pigskin. He's going to be with us for a while."

Steve ran appraising eyes over the squad, and he liked what he saw. Young, muscular, and clean-cut, they seemed to have all the outward appearances of good football material. He couldn't understand why they didn't have the drive needed to run in winning tallies.

"Glad to have you on the team, Madson," spoke up a blond Apollo of a youngster named Bud Andrews. "We can sure use a man with your experience."

Eastman gave Steve the eye and Steve, following orders, snapped harshly: "I thought you said you had a football team here, Eastman? There's not a guy among 'em that's dry behind the ears yet!"

There was a sudden silence on the field, and Steve burned under the stare of hard eyes. The team was against him already, which was just the way Eastman wanted it. He planned to have Steve get them so riled up that nothing would be able to stop them.

"If you're so sharp," said Tiny Disbrow, the two hundred-pound guard, "why don't you put on a uniform and scrimmage with us? Maybe we could show you a couple of things."

"Maybe that wouldn't be such a bad idea, Madson," added Bud Andrews, "if you've got enough nerve."

Steve didn't like what he was doing to the boys and the impression they were getting of him. But he needed that thousand dollars and it was too late to backtrack.

"I don't scrimmage with kids," he said testily. "I'll play with you in scheduled games, but only because I have to. On the practice field. I'll just stay by myself. I don't want to snap any of your brittle bones."

EASTMAN broke it up before a free-for-all started, sending them back to scrimmage again. Steve had never seen the team in action before, but the way they tore at each other he didn't think there was an outfit in the

country that could stop them.

"It's working already," Eastman observed as they watched. "If you keep on needling them like that, they'll be fighting mad enough to take every game."

"But I don't like it," Steve said slowly. "There's not a man out there who wouldn't give a month's pay to screw my head off and boot it down the field."

"Don't go mushy on me," Eastman snarled. "You're getting paid plenty for the tune you're singing. Maybe if you'd played it this smart two years ago the Bruins wouldn't've tossed you out."

Steve's anger pot boiled over again, and he said in a warning voice: "Can that stuff, Mister, and damn' quick. The whole story's as phoney as a three-dollar bill."

Are you trying to say that you didn't deliberately throw that game with the Rams?" Eastman said, grinning. "Don't give me that, Madson. I've been around."

"I never threw a game in my life," Steve declared hotly. "Anybody who says I did is a cockeyed liar!"

"So you claimed during the investigation," Eastman reminded him. "But you never did explain where that five hundred dollars came from. If you'd been smart, Madson, you'd have put it in the wall safe instead of stuffing it down in a chair in your hotel room."

"Somebody framed me, I tell you!" Steve insisted. "I didn't even know that five hundred was there!"

"Well, well," Eastman scoffed. "So you were framed, huh? But don't blow your top now," he went on in a hard voice. "Go climb into a uniform and get out on the field. You've got a lot of conditioning to do before the opener Saturday."

Steve went out there every day and worked out. He missed the close association and joking that had always been part of his training sessions of the past, and he hated the baleful stares that were constantly thrown at him. But still he kept up the act, digging the needle deeper whenever he got the chance. That Saturday, as they changed in the oppressively silent lockers, he said:

"So today we get our ears pinned back, huh? Maybe it'd be better if you bums got a batch of dolls to play with."

There was low cursing, and then Bud Andrews was suddenly hulking over him, eyes flashing, the cords standing out on his neck.

"There are gonna be some ears pinned back right now," the blond halfback threatened, "if you don't keep a civil tongue in your head."

Steve looked coldly at the lad. A lump of lead rose in his throat and he felt like a Judas, but now that he'd started he couldn't very well back out.

"Dry up, fish bait," he said with heavy sarcasm, turning away again to lace his shoes. "I don't talk with scrubs."

A strong hand abruptly grabbed him by the shoulder and pulled him upright, and at the same time Al Eastman's voice echoed through the lockers.

"Hold it, Andrews!" he barked. "If there's gonna be any fighting on this team, save it for the field. That's an order, understand?"

WITH STEVE on the bench, the Ramblers took the toss and elected to receive. They were a hate-driven team, and the Trojans didn't have a chance against their terrific opening onslaught. Pat Smalle, the gaunt fullback, spiked one across the line before the initial stanza was more than five minutes old, but in the second quarter the Trojans managed to tie it up with a lucky pass.

Then the Ramblers started to slow up, to lose their white-heat drive. There seemed to be something missing and the Trojans rolled on to another marker and an easy conversion before the frame ended.

"That's what I was afraid of," Eastman growled as they went into the lockers. "You start the next half, Madson, and whip them up again. Get them to those goalposts if you have to kick every mother's son of them all the way down the field!"

The boys were sullen in the lockers, barely listening as Eastman went through his pep talk. Then he gave

the nod to Steve, and Steve sounded off.

"I'm going to cancel my contract with this outfit, Eastman," he exclaimed. "These bums of yours won't win a game all season, and I don't want my name on the sport pages with them. It'll kill my standing in the big time."

Fire abruptly came back into the squad's eyes, and Bull Watson, the rawboned tackle, snarled: "Maybe we won't win, big shot, but we won't throw any of them. That's more than you can say for yourself!"

"Yeah," Tiny Disbrow chimed in. "The guy thinks he's hot stuff, when there's not another outfit in the East that'll have him for peanuts!"

Both barrels went home, striking deep. They hurt Steve to the quick, but he knew he'd been asking for it. He had driven the boys to the wall, and now they were fighting back. Worse, he couldn't even offer explanations. That would just queer his deal with Eastman, and the money was too close to his grasp.

They went out for the second half with their blood boiling, and Steve added more fuel to the flame by yelling: "I'm taking this kickoff, bums. Get outa my way or I'll dig cleats into your yella backs!"

The ball came down the channel and Steve speared it. He tucked it under his arm and shot down the field, working toward the sidelines. The Ramblers plowed into the hapless Trojans and bowled him over like matchsticks, and Steve got to the forty-eight before a tackler broke through and knocked him out of bounds.

"Where the hell was your blocking in there?" he ranted as they huddled. "Gimme the ball again, and see if you can punch a hole in there."

They got down on the line and Spike Black chanted signals. Then Mugs Barlow heaved the ball between his legs and Steve took it on the tips of his fingers. The play was slated to go through the Number Two slot, and the forward wall opened a hole big enough to drive a jeep through. Steve plunged into it with churning legs, the ball tight in his arm. The Trojan quarter-

back tried to grab on, but Steve shoved a big hand in his face and pushed him away.

Then he was in the clear and slicing toward the sidelines. Bud Andrews and Cab Willard were out in front, cutting the leg from under two of the secondary men. It was beautiful blocking, and Steve knew there would be no stopping these boys.

The crowd in the stands went wild as he charged across the line, but Steve was not happy. It was the first time he had taken the ball into paydirt in two years, but there was no feeling of thrill, no exultation. Maybe he was a hero to the fans, but he was a dead-beat to his own team—and that was too much for him to take.

THERE WASN'T a single smile showing when they went down for the conversion. Anger had seeped so thickly into their blood that there was no room for any other emotion. The game was strictly impersonal, and they were playing like cold machines.

Spike Black bit off the signals and Mugs Barlow slammed the ball back. At the same time the Rambler line charged with murderous force. Grinning the Trojans to bits, and Steve went across the chalk on his feet.

Then Pat Smalle was running out to the field, and Steve sighed in relief. Eastman was yanking him; there was no use keeping him in there any longer.

Steve sank wearily to the bench and dropped his head to his hands, and Eastman gloated: "They'll be okay now. Do those guys hate your guts!"

The rest of the game was a walk-away for the infuriated Ramblers, and they tallied three more markers before the final gun. But there was no rejoicing in the lockers. The boys were resentful; they had vented their hate on the Trojans, but still they were not satisfied. They wanted to pluck the thorn from their side and crush it to bits.

Steve was slow in dressing and was the last to leave the lockers. When he came out Bud Andrews was waiting for him, and Steve knew what was coming up. But he didn't want to fight the blond halfback. There had

been too much unpleasantness already without adding more.

"Hello, Andrews," he said quietly. "That was a nice game you boys turned in. Darn' nice."

The corners of Andrews' mouth went down, and he said: "Don't try to soft-soap me, Madson. You know why I waited here."

Steve sighed. "Yes, I know."

"Then put up your hands," Andrews challenged. "I'm going to knock your damn' teeth out."

Steve made no attempt to defend himself, and the big halfback threw a fist that crashed into the side of the jaw. It was a piledriving right, with both weight and fury behind it, and Steve was staggered. He had stopped harder blows in knockdown, drag-out fights and had come back slugging. But this time he had no will to fight, no strength to throw off the effects of the blow, and he crumpled to the cement walk.

"Get up and take it like a man, Mr. Pigskin," Andrews was saying far above him. "Get up!"

But he couldn't move. And then, minutes later it seemed, a strong arm went around his waist and pulled him roughly to his feet. Then Andrews was speaking again, only this time his voice was much closer.

"I never thought the great Steve Madson would fold up that easily!" he said, not too harshly. "I'd better get you to a taxi."

THE FOLLOWING Monday afternoon Steve saw Bud Andrews stare at him quizzically in the lockers. He wanted to tell the youngster what it was all about, but he knew he couldn't. He tried to tell himself that he was out to do a job on the Ramblers, and nothing else. To hell with what they thought of him. They meant bread on his sparse table, and that was all.

But though nothing was said, Steve felt that Andrews had told the others. And he wondered how that was going to affect his influence over the team. If they thought he didn't have enough insides to put up his fists and fight it out, then they wouldn't be bothered by his needling. That would put

them right back at scratch again, and he could kiss his thousand dollars goodbye.

He had to find out what the score was, and after lacing up his cleats he said in a loud voice: "You thick-headed bums on the line better learn how to block this week. The way you hit those Trojans it looked like a pillow fight."

There was no response from the squad, and Tiny Disbrow looked up from his bench, satisfaction mirrored on his battered face.

"Where'd you get that bruise on your chin, Madson?" he said testily. "Run into a door or something?"

There was a mild ripple of snickering, and Steve knew that the story was out. Bud Andrews had told them about the onesided fight.

But he had an answer ready. "One of you slobs laid a lead pipe on me Saturday night," he snapped. "If I ever find out who it was I'll smash a helmet down his damn' throat!"

The blatant lie did what he had hoped, and as he stalked from the lockers a wave of angry curses blasted after him. They were ready to tear him apart, and that was good. Steve hoped that he would be able to work them to the same fever pitch for the coming game.

The week sped by, and with each passing day the tension in the lockers mounted higher and higher. Then it was Saturday afternoon and time to go into action against the Owls.

Steve was feeling blue when he arrived at the field, and he knew that he couldn't go through with it. He had reached the breaking point, and though he needed the money Eastman had promised, he couldn't take the hate of the Ramblers any longer. In his letters to Vivian he had said that everything was fine, that there was nothing to worry about. He didn't want to burst her bubble of happiness, but he told himself that she would understand, that they'd get along somehow.

HE WENT straight through the lockers and on into Eastman's office. The coach was at his desk, working over some papers, and he raised his head and said, "Well, what

do you want, Madson?"

"I'm pulling out," Steve said quietly.

Eastman grunted in disgust. "Can't take it, huh?"

"That's right," Steve said. "I can go out there and get my brains bashed in on the field. I can run the ball and heave passes till I drop. But I can't go on making a fool of myself with the boys."

Eastman grunted again. "You're soft, Madson," he said. "Soft and stupid. You're talking yourself out of an easy grand. You know that, don't you?"

"I know," Steve said heavily. "But I made them win one game, and they're sore enough to win again today."

"Stop it before you make me cry!" Eastman grated. "You don't get a lousy dime unless you stay and finish the job. Understand, Mr. Pigskin? Not a lousy dime!"

It was like a hard right hook to the face, and Steve reeled under the blow. He couldn't believe his ears, and yet he knew that Eastman was giving it to him straight.

"I've hated your guts since you took Viv away from me," the coach said, his voice almost snarl. "And this is the payoff. You made me dance to your tune once, and now I'm playing the music. You get out there, Madson and do what I say, or you walk back to New York."

Steve went white around the mouth and his eyes hardened in fury. He could see now that Eastman had sent for him in the first place only because he wanted to tear him down, to ruin him for good. But he suddenly decided that he wouldn't give Eastman that satisfaction. He didn't know how he was going to do it, but there had to be a way.

"All right, Mister," he said, "I guess you win. You give the orders and I'll carry them out."

Steve sat on the bench, his face a mask, and watched while the Owls took the kickoff. The nocturnal boys were big and rough, with a lot more rugged experience behind them than the Ramblers, and they showed their superiority in the first few minutes of

said, "What is this, Madson—a gag?"

Steve grinned at the blond halfback. "No gag, son," he said. "I'm just acting myself for a change. You take the the kick, Andrews, and I'll block. Check?"

Hi Harris, their bone-crushing left halfback, took the kick up to the forty-three, dragging Tiny Disbrow a good five yards before he toppled. Then they went into their powerful T-formation and hammered through for two first downs before kicking out.

Bud Andrews and Pat Smalle each took it once, and though they picked up some yardage it wasn't enough. Then Spike Black tried a pass to Cab Willard. It was a beautiful ball, straight down the alley, but something went wrong. Hi Harris made a terrific leap into the air and snagged it on the tips of his fingers, and before the Ramblers could stop him he was across the chalkline for the first tally.

AS THE game wore on through the period Steve became racked with excitement. He had forgotten all about Eastman; the only thing he could think of was what was happening out there. The Ramblers had come to mean more to him than just a meal ticket. They were his team, the boys he wanted to fight with, not against.

Early in the second stanza the Owls battered another one across. They took it right through the center from the fourteen, and Hi Harris was all alone when he crossed the line. It seemed that the Ramblers had lost their fight completely. The chips were down and they had no one in there to drive them.

And then Eastman jerked a hand at Steve, saying sarcastically, "Think you can bring 'em back to life, Mr. Pigskin?"

"I'll try," Steve said, keeping the anxiety out of his voice.

"You'd better," cautioned Eastman. "If they don't win this one you will walk back to New York!"

Steve went out on the double, his heart pounding. "Okay, boys" he said lightly, "let's get one. Show those mugs that the Ramblers aren't clinging vines!"

Bud Andrews and Spike Black stared at him strangely, and Andrews

The Owls put their foot to it and the ball came down, a high twister. Bud Andrews went over to take it, and Steve stayed with him.

"Down the sidelines!" Steve yelled. "Let's go!"

Andrews dug in, following Steve, and the Owls swarmed after them. Steve pivoted sharply to miss three would-be tacklers, and they cut toward centerfield.

Then they were in the midst of the Owls. Steve shouted, "Plow into them!" and threw himself forward in a body block that cut two men to the ground. Andrews went through the hole for another four yards before they blanketed him.

The boys gave Steve puzzled stares in the huddle. They couldn't understand where he had left the needle, but he didn't try to explain. "I'll call 'em, Black, Okay?" he said quickly, adding: "A deep lateral on five. You sling it, Andrews."

They got down and Spike Black called signals. Then the ball came back and Steve faded with Bud Andrews, eyes sharp for interference. Cab Willard let his man go by to streak for the lateral, and Steve slammed into him as Andrews snapped the pass.

Steve was instantly on his feet again and charging down the field. A roar from the stands told him that the pass was good, and he cut across to shoulder Hi Harris out of the play with a bone-jarring crash.

Cab Willard got down to the twenty-six for a good first down before he was knocked out of bounds. It was the longest run of the game for the Ramblers.

"Nice going, guy," Steve enthused in the huddle to more puzzled stares. "Now Black hits the line on four. Stay behind me, boy!"

THE RAMBLERS hit the Owl line hard and opened the hole, and Steve streaked into it, Spike Black on his heels. He knocked Larry Bell, Owl quarterback, to the seat of his pants with a glancing block and then dived headfirst to slice out still another secondary man.

Black clomped by on flashing cleats, and Steve lifted his head to watch. He was bruised and aching from the blocks he had thrown, but he yelled

with the excitement of the play. Black drove all the way to the fourteen before Hi Harris stopped him!

This time the stares in the huddle had changed to amazement. Steve grinned at the boys and said: "That's slowing 'em. Let's get a t.d. now. You take it, Andrews."

The huddle broke and Muggs Barlow got over the ball. Spike Black went into his chant and it came back to Bud Andrews. Steve charged in high gear and catapulted himself at the line, smoothing the edges of the hole, and Andrews was through it in a flash. The Owl quarterback missed him by inches in a desperate plunge, and then he was over the chalk for the first Rambler tally of the day!

Suddenly the boys were around Steve, and they were going crazy. Bull Watson said in amazement, "Hey, you ain't such a bad guy after all, Madison!"

"You're damn' right," Spike Black exclaimed. "That was Steve's touchdown, from start to finish!"

And then Bud Andrews was back, and holding out a big hand. "Sorry I slugged you, fella," he said brightly. "I guess I was all wet."

Steve curled his upper lip and snapped, "Cut the tear jerking, you bums, and play ball." And then he laughed. "What a team!" he said. "You guys are the best in the world, only you had to have somebody after you with a hot poker!"

Steve took it across for the conversion, and then they kicked off to the Owls and two plays later it was the half.

They went in, a closely-knit, harmonious team, and Al Eastman stood over them, obviously not too happy at the ways things had turned out.

He said quietly: "So you're all in love with each other, huh? Ain't that just too wonderful." And then his voice went up in a roar: "But don't think you're safe yet. This ball game's got thirty minutes to go, and the Owls are still ahead by plenty!"

A cog in Steves brain suddenly clicked into place. He remembered something that Eastman had said that first day on the field, and now he un-

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Magic Eye Fine
has been operating
on our boy . . .



Crook, Fine, and Stinker

by TOM THURSDAY
(author of "The Tapeworm Turns!")

When we hear that Felony Jones is around, it's just natural to expect a whammy artist in the background.

I CAN TELL by the way, the Boss's puss is puffing in and out that he does care for the rude manner in which Galloping McBumm is hammering his own personal fisticuffer, Socker Sosin. It is the third round and Sosin has been delighted to rest on the canvas at least six times or each time McBumm has tapped him on the beakus. This is indeed very disappointing because the Boss has come all the way to Miami to see his boy perform in the Orange Bowl, and he is positive Sosin should be the welter champ, regardless what happens.

Suddenly the Boss turns to me and states, like this, "I see from here that Felony Jones, the crook, has hired Magic Eye Fine to put the whammy on the Socker. All of which is undoubtedly why my champ cannot make any headway with his natural ability."

The Boss is so irked and perturbed that he swallows his fresh-lit cigar and

we have to sock him on the back before he will consider coughing it up. So me and the other boys get the Boss outside the Orange Bowl and inform him that we are very sorry that he is not feeling 'so well and likewise Socker Sosin."

"Look," says the Boss, "this here funny business has went far enough and I do not desire anymore shenagans from either Felony Jones or Magic Eye Fine. Therefore steps will be taken at once to see that matters are changed so that both them rats will keep out of my hair."

I am about to remind the Boss that he has forgot to put on his wig but he has always been very quick with a gun and I do not care to injure his feelings. "Well," I say, "what you have remarked is very quite true and them bums should be dealt with in a manner that is of interest to any smart embalmer. However," I add, "what is your de-

sire in the matter?"

"You will find out where this Magic Eye Fine lives, which is no doubt in some alley ashcan, and you will bring him before me as soon as possible, if not ahead of time. I will then make a deal with Magic Eye and show him that his present connections is full of errors and also holes. Anyone," says the Boss, "who associates with such small-tripe tramps as Felony Jones is very weak in the head where the brains are supposed to be horsing around."

The Boss takes out a buck cigar and lights it with a dollar bill which same he claims is practically of no value due to the inflation that is now touring the country. The Boss is a very rich man because he made his money honestly in the Bolita racket which is nothing but selling numbers to folks who would like to strike it rich with no work whatsoever. The fact that they have only one chance in 999 of copping the right number when it falls is something that don't annoy them in the least because they have perhaps never went to school and studied arithmetic.

"Whatever you say, Boss," I remark, "is okay by me and the boys. If you desire to hold a little chitchat with Magic Eye Fine I will see that he has the honor of your company. "But," I observe to the Boss, "if he does not care to visit you while still breathing what is your orders in such a unfortunate case in respect to sudden rigors of mortis?"

"You will please not rough him up beyond repairs," says the Boss, "because I want the full use of his Magic Eye, which same I have heard so much about, and perhaps I can even use him in my business. So you will kindly tell the boys to go nice and gentle, as Magic Eye Fine may be a very valuable man if he has the sense to listen to sound reason."

* * *

WHILST THE Boss is stopping in his own mansion on Hibiscus Island which same is sunk somewhere in Biscayne bay, me and the boys is likewise taking advantage of the winter climate and also a suite in the Hotel Golden Fronds. It is a nice

little joint and the rent is a steal, being only fifty slices of moola per day. With me is Bullet-Proof McMortuary and Super-Slug Schwartz who have been brung up in Brooklyn and can speak the language very well, indeed.

"Now, gentlemen, "I say, when we are comfy in our suite, "as you may have heard, the Boss is very annoyed at the dire actions of this lad Magic Eye Fine and would like to hold converse with him as soon as you can bring him in."

Bullet-Proof takes his shootola out of his holdster and remarks, "Duh mug is practically right here now and I can do it wit only one shot. Howsoever—"

"You fail to comprehend the finer feelings of the Boss," I admonish. "He desires that the business of transportation be of the highest quality and does not get the interest of the cops."

"Yuh mean they have cops way down here, too?" ask Bullet-Proof.

"I understand they have same," I says; also they have a law that if you have a criminal record you must drop into police headquarters and give them a sample of your real name in pen and ink and in addition tell them where you are staying and how long you are staying and to wit why. This why is what discourages the boys from even calling at headquarters for a friendly handshake, because the boys feel that they are down in Miami and Miami Beach on a vacation from the snow of the north, and why they are down here is a matter that is the purest of personal."

"I do not know what is the address of the cop station," says Bullet-Proof, "and besides which I ain't got no criminals records to sign for because them six mugs I croaked just happened to pass in front of my gat while I was doin' a little polite practicin'."

The boys fill up some glasses with some special Florida wet-wash and toss it down their gullets and forget all about such uncouth items as cops and police stations. "Well, gentlemen," I say, "about this Magic Eye Fine person—I believe the Boss will pay a bonus if you bring him in not later than tomorrow. He should be all complete and no parts missing, as you know

the Boss has a very artistic viewpoint and does not care to have any ears or arms out of place."

"Where does duh mug flop?" asks Bullet-Proof. "I will hire me a taxi and go forth and get him at once in a very refined manner."

"We will go forth immediately," says Super-Slug Schwartz, "and make the Boss very happy; if this Magic Eye character is not now floating in the ocean we will show him to you tonight."

I wish the boys bon trip and decide to pile into the bed for at least a day because I have been very worried about the Boss's disposition on account of the manner in which his protege Socker Sosin has been treated by Felony Jone's bindlewillie Galloping McBumm.

* * *

A BOUT 3 A.M. in the early morning I hear a slight riot outside the door and before anybody busts it down I yank it open and I see Bullet-Proof and Super-Slug with a very large bag between them.

"Mister Magic Eye Fine is callin'," says Bullet-Proof.

"Where is Mr. Fine at the present moment?" I ask.

"In duh bag," says Bullet-Proof. "He did not want any one to lamp him so he is travelin' incognuts."

"That is no way for him to travel," I says. "You will please open the bag and let us see what Mr. Fine has to say, because maybe he thinks he is misunderstood."

The boys dump Magic Eye on the floor and he is quite upset about the means of transportation, claiming he prefers airplanes with a pretty steward serving him hot tea and sweet knickknacks.

"This," remarks Eagle Eye, "is a very great outrage and I will notify the police at once. You will please show me the telephone."

"Now, now," I sooth, "the telephone service in this trap is very poor and it will only annoy you if you try to call the police. Besides," I add, "the cops do not care to be bothered with small items."

Just then a B-29 or the like flies in the door and when the smoke drifts

away I see what looks like Miss Freckle Face of 1948. "You—you louse!" she remarks, and prances over to Magic Eye Fine and cuffs him on the schnozz. "That for you, Sugar Pop! You tell me you will stay home and wait for Mommer and I see you now with a fine flock of jail-bait."

Bullet-Proof McMortuary raises one of his dark-and-heavy eyebrows and looks over his hundred-buck sport coat and then gives a glance at his new alligator shoes the price of same being forty-five slugs in real green cabbage, no checks.

"Female," says Bullet-Proof, "we do not care to dump dolls in the ocean, but, you are giving out with remarks on gents that do not care for same."

Miss Freckle Face turns to Bullet-Proof, and whinnies, "How was the warden when you left the pen or did you take a walk while the guards was shootin' craps?"

From then on no more first class courtesy is shown to Miss Freckle Face by the boys. Bullet-Proof and Super-Slug are very positive that a very great insult to their characters and fine reputations has been given them by the dame, so they yam a gag into her mouth and tie her hands and feet. Before this can be accomplished she lets forth with a yelp and a scream that has some of the neighbors ask the clerk what type of murder is being performed in Suite 7-11. The clerk phones and I say, like this, "I have just informed Prof. Schwartz and Dr. McMortuary that they must not disturb the other guess by having the radio up so high, and they will have to go without it account both are very deaf in the ears."

We then put Magic Eye and his Mommer in the back room and I notice why they call him Magic Eye because the right peeper stares at you with a very funny look and out of it seems to come a stream of light. I also learn that Felony Jones pays him some real moola for putting the hex on the Boss's Socker Sosin, which is no doubt why he loses as I do not think the punches the Socker took would kill more than two bulls and a regiment of elephants.

After they have bedded down Fine

and his Mommer what with one tied to one end of the bed and the other glued to the other I call up the Boss on Hibiscus Island and tell him the very nice news.

"I am very gratified highly," says the Boss, "although I am in the dead midst of a poker game and have dropped twenty grand to a couple of real estate gents but," goes on the Boss, "I have their home address and Bullet-Proof and Super-Slug can call on them later and get it back."

I turn to the boys and say, "The Boss will be right over and he is gratified, but very highly, and he may overlook some of those collections you made in Brooklyn where you forgot what you learned about arithmetic." The boys are very outraged at such a mere suggestion of them holding out and say they do not care to hear any more about such matters in the future.

* * *

THE BOSS pops in a hour later and he is in a very merry mood and remarks that Magic Eye Fine will be a great addition to his chosen profession. I lead him into the back room and when he notes Magic Eye and Miss Freckle Face tied to the bed he clucks his molars and says, "I do not desire to have this poor little beauty treated in such a manner and," he says, "you will please unfix her at once and give her this set of two fifty-dollar bills because I know she has been very uncomfortable."

Well, the easy dough makes Miss Freckle Face forget all about who she was going to kill first and she thinks the Boss is a very nice gent and I am glad because she reminds me of my first two wives who was cats from hell and may they both return there. When we untie Magic Eye he says he would like to see the police, two lawyers and above all Mr. Felony Jones.

"You will please do not mention any rats by the name of Jones," says the Boss, "because you are now in good company and are about to make real money instead of the corn flakes that Felony Jones pays you."

Magic Eye does not care to listen to the Boss but Miss Freckle Face waves the two fifties in front of his puss and states that he should have

some brains as he is a big boy now and should act like the same. This kind of makes him blush and so he states that he will listen to reason if there is any heavy cash that goes with the reason.

"Look," says the Boss, "I am a patron of the arts and am very much interested in two race nags which will go at Hialeah track in a few days and I have a fine boxfighter named Socker Sosin who you ruined at the Orange Bowl the other evening when you tossed your eye at him. Now I will pay you in green cash the sum of \$500 per weekly if you will work for me and let your eye roam in the direction I so state."

"What do I do if Felony Jones shoots me?" demands Magic Eye. I am about to state that under such rude circumstance he should lay down and become a treat for the undertaker but just then Miss Freckle Face says, "I am the sole and only manager of Magic Eye Fine, and although I can see that you are a gent that is just like Santa Claus I must inform you that he will do nothing unless I give him the go-go."

"Well, now," says the Boss, "I am indeed very glad to note that Magic Eye has a smart girl as his manager and, I will show you how much I appreciate brains, because I do not have too much in my organization. However, I was walking down Lincoln Road on Miami Beach yesterday and I see a very swell mink coat that is just about—"

"Okay," says Miss Freckle Face, "I can see you are a gent who can appreciate the value of a girl who is just tryin' to get along."

Well, we shake hands all around and the Boss suggests that Bullet-Proof act like a social secretary to Magic Eye and Miss Freckle Face who announces that her real name is Miss Eloisa Antoinette Borgia from 10th avenue New York. "I do not desire that Felony Jones use any uncouth and rough treatment on my new proteges," says the Boss. "I could get a police escort," says the Boss, "but they are very busy and I do not care to bother them."

* * *

I AM sitting in a food trap on Flagler street the next afternoon hav-

ing a little breakfast at 3 P.M. when I get the idea that there is something foreign up my nose. The smell becomes worse and I look up and there is Felony Jones and he is very upset about something and he sits down beside me and remarks, "Look, crook, what makes you and that Boss of yours think you got brains, hey?"

"I have come in here," I say, "to eat in peace and quietness and I do not care to discuss matters with characters of your ilk and general deportment. And what is more," I say "if all the clinks you have been in was colleges you would have more degrees than ten college professors."

Felony fingers the sugar bowl a minute and can't make up his mind whether to deliver it to my head or let it land on my beak. Finally he puts it down and remarks, "Bum, I know you have kidnapped Magic Eye Fine and I will take steps to see that you get in poor health sudden-like. And," he says "you can tell that lousy Boss of yours that he will be smart to keep his insurance paid up. I know bid you good afternoon."

That evening I am gallavating in one of the Miami Beach night clubs with a blonde sweetie who claims she quit Hollywood account of Lana Turner being jealous of her when in comes the Boss and honors me by sitting at my table.

"Ah," says the Boss, "and who is this queen of the night, may I ask?"

"Duh name's Josie Maloney," says my sweetie, "an' I think your cute."

We have a little chitchat for awhile and then I tell the Boss that Mr. Feloney Jones has stated that his health will not be improved in the very near future.

"My, my," says the Boss, "you will please have Bullet-Proof ask the price of concrete and also find out how deep is Biscayne Bay because, I do not desire to have my health get poorly." Then he turns to my sweetie and remarks, "Well, come along now, my pet, and let us see if the lights are brighter in other joints."

Miss Maloney leaps from the table and takes the Boss's arm and waves me a goodbye from the door and that is what I like about the Boss because he

always has a eye for beauty and don't care who she is with. I order a Beach cocktail—two parts Miami river and one part Georgia corn—and then depart hence into the starry night.

I am walking down Collins avenue admiring the palms trees and the drunks when a black car passes and a flock of shots spit flame in my direction. None of the bullets come near me, proving that the boys have been out of practice, and so I watch the car race away and don't even bother with the license. A moment later a cop squad car pops up and one of the lads says, "What is going on here, fella?"

I say, like this, "I do not know what you are conversing about but if you are alluding to something that sounded like the Battle of the Bulge, why a big car needs its engine cleaned out because it backfires all over the street."

"Oh," says the cop, "I see. Funny how you can't tell the difference between real shots and backfiring, ain't it?" I agree that it is and I walk down the street wondering if Felony Jones has been out riding for his health or have the Kremlin Kids taken over Miami Beach.

* * *

EVERYTHING is very quiet for the next week and then the Boss gets his two bangtails booked to do some running at Hialeah Park track. I have never seen these nags and for all I know they are a couple of brewery specials and will not move unless hooked to a truck. The Boss does not like their original names which is *FBI Special* and *Sing Sing Boy* and so he changes them to *Running Racket* and *Habeas Corpus*.

He has one nag entered in the third and the other in the seventh and the odds on both are 10-to-1 showing that the wise money boys don't figure either tramp has a chance to come in six furlongs behind last. The Boss has a swanky private box in the club house section and his name is out front in gold letters and he wipes it off with his hanky just before he sits down. Magic Eye Fine is there and so is Eloisa Antoinette Borgia and I note that Magic Eye has a black patch covering his hexing orb. He tells the Boss that he must do that to prevent wear and tear on the

pupil which is very high strung and delicate, indeed.

"Now," says the Boss to Magic Eye Fine, "if you will put the whammy on them other dogs and see that my purebreds win I will pay you a very large sum of money."

"The Eye is in one swell condition," says Magic Eye, "and your purebreds can't lose."

Just then a very sinister character struts up in front of the box and I think he is going to wreck the health of the Boss but he just leans over the rail and hands him a envelope. The Boss reads it very carefully and smiles all over the track and I am greatly relieved that the Boss is so happy.

"Well!" he says, "I see by this communique that Felony Jones has learned how to write and can spell a few words with only two mistakes in each word and," says the Boss, "he wants to know if I will make him a side bet of five grand that his ape Galloping McBumm can knock out Socker Sosin in a return bout. He says he can get the bout booked in the Biscayne Arena in the next two weeks and that makes me very happy indeed." Then he turns to Magic Eye Fine, and says, "Good friend, this time you will be on my side and my champ can't lose."

"Yeah," says Magic Eye, and that is all.

WELL, I will not bore you with what happens to the Boss's two entries with long details because I am not no radio sports announcer who bust their lungs over nothing whatsoever. When the third race starts, *Running Racket* is fourth from the rail and when the starting gate goes up the jockey near falls off the nag and the nag acts like he is very ill and would like a doctor at once. The Boss looks at Magic Eye and says, "What is this? What is this?"

Magic Eye says, "Be calm and not perturbed. The Eye will now begin to commence."

Soon *Running Racket* gets back to normal and the eight bangtails start swooping around the track but the dust is so great I can't tell whether nags or midget autos are racing. At the half

the dust clears and I am very dumfounded to see that *Running Racket* is in the lead by two lengths. I look at Magic Eye and he is doing his stuff in full bloom and the Boss is so happy that he near falls out of the box. This is most disgusting to me because I have placed a little secret bet on the favorite, *Sucker Bait*, but I do not care to have the Boss know anything about it.

At the end of the race *Running Racket* won by six lengths and all the wise money boys go out and buy themselves some pure arsenic.

When the seventh race comes up *Habeas Corpus* is second from the rail and he looks to me like he has been out for six nights with a couple of fast fil-lies and I don't think he can come in before the night begins to fall. I frankly think that the Magic Eye Fine stuff is a lot of very pure crap and I sneak down a bet on the favorite, *Alms House*, because even the dopes who write the dope sheets all pick him to breeze in like a comet.

Well, I do not know whether all the other ten nags in the race are drugged, or just dead, but from the way *Habeas Corpus* speeds home I get the notion that maybe there is something to the goo of Magic Eye Fine.

"Great work!" says the Boss, putting his arms around the shoulders of Magic Eye. "You are undoubtedly a very great genius."

"Yeah," agrees Magic Eye and lets it go at that.

Back in our hotel suite I note that Bullet-Proof McMortuary and Super-Slug Schwartz are looking like their rich grandpops died and left all the money to Joe Stalin. I enquire with all my usual politeness if they have had a profitable day at the track and they remark that it is indeed too bad that bums like Magic Eye Fine do not take a high dive in the dead center of the Gulf Stream, which is very wet all over and likewise deep.

"Duh guy must have somethin'," says Bullet-Proof. "Them two dogs of the Boss's are just good to make soap out of when boiled down proper. How come they win, huh?"

* * *

I WILL now come to the night of the McBumm-Sosin fight at the Biscayne Arena because I would like to get this over with as much as you and because it just goes to show that there are more crappy endings in real life than happy.

Socker Sosin is in fine shape for the condition he is in and any one who can train in Miami in the winter season is very nuts account of there are so many nicer things you can do, some of them blonde and some of them brunette and a very nice ocean to bathe in. Galloping McBumm enters the ring first and Felony Jones and his hoods are in the corner and they all look too happy to suit me.

The Boss is sitting in a ringside seat near the Socker's corner and Bullet-Proof and Super-Slug are acting as seconds, which is very funny because the boys can't tell a foul blow from a machine-gun. I look around and do not see Magic Eye Fine and I say to the Boss, like this, "Boss, where is Magic Eye this night of all nights when we need him very greatly?"

"I am beginning to wonder if Magic Eye over-slept so his great Eye will be rested," says the Boss, "but I am very certain he will be here right away any minute."

But by the time the brawl starts there is no Magic Eye and the Boss is very upset and annoyed at his absence and I wonder what has become of him. Just before the bell for the first round Eloisa Antoinette Borgia pops beside the Boss and says, "Have you not see Magic Eye?"

"No," says the Boss, "and why don't you know where he may be?"

"He is not at home," says Eloisa, "and I am very worried that he is alone and maybe sick some place where I can't help him."

"This," says the Boss, "is a very good time to think of such matters and if he is not here very right away he will not be any other place for the rest of his life."

The bell.

Sosin leaves his corner with a mean snare on his mug and belts McBumm with a left and right to the head and

I think that maybe Sosin has had a few drinks of Georgia Corn because he has never shown so much action before. The Boss does not even look at the fight because he is worried about Magic Eye and also about the side bet of five grand he has with Felony Jones and maybe other matters.

I hear a thump on the floor and I am very amazed to see that it is McBumm on the canvas and not Sosin and Felony Jones hollers across the ring,

"Some bum musta waxed the canvas—its all slippery!"

McBumm takes a count of nine which is pretty long for a guy who has just slipped and then Sosin belts him again with a right to the kisser and again he goes down. I yell over to Felony Jones, "Wax is great stuff, hey?"

I think the bell saves McBumm from a beautiful kayo and for a moment the Boss forgets about Magic Eye Fine and thinks Sosin can win without any whammy. The second round is worth anybody's dough and I will admit that I am very surprised at so much action on the part of both hambos because if they are real fisticuffers I am Joe Louis in his prime.

The third round is very sad and just as McBumm has Sosin on the floor in comes Magic Eye Fine and he is very upset and looks it. The Boss grabs him by the shoulders and yells, "Quick, the Eye, the Eye!"

I LOOK up into the ring and I see the hand of the ref going up and down over the dozing form of Socker Sosin and I get the notion that all the Magic Eyes in the world ain't going to bring back our brat for more entertainment from Brother McBumm.

Then the Boss notes that Magic Eye ain't even took his black cover off his eye and begins to roar all around the place like the Russians have landed and have took Times Squarehead. "What is this! What is this?" howls the Boss. "You have not even removed the cover and how do you expect to work the Eye with the cover over it!"

Magic Eye opens his mouth to say something but before he can say a sound the Boss rips the cover from the

(Continued On Page 95)



Small But Sporting

by JOHN WINTERS FLEMING



AS THE most sportsminded nation of all time, our national scene is liberally sprinkled with famous sports spots, north, south, east and west, large — and small. Here's what we mean.

Following are eight top sports spots. Each is small in size—all under 15,000 population—but tall in sports stature. And each is uniquely associated with a specific sport. Spots and sports are paired incorrectly here. How many can you pair correctly?

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Bonneville, Utah. | 1. Trap shooting. |
| 2. Cooperstown, N.Y. | 2. Marbles. |
| 3. Red Bank, N.J. | 3. Skiing. |
| 4. Steamboat Springs, Colo. | 4. Boar hunting. |
| 5. Tellico Plains, Tenn. | 5. Auto speed tests. |
| 6. Vandalia, Ohio. | 6. Harness racing. |
| 7. Wildwood-by-the-Sea, N. J. | 7. Power boat racing. |
| 8. Goshen, N. Y. | 8. Baseball. |

Answers are on Page 74



Ball Out

for

Booda

by

THEODORE J. ROEMER

(Author of "Shortstop Slugger")

Chick Rawsen didn't profess to be the smartest basketball coach in the game, but he did believe that no player was smarter than he was.

BOODA SANDS didn't start that way. He was a tall, raw-boned, redheaded kid from the country—about as homely as the wheat country makes 'em—but he showed promise with those big hands and his speed, and Rawson watched him carefully through freshman year, nursed him along like a baby as a sophomore, then when a junior, when he really should mean something to the team—well, that summer something happened to Booda Sands.

He came back to school and he was no longer quiet. He had developed a bray like a mule. and at his own shouted jokes he gave the bray all his lungs could command. He became somewhat undesirable in hotels and trains, and even on the campus where he developed into something of a wolf—a harmless sort of wolf, that is, for Booda just wasn't that kind. He merely whistled at the girls and hooted at the sight of a cute knee. He was pretty much a kid.

Then he really started to get into Rawson's thinning hair. With money earned in the wheat country he bought a crate, knocked off the fenders. "My hot-rod," he said. Eddie Manns, assistant coach, said, "He'll kill himself." Rawson didn't think much of it. Then he saw Peggy, his daughter, riding with him.



The next day the cops stopped Booda for speeding. "Driving license suspended for three months," the judge said. Which incidentally was the duration of the basketball season.

Booda came back at Rawson by starting a hockey team at Northern, playing between basketball games, and the way Booda Sands played hockey was nothing short of murder.

Rawson had to call the faculty in on that one. A new ruling: No man may participate in two sports in one season.

By this time one gathers Rawson was hard put holding Booda Sands down. Besides, Peggy was still going with the big galoot once in a while. It all showed up on the basketball team; they began winning their games by only five and six point margins.

Watching the varsity practice two nights before the Kings game, Rawson moaned, "It's the same old story—just the time a guy gets good enough to mean something to the team, he gets too big for his pants. Look at

Sands, loafing out there, or day-dreaming."

"Kings will put a basketball into his mouth," Eddie Manns said.

Rawson blew his whistle. "Sands, hit that spot! Shoot! Shoot it fast!"

"Shucks, Coach," Booda drawled. "I was just makin' sure."

RAWSON untwisted his wind-pipe. "Sands," he managed finally, "Against State, if we last that long undefeated, you won't have time to make sure. You shoot at the flash, at the split-second that forward—Karns, get in there." Booda Sands knew all that, had been drilled for two years, had been doing it to perfection for weeks, but now—

As the second string center raced through the play nicely Booda pulled his long nose, shrugged and moved off the floor.

Rawson moped his fuzzy brows with his sweatshirt after he'd sent the squad to the showers. "Kings, and then—" he shuddered—"State."

"State and Bill Cooms," Eddie Manns said.

Rawson shuddered again. Last year—but he didn't want to think of last year. He had planned this year on Booda Sands bottling up this Cooms and Northern winning a championship, because he hadn't won a championship for six years now and it was about time. College presidents have an unhappy faculty for thinking of such things. And he liked Northern; he had his house bought and paid for. And Peggy, who had just turned nineteen, should finish here. Northern, he figured, was a good place for Chick Rawson.

"I hear," Eddie Manns was saying, "that Cooms is having a try-out with the All Star pros right after the season. Been offered ten grand for his first year."

But Rawson wasn't listening. He was thinking *I've got to jar him loose. I've got to wake him up, show him he isn't so big.*

Rawson frowned, then smote his bony fist into his left hand. *Competition that's the thing! I'll play Karns, and Booda will ride the bench*

the Kings game—and all next week, if necessary.

So Rawson took his basketball team up-state that Saturday and Northern played their second-last game of the season with four regulars and Karns on the floor, and Booda Sands, Northern much-ballyhooed big gun, reclined indolently on the bench. Northern squeaked out a win, 62-59. Rawson lost five pounds.

Eddie Manns said, "Is it over?" and opened his eyes.

Rawson muttered, "He hasn't learned his lesson yet, not yet." And all that week Booda Sands rode the bench.

When the week was over Eddie Manns breathed deeply. "Has he learned it yet?" Rawson opined that he had.

The big blue team from down the river hit the floor like a wind. They whirled a yellow thing around in the air then a tall drink of water flipped a finger somewhere near the iron beams of the gym and the ball went in. It was only practice but Rawson gulped.

He said, "That's Cooms out there, Sands. Do what you can."

"Sure, Coach. Sure." Booda hitched up his red silks on his own elongated thighs and went out with the four seniors.

Eddie Manns began to pray.

State drew first blood. It was Cooms, of course. Jones, for Northern, counted thirty seconds later, then Cooms again, like a flash.

Eddie Manns said, "Is your strategy working?"

Rawson said, "I don't know yet. He's playing pretty good ball." He watched closely. Cooms again, then Booda Sands flipped one in. The crowd gave tongue. Northern liked the kid. Jones, going like a red fox, hit the iron to tie the count up. The gym went wild.

Eddie Manns moaned. "Cooms hasn't warmed up yet."

"Neither has Sands," Rawson said. Eddie gave Rawson a look.

IT WAS a good ball game to the quarter, 16-15 for State, and then Bills Cooms put two wires together

and got heated. State began piling and Eddie Manns began cussing. "You and your strategy. Two weeks lay-off—the kid's rusty."

And Rawson had to admit it. The kid was trying but just wasn't in there. At the half it was 36-24 and there was a lot of people there to give Rawson an encouraging slap on the back. Even Peggy was there with a tearful, wet kiss. She knew what this championship game meant to Chick Rawson.

In the locker room he bawled them out some, just to let off steam. Booda sat on his bench, quiet, a little grim. Rawson ripped a few choice words into him, then ordered them out again.

And suddenly it was different out there. Booda Sands got the tip-off from Cooms. Jones made a snap throw. Booda was in that quick-opening slot; his big hands flicked at the flash of the ball. Karns had never shot so smoothly in all his life.

A minute later Booda Sands did the same shot. Then he blocked Cooms on a quick-breaking play inside the circle and stole the ball from the mighty Cooms. Jones and Booda took the ball down-court. Ries, the other forward, drilled in, missed. Cooms went up, but Booda Sands also went up and Booda's long fingers found the leather first. He tipped it in.

The blue champs of last year came whirling down, mad now, but Booda Sands was there. If he'd been in

Rawson's hair all season he was inside State's pants now. He breathed all over that court in less seconds than it takes to tell of it. His shots were uncannily accurate; his passes like bullets. His great paws were moving walls of defense. At the quarter Northern was behind 41-40. In ten seconds Northern was leading 42-41. After that they weren't headed.

Rawson sat on the bench when it was over and confetti was coming down and people were rushing about and the noise was terrific. He pulled his sleeve over his fuzzy brows and grinned weakly.

"Eddie," he said. "It worked. My strategy worked. The kid just got warmed up this second half—"

Eddie Manns spat eloquently. "Your strategy, hell! Look over there and you'll see whose strategy it was." He got up and shook himself. "I heard about it during half time but promised not to tell. They got married two weeks ago on the q.t. and tonight he was beating out Bill Cooms for that job with the All American pros at ten grand a year. *Your* strategy, humph! It took a Rawson to tame the kid but it wasn't Chick Rawson."

Rawson felt weak. He turned but he knew what he was going to see. Peggy in that long-legged, homely galoot's arms.

It was what he saw.

THE END

HE GAVE UP BASEBALL

BACK IN the nineteenth century, a big husky lad from Boston came into the Cincinnati training camp and asked the manager for a chance to show his baseball skill. His request was granted. He went out onto the mound and gave such a brilliant performance that he was signed up. As a baseball player this boy had great possibilities.

But just before one of the big games the new pitcher mysteriously disappeared. The manager and his team looked all over for the lad, but to no avail; just when they were about to give up they found him in a prize fighter's camp in Mississippi.

"What's the idea of disappearing like this?" asked the irate manager. "You're supposed to be pitching for us!"

The big lad shook his head. "I'm not playing baseball any more; I'm giving it up. I want to be a fighter."

And a fighter he was! He knocked out his first opponent in the ninth round and went on to become the greatest fighter of his time. Baseball lost a great pitcher, but boxing gained a great champion. He became known as the Boston Strong Boy—the one and only—John L. Sullivan!

Robert Montgomery



PROPER PAIRINGS

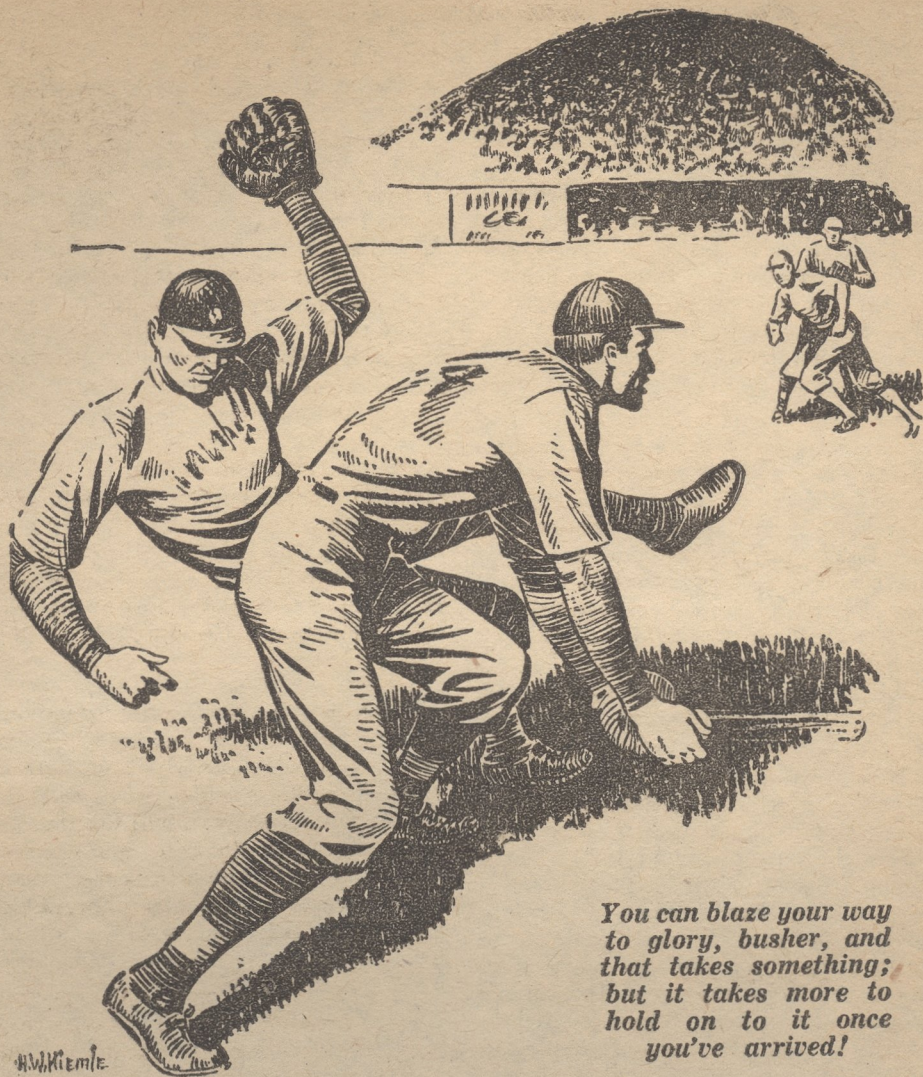
To

"Small But Sporting"



1. Bonneville, Utah.
2. Cooperstown, N. Y.
3. Red Bank, N. J.
4. Steamboat Springs, Colo.
5. Tellico Plains, Tenn.
6. Vandalia, Ohio.
7. Wildwood-by-the-Sea, N. J.
8. Goshen, N. Y.
1. Auto speed tests. On Bonneville's famed salt flats.
2. Baseball. Home of baseball's Hall of Fame and site of first diamond.
3. Power boat racing. The National Sweepstakes are held here.
4. Skiing. One of the nation's skiing meccas and site of many ski meets, jumping and cross-country.
5. Boar hunting. Each November one of the nation's unique sporting events is held here in the Tennessee Mountains of Cherokee National Forest: the hunt for Prussian boars, those fierce tuskers imported years ago from the Black Forest of northern Germany.
6. Trap shooting. Here is the home of the Grand American Trap Shooting Championships, held annually.
7. Marbles. Each year the nation's top teen-age tawsters gather here for the National Marbles Tournament.
8. Harness racing. Here is an historic link in the chain of the Grand Circuit.





*You can blaze your way
to glory, busher, and
that takes something;
but it takes more to
hold on to it once
you've arrived!*

BIG MOMENT

by ROBERT SYDNEY BOWEN

(Author of "Pennant Pacer")

THE SURGING chant rolled back and forth across the flood-lighted surface of Memorial Park like ever mounting storm waves.

*Take him out! We want Ryan!
Take him out! We want Ryan!*

Down on the pitcher's rubber Johnny Berle tried to close his ears to the

chanting, but it was impossible; you just can't be deaf when some six thousand softball fans are yelling for you to be yanked. Definitely not when they are clammering for one Casey Ryan to come in and take your place.

Johnny Berle tried just the same. He took a look around to see that his out-

field was playing the left hand hitter at the plate, took a look at the Milford runner on second, and the Milford runner on third. And lastly he took a look at the score board. It showed that it was the last of the fifth inning, and that there were no outs. The score board also showed that the Preston Bears were leading three runs to none. But, technically, that was not correct, the Milford Lions had already scored two runs this inning that had not been chalked up yet.

Taking a deep breath to steady himself, if such a thing were even remotely possible, Berle placed both feet on the rubber, held the ball between his two hands in front of him, and eyed the opposing batter for the fleeting second allowed by the rules. Then he took his left hand off the ball and came back with his right in a flashing figure-eight wind-up. As his hand came up he let go, and the ball headed toward the plate in a speed curve.

It was a beautiful pitch, heading right where he wanted it to go. Unfortunately, though, it seemed to be right where the batter wanted it. The man swung from his heels, connected solidly, and the ball became a straight white string that stretched dead out to right center, passing no more than six inches above the second baseman's upflung gloved hand. The right fielder nailed it on the second hop and whipped into second to hold the batter to a single. But there was no chance to catch either of the two other runners, and as the crowd went wild, the Milford Lions went ahead in the ball game four to three.

The chant trebled in volume, and as the plate umpire signaled time, Doc Withers, manager-coach of the Bears, walked slowly out to the mound. A dull sort of unreasonable anger burning in him, and his heart sinking lower inch by inch, Johnny Berle waited, his eyes staring unseeing down at the ball in his hands. Coming to a halt a couple of feet away Doc Withers stuck his hands in his hip pockets and grinned kindly. "What's the matter, Johnny?" he asked. "Getting a little tired?"

"Some, Doc," Berle said, still staring

down at the ball. "Guess they're just finding me, that's all."

"Well, what about it?" Withers asked. "Want to try another or not?"

Johnny Berle took a deep breath, started to nod, and then checked himself. The chant booming about the park had mounted to deafening proportions. "No, its not my night, Doc," he suddenly said. "You and the boys want this one bad. Ryan can give it to you. He—he always could."

Doc Withers' eyes narrowed slightly as he shot the pitcher a keen stare.

"What do you mean, he always could?" he demanded. "Ryan's only been with us two weeks. You've been our ace for two years!"

"Nothing," Berle snapped. "Skip it. Bring Ryan in, Doc; he's your man. Besides, they want him, too."

THE MANAGER started to speak but let it go. Instead he turned and waved toward the bull pen. A big built, good looking man out there stopped tossing up pitches to a receiver. As the stands shook down the thunder from the skies Casey Ryan walked slowly, and perhaps a little majestically, in toward the pitching rubber. Once noting that the relief man was on his way, Withers turned back and stared hard at Berle again.

"Anything special wrong, Johnny?" he asked gently. "You worried about Betty? Kid's not born yet, by any chance?"

"No," Berle shook his head. "Not for another week, the Doc says. Betty's fine. So am I. Forget it. Just not my night."

Withers shrugged and let it go at that. Besides, Casey Ryan had reached the mound. The good-looking pitcher grinned at Berle, and clapped him friendly-like on the shoulder. "The bums picking on you, Johnny?" he chuckled. "Well, those things happen. You just go and relax. Me and the boys will still win it for you."

Berle handed him the ball, and returned the grin. "Thanks, and do that, Casey," he said. "Good luck."

"Mutual," Ryan grinned. "And say, how's for inviting me around for dinner some night? I haven't even laid

eyes on Betty since I got back. Pretty as ever, I bet, eh?"

"That's right," Berle murmured. "Sure, Casey. Maybe some night. I'll let you know."

"A date," Ryan nodded. "Now go relax, pal. Everything's going to be all right."

And, it was. Sitting on the bench Johnny Berle watched Ryan make apes out of the first three Milford Lions to face him. Not only did he have a world of speed; Casey Ryan had a twister that could drive a batter nuts, and usually did. And then, as though spurred by the big fellow's perfect pitching, when the Preston players came in for their first half of the sixth they fell on the Milford pitcher like ten ton of brick. When the smoke cleared they had not only tied it up, but had surged out in front by two runs.

Only two runs but they were as good as ten with Casey Ryan on the rubber. In the last of the sixth the big fellow allowed only one scratch single. And when the Bears didn't get any more in their half of the seventh, Casey went out there and tossed up exactly five pitches. Two of them were strikes, and three of them resulted in easy pop-ups to the infield. And that was that. The Preston Bears had still to taste the bitterness of defeat. Two more wins and the State Championship was in the bag, and the team would enter the Eastern Zone Round-Robin on odds-on favorite.

A SHORT time after the game-winning jubilation had died away Johnny Berle was walking from the dressingroom exit over to his parked car when he heard his name called. He turned around to see Doc Withers hurrying toward him. "Do me a favor, will you, Johnny?" the manager panted as he came up.

"Sure thing, Doc," Berle nodded. "Anything you say."

"A lift, that's all," Withers said and dropped into step. "I didn't bring my car tonight, and there's a million waiting for the bus. Of course, though, if you've..."

"Nope, glad to," Johnny said. "Your

diggings are right on my way, so why not?"

A few minutes later Berle tooled his car out of the parking lot onto the street. He drove a couple of blocks in silence, and then turned his head for an instant and grinned at Withers.

"Just two more, hey, Doc?" he said.

"Yeah, but a couple of tough ones,"

Withers murmured with a faint nod.

Then after a pause, "Say, Johnny?"

"Yeah, Doc?"

"I'm not the nosey type, Johnny," the Bears' manager finally said, "but something's happened to you these last couple of weeks. And I don't mean about Betty going to have a baby. Have you run into some trouble, Johnny? And is there anything I can do to help?"

Berle didn't reply until the car had covered another three blocks. And then when he did speak it was as though he were talking to himself. "No, nothing that anybody could help, except myself. And it isn't exactly trouble, either."

"Then what?" Withers probed.

Johnny Berle started to speak, changed his mind, and then tried again. "Were you ever jinxed, Doc?" he blurted out. "I mean somebody really have the Indian sign on you?"

"Often," the Bears' manager laughed. "But not for very long. Who's got it on you, Johnny?"

"Casey Ryan," Berle said after a moment's hesitation. "He's had it on me since we were school kids together right here in Preston."

"Known him that long, eh?" Withers grunted. "I wondered when he spoke about your wife. But just what do you mean, the Indian sign? An old fight, or grudge, or something?"

"No," the softball pitcher shook his head. "Casey and I were always pretty good friends. That's the screwy part. It... Well, it was just that Casey was a natural in everything. Anything I could do, he could always do better. Like the song by that title. I was pretty fair in high school sports, but Casey was always better. I'd pitch a three hitter, and the next time out Casey'd pitch a one hitter. On the football squad I'd win the game with a

sixty yard run. Casey'd run ninety yards and win the *big* game. Like that in everything."

"So?" Withers murmured.

"So it worked into me deep," Berle said a trifle tight lipped. "It just didn't seem any use when Casey was around. I guess the pay-off was the day after Pearl Harbor. I tried to enlist but got turned down, and eventually ended up in a war plant. Casey enlisted, got accepted, and was sent to an officer's training camp. He got medals in action. I pressed out shell casings two thousand miles from any front. And now after six years he's back, and. . . Well, you saw what happened tonight."

"It just wasn't your night," Withers murmured. "You said so."

"It was Casey Ryan," Johnny Berle grated. "Back to put the Indian sign on me all over again. Knowing he was there ready to step in and do it so much better just made me lose my stuff. I. . . Guess all this sounds kind of silly to you, eh?"

"Yes and no," Doc Withers said quietly. "You just didn't try to shake off the past, Johnny. Things change, and people, too. You and Casey are really opposites. You're steady, dependable, thorough. He's smooth lighting, the speed ball. But here today, and gone tomorrow; he admits it. A rolling stone."

"But what a polish!" Berle grunted.

"Think so, Johnny? Add things up. You have a good job, a home, a wonderful wife, and a baby coming. What's Ryan got? Nothing but world-wide experience, and the natural ability to do anything well. But not the will to keep on doing anything well. Man alive, what else do you want, Johnny?"

"To top Casey just once," Berle said grimly. "Don't ask, why? I just do. To satisfy something inside me, I guess."

Nuts!" Withers snorted. "You've already topped him in a dozen things. So forget that crazy Indian sign stuff!"

For a moment Johnny Berle stared hard at the road ahead. "I wonder," he presently murmured. "I wonder."

"Stop wondering!" Doc Withers snapped. "I'm telling you it's a fact. And I only hope that one of these days and soon, that something will

happen that'll make you realize it *is* so. Now, let me off at the next corner. See you Wednesday night, and give my best to Betty, Johnny."

"Sure will, and thanks, Doc," Berle said as he slowed down. "Could be you've given me something to think over."

"I know I have!" the other said gruffly as he climbed out of the car. "But *you're* the one who has to do the thinking. Night, Johnny."

"Night, Doc. See you Wednesday."

* * *

WEDNESDAY evening was made to order for just about anything anybody would want to do outdoors. It wasn't chilly and it wasn't sweltering either. Added to that there was a great big full golden moon that made it almost unnecessary to turn on the floodlights. And so the weather, plus the fact that the Preston Bears were tangling with the Bakersfield Owls who had only dropped one out of seven games, sent some nine thousand odd fans through the Memorial Park turnstiles.

Sitting at one end of the bench Johnny Berle was absently counting the house, and thinking of various other things, when Casey Ryan suddenly dropped down on the bench beside him. The big fellow clapped one hand down on his knee and grinned at him broadly.

"What's the matter, Johnny-boy?" He boomed. "Wondering how you're going to pay the light and phone bill this month?"

"Those and a dozen other bills," Berle grinned back at him. "How do you feel? Really going to give it to them, huh?"

"Sure, just more bums," Ryan grunted and waved a hand toward the Owls bench. "But do you know something? You're a change boy, Johnny."

"Am I?"

"A fact! Guess that's what married life does to guys. Always said a guy was a sucker to get hitched before he'd been around. Not that Betty isn't a sweet kid, you understand. But look at all the years you've been in a rut. A rut right here in this town."

"And you?" Johnny asked slowly.

Casey Ryan chuckled and shook hands with himself. "Me?" he echoed. "I've seen things, boy. And been places. No dog collar around my neck. I've lived, I have, and I'm going to go on living. Life's short, you know. Too bad you didn't get wise to yourself before it was too late. Me, maybe I'll stick around for a year or so, and try out the crop. Then on I'll go. Just like that. Its living, boy!"

"Could be," Johnny murmured and stared into space.

"Is!" Ryan said emphatically. "Tell you what, Johnny. One of these nights maybe you can slip out and we'll have an old fashioned rowdy—dow. Right?"

"Sure, maybe," Berle nodded. "I'll let you know."

Casey Ryan stood up, looked down at Johnny Berle, and shook his head sadly. "Oh, brother!" he rumbled "How some guys love life!"

And with a nod of his head, and a careless wave of his hand, Casey Ryan walked over toward the playing field.

Some five minutes later the game got under way with the Bears taking the field, and the visiting Owls taking their first cracks at bat. For a brief moment while Casey Ryan checked the positions of his infield and outfield, a still-ed hush settled down over the park. And then it was shattered by an eager roar when Casey took his stance and made his first pitch. A strike, swinging. A ball on the outside, and then a second strike swinging. The next pitch was a floater, and the over-eager Owl at the plate tried to belt it a mile. Instead he rolled to Casey who scooped it up with flawless grace and under-handed it to first with steps to spare.

The next Owl batter was the slugger type, and Ryan made a monkey out of him. At any rate he made the man pop high to the third baseman. And the third hitter up didn't do any better, even though he did work Casey up to the three and two count. He drove a clothesline ball right at the second baseman who didn't have to move a step to either side. The crowd howled its pleasure, and Casey Ryan grinned and touched the peak of his cap as he went trotting down off the mound.

IN THEIR half of the first the Bears quickly showed the nine thousand odd fans in the stands that they were wearing their hitting clothes. The first Bear up got on with a single past short. And the next Bear up scooted him around to third with another single down the first baseline. For the next couple of moments they had a little huddle on the pitching mound, and then the results of that huddle were tried out on the third Bear to step into the batter's box. It didn't work out so well for the visiting team. A triple to deep center drove two runs across the dish to break the scoring ice.

The fourth Bear up tried hard but the best he could do was bang a scorcher toward third. The visiting third baseman played it in lightning style, made the Bear stay on the bag, and then threw the runner out at first. A couple of minutes later, though, the Bear on third strolled home when the fourth hit of the inning went for a double to deep left center. And that man scored, too, shortly afterward when a beautiful single went screaming over the first baseman's head.

That was all for the hit-thumped Owl in the box. A new twirler came in for the visitors, and after five warm-ups he tried his luck. It was good. A high foul was caught for the second out. And a towering fly to center was pulled in for the third out.

And that first inning just about set up the picture. Pitching almost perfect ball Casey Ryan toyed with the Owl batters. In the second he allowed one hit. In the third he allowed two hits. One of which, though, went for a home run. In the fourth he blanked the visitors. And in the fifth he let up a little and the Owls were able to collect three hits for one run. In the meantime, though, the Bears had not shed their hitting garments. They picked up two in the third, one in the fourth, and three in the fifth, to take a commanding lead of ten to two.

Just before the second Bear went down in the last of the fifth Casey Ryan suddenly turned to Doc Withers, sitting on the bench beside him, and pointed across him to Johnny Berle sitting on the other side.

"Look, Doc, I've had my fun," he

said. "How's for Johnny finishing? He looks like a little fun wouldn't hurt him, either."

Doc Withers didn't reply. He turned his head and grinned at Berle. "Feel warmed up enough?" he asked quietly.

Johnny Berle frowned and started to shake his head. And then suddenly he was conscious of Doc Withers' almost imperceptible nod. Instantly the old familiar stab of unreasonable anger shot through him. He slid out of his jacket, grabbed his glove, and stood up.

"Sure, why not?" he said tightly. "Casey's put the thing on ice, hasn't he? Hey, Max! Grab a glove!"

And as both Doc Withers and Casey Ryan stared a little pop eyed, Berle went loping down to the bullpen with Max to receive his warm-ups.

* * *

A FEW MINUTES later the final out of the inning was made, and the Bears went trotting out onto the field. And as Johnny Berle walked slowly out to the mound the PA system blared out the change in the Bears' line-up. The echoer of the announcement died away and then a faint murmur of applause rippled around through the packed stands. It told a story all its own, and Johnny's face flushed red and hot as he fingered the ball and waited for Carson, the catcher, to finish putting on his tools.

Presently all was set and Johnny made his first pitch. It was high and wide, almost wild. A scattering of iron hearted fans hooted, but Johnny shut his ears to it and pitched again. It was a strike the batter missed by a foot. However, he caught hold of the next one. It was a scorcher toward the hole between third and short. The Bears shortstop's mother must have once been scared by a rabbit the man went into the hole after that ball so fast. He nailed it and with one foot off the ground threw a perfect strike to first to get the runner by half a step. The crowd really cheered that one, and Johnny Berle silently but fervently joined in.

The next batter was the opposing pitcher and after it had gone to three

and two Johnny finally got him to miss the third strike. That breathing spell, however, was all too short. The next two Owls up connected for singles. And then to really give the Owl fans something to cheer about, the next man lifted Johnny's second pitch up into the right field stands.

Burning with anger at Casey Ryan, at Doc Withers, at himself, and at practically everybody else in the world, Johnny took the new ball thrown out, rubbed it up a little, and then took his stance on the rubber. His first pitch had blazing speed, but it was a ball. His next went through the strike zone without a swing. His third was foul tipped. And the next was cracked right back at him. He caught it, dropped it, but picked it up and made the throw in time. And another smattering of applause greeted him as he walked off the mound to the bench.

Casey Ryan greeted him with a broad grin and a shaking of his head. "What's the matter, boy, you sore at somebody?" Ryan asked. "Don't try to kill the guys. Have *fun* with them, like I thought you wanted to."

"Okay, I will," Berle grunted and sat down on the bench as close to hating Casey Ryan as he ever had in all their long acquaintance.

Perhaps tired of slugging Owl pitching, or perhaps content with their ten runs in the bank, the Bears went out in one, two, three order in their half. And then Johnny Berle walked out to the mound again.

Unless big things happened the ball game was over for the Owls. And it was instantly evident that they all realized that only too well. The first man up dropped a perfect bunt that Berle couldn't find the handle on for a moment, but wouldn't have been able to make the put out even if he had. The next Owl up choked as though he was going to bunt, and then suddenly swung for the seats. The ball he belted didn't reach the seats but it went far enough between center and right to score the Owl on first and carry him safely into third.

The crowd sensing bigger things coming was in an uproar. Standing just back of the mound, but watching the

man on third, Johnny took his time. Then he stepped onto the rubber with both feet, poised, and made his pitch. The batter promptly cracked it over second to drive in the Owls' seventh run. And when that run scored, Doc Withers came ambling out to the mound. "Johnny, unwind," he said quietly. "Get in there and show them. You know you can."

"Like an echo for Casey, eh?" Berle snapped.

Doc Withers' eyes flashed, and then he smiled. "Sure an echo for Casey, if you like," he said. "But pitch! The boys want to win. Remember?"

Johnny Berle felt the blood flooding into his face, but it was not being sent there by anger. He grinned a little sheepishly. "Okay, sorry, Doc," he said. "I'll pitch. I acted like a heel."

"No," Withers said, as he turned to return to the bench. "Just not bright about some things. All right, Johnny."

And it was all right, too. A knotty tightness taken out of him by Doc Withers' quiet words, Johnny presently faced the next Owl batter and fanned him on three pitched balls. The next man he made rap one across the right side of the infield. And the Bears second baseman seeming to sense the hit was in like a flash to scoop up the ball, and whip to short covering second for the force. And the shortstop in turn drilled the ball back to first to complete the double play, put out the side, and rap up the game for the Bears.

WHEN THE last out was made the Bear fans went crazy with joy, and the Bear players went even crazier. All of them pounded Johnny Berle on the back, and pounded each other on the back. The Bears' dressingroom under the stands soon became a madhouse of riotous joy. Johnny took little if any part in it, however. He showered and dressed, and slipped out as quickly as he could. Resentment toward Doc Withers and Casey Ryan still burned deep within him. Toward the big fellow for so "graciously" handing him an eight run lead, and telling him to go have fun because the game was on ice. And toward Doc

Withers for nodding him to go out and show the crowd that he really could match Casey's pitching.

An unreasonable anger, perhaps, but he felt it just the same. So he slipped away from Memorial Park as soon as he could and went home to his wife and other things. The game was won, and history. The next game, the real big one, wasn't until Sunday, four days hence. He should be able to forget a lot of things in four days!

The big game of the season was to be played against the Stamford Eagles, a team that had won the Eastern Zone Round-Robin last year, and, like the Preston Bears, had won every one of their nine games played so far. It was scheduled for two o'clock Sunday afternoon in Memorial Park. Early Saturday evening, though, every thought Johnny Berle had about the morrow's game disappeared in thin smoke. And it was because the stork arrived over Johnny's house, and began circling slowly downward. Circling downward ever so slowly!

All Saturday night and well after Sunday's sun had started its climb up through the blue, Johnny paced the ten by twelve waitingroom in the Preston Hospital. Eyes bleary, his face haggard, and a pumping lump of ice where his heart used to be, he clutched at every nurse, intern, or doctor who happened to pass the open door. All of them, though, just gave him a smile, and a few soothing, comforting words, and walked on.

All of them until ten o'clock when a fat, smiling nurse he had never seen came in and told him the good news. He was the daddy of a fine eight pound boy, and both mother and son were doing splendidly. And he could see them both presently, too. But it was another hour and a half before "presently" arrived and Johnny was allowed to go upstairs and see for himself that truth was truth. And then after ten lightning fast minutes he was shooed out of the hospital.

HE LEFT walking on air, and traveled that same way to his house. There he stripped, showered hot and cold, shaved, redressed, and grabbed a quick bite in the kitchen before going

out to Memorial Park. No sooner had he entered the dressingroom than Doc Withers grabbed him by the arm.

"Johnny, where you been?" the manager demanded. "Thought you'd decided not to show up, and I've been phoning your house. What happened?"

"What happened, Doc?" Berle shouted and threw his arms about Withers. "Greatest thing in the world. I'm a daddy, Doc. Hey everybody! I'm the daddy of an eight pound boy!"

Every player on the team crowded around to shake hands, and make cracks about the usual cigars. The last one to shake Johnny's hand was Casey Ryan, and although there was a broad smile on the big fellow's face there was a funny look in his eyes.

"Daddy of a boy, huh, Johnny?" he said as he squeezed hard. "That's swell. Why, you didn't even tell me! But its fine, boy, its swell. Congratulations!"

"Thanks," Johnny grinned, and then turned to Withers. "Hey, Doc!" he cried eagerly, "I'm pitching this one, eh?"

A shadow seemed to slide across the manager's face and settle in his eyes. He shook his head. "No, Johnny," he said quietly. "Not starting, anyway. You look all in, boy, and you should be. I'm starting Ryan, and...and we'll see. These Eagles are really tough babies."

A lot of sunshine seemed to ooze out of Johnny Berle, but he kept a smile on his face.

"Okay, Doc, you're the boss," he said, and walked over to his locker.

"Come on everybody, pep it up!" Doc Withers barked almost harshly. "Let's get out there."

Instantly the general babble, and preparation activities were resumed. But a few moments later a wild howl of pain suddenly rose up above everything else. Everybody stopped what he was doing and turned his head. The focal point of all eyes was big Casey Ryan who stood in front of his locker clutching his right hand with his left, and his face twisted with pain. An instant later general paralysis was snapped, and Doc Withers who was closet reached the big fellow first.

"What the devil, Ryan?" he choked.

"My hand!" Ryan groaned through clenched teeth. "Slammed the damn locker door on it. What a dumb thing!"

As the big fellow spoke he took away his left hand and held up the right. Clear across the four fingers, between the first and middle knuckles was an ugly red crease. Ryan wiggled his fingers a little, but he did so with his teeth clenched, and his lips back flat.

"Nothing broken, I guess," he mumbled. "but, brother, that can hurt!"

His face a little white and tight, Doc Withers peered down at the creased fingers, and then let out a long sigh. "Well, that's that," he said as though to himself. Then to Ryan, "Go let the cold water run on them. I'll put some stuff on, and bandage them up in a minute."

Casey Ryan nodded dully, and wiggled his fingers a little more. "I can try it, Doc," he said, "Maybe I could go, but I don't know."

"Not with those fingers!" Withers grunted. "They're beginning to bleed. Go let the cold water run on them."

Without another word the big fellow walked over to the sink. Withers stared at him a moment and then looked at Berle.

"I guess its you after all, Johnny," he said quietly. "And *only* you. All right. let's get out of here before one of us gets killed!"

FORTY FIVE minutes later the all important game got underway. It being the game to decide the State Championship a coin was tossed. The Eagles won and took the field first. Their pitcher was a long, lean redhead down on the program as, Dutch Holland. However, everybody who followed softball knew Dutch Holland, and well they should. For three years straight he had topped all other pitchers in the State circuit. And this year was turning out to be the best one of all. He had pitched six of the Eagles nine wins, and in those six games a total of only three runs had been scored against him.

And so when Dutch Holland stepped up on the mound a tingling, expectant

hush settled down over the fifteen thousand fans who had paid, pushed, shoved, and fought their way into the stands. But the instant the Bears' lead-off man had swung at Holland's first pitch and missed, the tingling hush was blasted by a mighty roar. The roar increased when the batter swung and missed the second pitch. And it went rolling far out over the countryside when a beautiful pitch that just nicked the outside corner was called the third strike.

The second Bear was at the plate for only one pitch. He swung, connected, but simply popped weakly to third. And the third Bear batter had only slightly better luck, but with the same result. That was that, and Dutch Holland received a mighty ovation as he walked slowly, and nonchalantly toward the Eagles bench.

"Okay, Johnny boy!" Casey Ryan barked and gestured with his bandaged hand. "Let that new kid of yours ride every pitch. Get in there, now!"

Berle nodded, but didn't say anything. Throat tight, and dry as a bone, he walked out to the pitcher's mound. His name had of course long since been announced, but a confused hub-hub rippled through the packed stands as he walked to the mound. He was conscious of it, but for the first time in three weeks it had no effect upon him. And the instant his hands were on the ball the tightness left his throat, and a strange soothing, strength giving warmth surged through him. It was almost as though a great crisis had been reached and passed, and he had his second wind.

A few moments later he made his first pitch to the Eagle lead-off batter. It was a clean strike. His second pitch was a strike, too, and the crowd started to shake itself up. When the batter missed the third strike, the fans really woke up and showed their appreciation. But it was not quite as loud as that shown Dutch Holland. That, however, was only the beginning for Johnny Berle. What he could do to one man he could do to two. And he did. Just three pitches, and all of them swung at, and missed. And as though to prove it was not just something that you did with mirrors Johnny fanned

the third Eagle on four pitches. So it really was roaring, booming thunder of applause that accompanied Johnny Berle back to the bench.

THE SECOND inning was almost like seeing yesterday's movie. The Bears went down in one, two, three order, but all three outs were made on hit balls. The Eagles didn't quite match that. They went down on one strike out, and two easy flies hit to the outfield.

The third inning went into history with still a batter not reaching first. But in their half of the fourth Tip Carson, the Bears' chunky catcher, got the first hit of the game. It was a clean single dead over the first baseman's hit, and you would have thought it a game winning home run from the bellow of the crowd. However, that was all there was to it. Dutch Holland already had a strike-out in the bag, and the next two Bear hitters popped to the infield leaving Carson to die on first.

Stung by that single hit against their pitcher the Eagles went up to the plate and swung savagely for the seats. But there was a softball pitching master out on the mound. A pitcher who that day had been touched by greatness. And as a result the ball just wasn't where the Eagle batters thought it to be. And so the visitors went hitless for the fourth straight inning.

As a matter of fact that was the story for both teams in the fifth inning, and in the sixth. And then came the seventh. The first Bear up tried hard but got fanned again. And then Parker, the Bears first baseman, exploded the entire park on Holland's second pitch. It came in right where he wanted it, and he hung out the clothes down the left field foul line, and the ball hit after one hop against the wall. By the time it was returned to the infield Parker was on second base, and dancing up and down like a kid at his first Xmas tree.

That brought up Tracey, the Bears shortstop, who hadn't got a hit in the last three games. But the cagey Withers played the hunch all out and sent him up there anyway. The hunch paid off. Tracey belted the third pitch right through the middle and out over

second base. And Tracey, the speed merchant of the team, flew around third and came in to score the first run. The crowd went nuts, and a goodly number of them fully expected to see Dutch Holland blow sky high. However, the lanky, lean Eagle proved in short order his right to be listed with the great. With wild bedlam exploding all about him he calmly struck out the next two Bears to face him, and ended the first half of the seventh.

Three outs to go! The words drilled and spun about in Johnny Berle's brain as he walked out to the mound. His infielders yelled things at him, and so did the others who remained on the bench. But they were sounds that simply beat against his ears and died away unregistered. It was almost as though he were in a world of his own. A world of his own that had only one other person in it. The Eagle batter stepping into the batter's box and swinging his war club. Just the two of them. Seemingly nobody else in a world of volcanic thunder.

WITH A strength in him that seemed even greater than he had possessed in the first inning, Johnny made his first pitch. He saw the man swing, saw the bat hit the ball, and then it was arcing down out of the sky and into his hands. The second Eagle batted left but he was no different to Berle. Just another person to be removed from this roaring world of his own. He pitched and once again saw the bat connect with the ball. The white sphere smacked the ground five feet into front of him, and came zinging up into his hands. Its force sent him back a step, but he retained his balance, half turned and threw to first for the out.

One more! One more *big* one! The hitter batted right, and his face was a mask of savage determination, but Johnny Berle didn't even notice. He calmly took his windup and came up to let go with everything in the world on the pitch. The batter lunged mightily, and got his wood on it. But only a little piece. The ball went straight up, sky high. Carson flung off his

mask, backed up three steps and waited. So did fifteen thousand breathless fans. So, maybe, did the entire world. And then the ball came down to plunk into Carson's mitt and stay there!

What happened in the next half hour in Memorial Park, and in the Bears' dressingroom, cannot possibly be recorded. At the end of that time, however, Johnny Berle suddenly came down out of the pink clouds to notice that one Preston Bear was missing. He grabbed Doc Withers' arm next to him.

"Hey, where's Casey?" he cried. "He's the guy I've really got to thank!"

"I know," Withers said quietly. "But Casey ducked, just as that last out was made. He wanted to catch a train. He's leaving town."

"Huh," Berle gulped. "Leaving town, Doc?"

"I guess he realizes it isn't his home town any more, like it is yours, Johnny," the manager said. "He gave me a message to give you. He told me to tell you he was wrong. That you're the one who's really living. That mean anything?"

Johnny Berle didn't say anything.

"It will, when you've given it some thought, Johnny," Doc Withers said quietly. "I think that when Casey saw your face when you sprang the news about your kid he realized for the first time in his life how truly insignificant his own had been. So he wanted to get away. Maybe to start fresh. I don't know. But Casey Ryan is one white man down underneath, Johnny."

"Sure he is," Berle blinked. "I never thought he wasn't."

"He didn't know that I saw him," Withers went on as though he hadn't stopped. "But I did. He didn't want the team to think he'd let them down on purpose. But he *did* want to give you your big moment!"

"Come again, Doc?" Berle echoed with a puzzled frown.

"What he did," Withers said slowly. "Sometime, Johnny, when you've nothing to do, try slamming a locker door on your right hand....*by accident!*"

THE END

Horsehide Doctor

by ZENE TUTTLER

(Author of "Smash That Apple")

"TAKE HIM out!" came a lone wail from the stands. The cry was not taken up, although the fans echoed it in silence. They just did not have the heart to demand the removal of hard working Red Harkness, former ace of the Ranger mound staff. They sat there and suffered in silence with Harkness.

Manager Bill Flanders sat on the bench and suffered, too. But not in silence. "That big bum!" he growled. "Look at him cracking up again in the late innings. And all that's wrong with him is his head!"

It was five to four, Rangers, in the last of the eighth. The broadshouldered redhead stood on the mound with a tired, strained face. He wiped a soiled sleeve across his sweat streaked face, stepped on the rubber and pitched. The batter slammed the ball into deep left for a triple and three men dented the plate.

That was all for Harkness. Flanders flagged him in and Harkness shuffled to the bench and slumped down with harassed eyes. It was tough to be an ace one year and a bum the next. He had tried everything for his arm, but it was no go. And as Harkness went, so went the Rangers. It baffled Flanders. X-rays revealed nothing wrong with his arm. Harkness' only explanation was his shoulder seemed to tighten up in the late innings.

Doc Dooley, lanky left fielder, plopped down beside Flanders and the Ranger manager scowled at him. "Take the confidence out of a ball player and what have you got?" snapped Flanders.

"A bum," yawned Dooley.

"Yeah. Only Red's trying and you ain't. Take the hustle out of a ball player and what have you got?" Dooley frowned at Flanders. "You got a

lazy, no good loafer who drags the team down with him."

"Aw, lay off!" protested Dooley. "You know I like the game, but I don't like it well enough to get out there and kill myself each day."

"Sure," said Flanders. "And I suppose you think I'm having a lot of fun out here every day trying to meet that payroll and trying to meet the bank payments. You know what's going to happen if we don't kick up some more gold dust along with some pennant dust."

Flanders relapsed into a moody silence. Doc Dooley blinked at him startled. Everybody knew the setup and Bill Flanders' plight with the Rangers. As half owner of the Class B club, he had sunk every penny he owned in the club and it was banked to the hilt with loans which had to be met that year. He had put a thirty grand price on Harkness and the big league Sox had been interested until Harkness started to flop in the late innings. It left Flanders in a bad spot. The Ranger pennant chances had flopped with Harkness and the fans were staying away in crowds.

Flanders stared at the diamond with empty eyes. Harkness and Dooley could put the Rangers back in the pennant race; it was only August. It was almost as bad with Dooley as with Harkness. The outfielder had come up to the Rangers fresh out of college three years ago. He had signed for one year explaining he needed some money to equip his dental office. But he had stayed on with the Rangers, practising dentistry winters and playing ball summers. The big league Sox could use a good outfielder, too, and the only thing that kept Dooley out of the big leagues was his lack of hustle.

Flanders kicked at the dugout flooring. The Ranger team was

floundering around on the pennant sea without a rudder. And when it went down, everything Flanders owned would go down with it. It was hell to have to take it lying down.

The Rangers went down one, two, three in the ninth and left the field on the short end of a 7 to 5 score. Flanders got off the bench bitterly. He was licked. He had coaxed the Rangers, he had pleaded with them, and he had driven them. But the Rangers kept losing ground. It harassed Bill Flanders; it tortured him and kept him from getting his proper sleep.

IT SOURED his temper next day on the field. He sat on the bench stewing to slap a stiff fine on someone. The Rangers went through practise like a bunch of blue ribbon lambs and you cannot fine ball players for being well mannered. He scowled as Doc Dooley rushed to the plate and cuffed three balls over the left field wall. His eyes bugged as Dooley grabbed a glove and trotted out to left field. Dooley did not cuff balls over the left field wall and Dooley did not hasten out to left field to shag flies.

Harkness blinked from the bench and said, "The sun get him?"

Flanders waited until he came in and said, "You feel all right, Doc."

"Yeah," he said and trotted briskly to take the field for the game.

Flanders shook his head. It didn't make sense to him. The Blues went down in order in the first inning and the Rangers came up. Two men were out and none on when Dooley strode to the plate. He singled to center and pranced off first base. Dooley went down to second on the first pitch and the startled catcher heaved the ball into center field. It was unheard of. Dooley had not stolen a base in three years!

Dooley pulled up at third and the fans broke loose with clattering applause, then went back to sleep. Flanders swore softly. The pitcher worked the count to three and two on the hitter, then stepped on the rubber for the money pitch. Suddenly a

figure in the Ranger home white streaked for the plate. The pitcher jerked, hesitated, then hurriedly threw the ball home.

Dooley slid under the high throw in a cloud of dust and the plate umpire held his palms down. The fans roared approval. Dooley jumped to his feet and trotted towards the bench. The stunned Blues stared after him. The Rangers blinked at him. Flanders scowled as Dooley sat on the bench, drummed his fingers on the wood and fidgeted around brimming with nervous energy.

Flanders said, "You sure you're all right, Doc?"

"Certainly!" snapped Dooley.

Flanders turned away in resignation. First the mystery of Harkness' arm had come up to plague him. Now his star left fielder, noted for his quiet and easy going manner, had turned into a jitterbug. Flanders shook his grizzled head in despair.

The game went into the ninth inning with Dooley's lone run the only score of the game. The first Blue hitter walked and Flanders squirmed. The next man sacrificed and the fans groaned. The all too familiar pattern of the Rangers losing in the late innings was taking shape again. The pitcher bore down and struck out the next hitter and the stands clamored to get the last man. Flanders cupped his hands and leaned forward.

The pitcher gave it everything he had. He ran the count to two and two, then cut loose with his Sunday pitch. The batter's shoulders spun and he hooked a terrific line drive into left field for a sure extra base hit. Out in left field Dooley sprinted for the ball like a madman. He did not have a chance for it and if he tried a shoestring catch, both men would score and the Blues would win. Closer, closer raced Dooley. Lower, lower swooped the ball until it was a bare six inches off the ground. Dooley left his feet in a might dive, clutched at the ball, skidded across the grass ten feet on his belly and came to a halt holding the white pellet aloft.

The stands roared approval. Flan-

ders gulped and breathed, "Holy Helen, what a catch!"

Dooley trotted in with an ovation from the crowd. His face was grave, his jaw green with grass stain. He accepted congratulations with a serious nod, then headed for the clubhouse. Red Harkness scratched his head and muttered, "What's got into him?"

"You tell me," gritted Flanders. "But whatever it is, I wish some more bums on this would catch it!"

DOOLEY repeated his madcap running on the basepaths next day and the Rangers finally caught fire from his spark. They ran wild and swamped the demoralized Blues, 15 to 3. Dooley gave no explanation for his sudden transformation. Flanders knew it was useless asking him, but tailed him waiting for a hint. He did not want that spark to disappear as fast as it had appeared.

He got it next day. It was Harkness' turn to take the mound. Dooley rolled a white pill from a small bottle in the dugout before the game and popped the pill into his mouth. Harkness gaped at him.

"What you got there, Doc?" asked Harkness.

"Oh, just a Vitamin pill."

"Whazzat?"

"Gives you pep and energy. If you're suffering from a vitamin deficiency in your diet. Stops that all fagged out feeling. Makes you last longer without getting tired." Dooley trotted out on the field with Harkness staring after him.

Harkness blinked at Flanders. "Hey, maybe that stuff will work for me, too!" He waited until Dooley came back to the bench and said, "Tell me some more about those pills."

Dooley shrugged. "When a guy gets listless, sometimes it is due to a Vitamin deficiency. Like it restored the pep and energy in my case. Why, I feel so energetic now I could run the bases twice to score instead of once."

"Izzatso?" said Harkness. "You— you suppose it might help me last a full game if I tried some?"

"Well, they can't hurt you. And they might do you a lot of good. Here, have one. Better take two."

Flanders watched frowning as Harkness swallowed two pills. The pills. The big redhead said, "Doc, I'll never forget you if they work."

"Forget it right now!" snapped Dooley. "Dont tell anyone about them. The papers will razz us out of the league if they get wind of it. Let us keep this to ourselves. We don't want enemy ball players to know about it, do we?"

"Gosh no!" said Harkness.

Big Red Harkness took the mound for the first inning and Flanders kept his fingers crossed. He did not now just how much Dooley's pills would help Harkness, but he was hoping for the best. If those pills failed to do any good, Flanders' last hope of salvaging the ball club was gone.

Harkness was hot on the mound and mowed down the Cougars for six innings. His fast ball never was faster and his hooks never broke sharper. But that was nothing, Flanders kept telling himself, Harkness always went good in the early innings. It was the last three innings which would tell the story. Would Harkness weaken again and crack to lose the game as he had been doing all season?

The Rangers led 4 to 1 at the start of the seventh, Flanders said worriedly, "How's the arm, Red?"

Harkness felt it, frowned, then said, "It—it feels okay."

"Of course it feels okay," scoffed Dooley. "Aren't you taking those pills?"

Harkness got the Cougars in order for the seventh. They threatened in the eighth, scored one run, but Harkness got by with no further damage. That did it, that convinced Harkness. He allowed a hit to start the ninth, then turned back the next three batters and the Rangers were in. They whooped it up around him after the game. The mighty Harkness had come back! Flanders grinned. Once again the Rangers were a pennant threat. Harkness beamed at Dooley, but Dooley's face was blank and it worried Flanders. Dooley did not

act as if he thought the Rangers had a pennant chance. He acted as if he were still doubtful about Harkness.

Harkness kept his end of the bargain with Dooley and did not tell a soul about the pills. He told the whole city. When Flanders showed up on field next day, each Ranger was lined up with a bottle of pills and posing for news photographers. Dooley glowered at Harkness and the big grin left the redhead's face.

"Aw, Doc, I only wanted to let the rest of the team in on it."

"Yeah? Well, where is our advantage when other teams use them? And just wait until you read the papers tonight!"

Flanders shooed the reporters and photographers off the field. He was worried about the razzberry the press would give the team. He tried to drive it out of his mind as the Rangers went to work on the Cougars, but it kept plaguing him. Doc Dooley could take the newspaper riding, but Harkness was very impressionable. And if anything happened to Harkness now, it would kill the Rangers' last chance of overtaking the Mohawks. Even a lopsided victory that afternoon over the Cougars did not remove his fears.

Instead, the publicity clicked the turnstiles. The press compared the Ranger dash and derring do on the basepaths to Billy Southworth's 1942 Cardinals who had won the World Series after taking daily doses of vitamins. The fans swarmed into the park and it brought a beatific smile to Flanders' moon face.

THE RETURN of Harkness to his old form and Doc Dooley's exploits on the bases and in the field was the tonic the Rangers needed. They took up the chase for first place with a hue and cry that echoed in the Mohawk stronghold. They climbed into third place from the second division, then clamored and threatened dire results when the two teams met in their four game series early in September. The Mohawks threatened right back and it brought a capacity jammed park for each game. The Rangers impatiently

brushed aside their preliminary opposition and the end of August found them in second place just two games behind the leading Mohawks.

Flanders uttered a silent prayer that the Rangers would not crack now. If they could only keep it up another two weeks. They had to keep it up. The fans had to keep filling the ball park. It was Flanders' last chance. And Red Harkness had to keep going strong. There would be a Sox scout in the stands for the Mohawk games.

The Mohawks hit town early in September with a fanfare from the press. This was it, the series which would reveal which was the better team. The four games which would determine the eventual pennant winner. The stands were jammed with rabid fans for the first game. They howled approval as the Rangers walloped the ball in batting practise and clamored for the game to get underway. The Mohawks went through their preliminary paces grimly. The Rangers cavorted around the field.

Manager Bull Rand of the Mohawks waddled to the Ranger dugout and shook a finger at Flanders. "How come your bunch of pill sniffers think they're gonna take us, dope?" he said.

Flanders jabbed a hand in the direction of the scoreboard. "Yonder lies the payoff, slug. Let us not bandy words in idle chatter."

"Yeah? Well, I hope you feel that way after the game," smirked Rand. He turned and walked away.

Flanders frowned after him. "What's he getting at? Seemed too darn cocky to suit me. Acts like he not only swallowed the canary, but the goldfish, too!"

Harkness said, "Where's Lew? Time to take that pill." He bellowed towards the clubhouse for the trainer. He called again and there was no answer. Flanders joined him. Still no answer. Dooley started towards the clubhouse when suddenly the trainer appeared, his face ashen with alarm.

"Gone!" he exclaimed. "Every last pill swiped from the clubhouse!"

"What?" echoed Harkness.

"Somebody broke in the clubhouse

last night and raided my storage locker. They took all the pills we had in the office, too."

Flanders shot an ugly look at the Mohawk dugout. "That louse! I should have known he had something up his sleeve. But that's okay, Lew. Call up the nearest drugstore and buy a supply."

"I already tried!" wailed Lew. "Every store in town is sold out. Won't be able to get any until *tomorrow*. And we can't get any delivered from the nearest city until the game will be almost over."

"We're sunk," groaned Harkness. "Licked!"

Flanders face hardened. "No, we're not! I kinda think Rand knows where we can get plenty. And not far from here, either. I'm gonna beat his ears off until he tells me what he did with our pills." The Rangers growled approval and formed around him glaring at the Mohawk dugout. Flanders started towards the enemy bench with the Ranger team at his heels. It looked like the beginning of a battle royal.

DOC DOOLEY grabbed Flanders' arm and yanked him to a stop. "Cut it!" he snapped. "What do you think the papers will say about a team that couldn't play without its pills. And the fans? Can't you see that's Rand's game? He's waiting for a riot to start and the whole story will hit the papers. We'll be laughed out of the league. So leave him alone."

"But how can I last the full game today without my pills?" protested Harkness.

Dooley hesitated, then said, "I have some hidden in my locker. I'll go get them."

He trotted to the clubhouse and returned with a small bottle containing white pills and handed it to Harkness. Harkness grinned fondly at the bottle, took one out, then gulped it down. Then he went to the mound for his warmup pitches.

Harkness was hot on the mound. He did not know about the Sox scout in the stands, but Flanders knew. Flanders gripped the edge of the

bench and breathed a silent prayer that Harkness would not fail him today. He could get thirty grand for Harkness, delivery next spring. It would take him out of the red and the crowds for the stretch drive and possible pennant playoff would put him in the solid black for next year. If Harkness collapsed, everything collapsed.

Harkness set down the Mohawks runless for three frames then they scored twice in the fourth on reckless baserunning. The Rangers shoved their first run across in the sixth and it was Mohawks 2, Rangers 1, with the crowd yelling for a home team rally. Harkness seemed to improve as the game went on and retired the side in order in the seventh. A Ranger was thrown out at the plate trying to score from first on a long single and the home team half and the game went into the eighth with the Rangers one big run behind.

"Get that run!" muttered Flanders on the bench. "They gotta get that run. And one more besides!" He banged a fist into his hand for emphasis.

The fans had the same sentiments, but they were saying them so loud the players had to shout to each other on the field, the coaches had to cup their hands to give instructions to baserunners. Both teams sat silent in the dugout because the stands were such a bedlam of noise no one could hear anyone else talking.

Harkness got the first two men in the eighth. The next batter singled and the next man was safe on the shortstop's error. The Mohawk third base coach jumped up and down like a madman.

"C'mon, you pill pusher!" he yelled. "Lessee ya pull outa this one!"

Harkness rubbed a worried hand over his forehead. Flanders grabbed the vitamin pill bottle from under the bench and held it up so the redhead could see it. Harkness spotted Flanders and the bottle and big grin spread across his face. He turned towards the third base coach, lifted his right hand and thumbed his nose. The fans howled with glee and begged him to

strike out the batter. He could not miss with ten thousand fans behind him solidly. He zipped the big third strike past the batter and walked towards the bench grinning.

The fans clamored for a Ranger rally. One run, two runs, anything. Flanders gritted his teeth and clamored inwardly with them. The Rangers battled to even it up. The first batter was robbed by a long running catch in center. Fate evened it up and the next batter was safe on an infield bobbie. The Mohawk pitcher faltered and walked the next hitter.

DOC DOOLEY walked to the plate and a roar broke from the stands. This was their man! He and Red Harkness had put the Rangers into the thick of the pennant fight. Dooley froze at the plate with a grim face. He was a much changed man from the player who had started the season with the Rangers. Gone was his listless manner, gone was his casual indifference at the plate. The Mohawks went into a worried huddle at the plate. Dooley had a good eye, he usually waited at the plate for a good one and drew more than his share of walks.

The huddle broke up and the Mohawk catcher went back of the plate. The pitcher smirked, got on the rubber and blazed the ball for the plate. It broke towards the outside corner and Dooley slapped the ball into center field for a line single. One run scored and the game was deadlocked. Rangers were on first and second with only one out.

That guy belongs in the big leagues with his brains!" muttered Flanders. "He crossed the Mohawks by taking a cut at the first pitch for the first time in the last twenty games!"

The Mohawk pitcher bore down and got the next hitter on a hopper down the first base line. Men on second and third and two out and the crowd kept pleading for that big run. The pitcher gave it everything he had. Ball one and the stands roared. Strike one and the stands scoffed at the pitcher and yelled encouragement

to the hitter. Strike two and the fans told the hitter it only took one and and he had the big one left. The pitcher gave it everything he had, but the Rangers were not to be denied. The hitter's bat flashed in the sun and crack! the ball hooked into left field for a double and the Rangers were ahead, 4 to 2.

It was all over but the shouting then. The Mohawks battled to come back, but Harkness had a strong body, a strong back, and a strong arm. He pitched his best bearing down in a clutch. He got the first two men, almost walked the third man, then fanned him for the last out. The Rangers tore off the field and scooted into the clubhouse before the fans could pour down from the stands. They slammed back and shook hands and laughed and shouted.

Flanders grinned and said, "We softened 'em up today, they'll be easier tomorrow."

Harkness wiped his perspiration streaked face and said, "Sure, just as long as we lay in a supply of those pills first."

Dooley did not seem to like that. He scowled, "It's time to throw away that crutch, Red. We will take them tomorrow pills or no pills. Just like we took them without the pills today."

Harkness frowned. "What are you talking about? We did so take those vitamin pills today."

Dooley shook his head. "No horse like you in the prime of his life suffers from a vitamin deficiency. Not the way you stow away that food. Those pills are for people with an unbalanced diet, or who are suffering from a vitamin lack for one reason or another. As for the pills you took today, they were headache pills. Bull Rand made me realize I was carrying the thing a bit too far when he swiped our pills. Good thing I remembered that old bottle of headache pills I had in my locker."

Harkness blinked at him. "But if those pills didn't put all that pep and energy in you, how about the time

(Continued On Page 98)



Dope From The Dugout

*Facts & Fun From
The Sports World
by WILCEY EARLE*

**ANYWAY HE'S A GOOD
SINGER**

Jack Doyle, that fine broth of a lad, was in trouble again some time ago. Handsome Jack, who is a great singer, is laboring under the delusion that he is also a great pugilist and a personage immune to the law.

Jack, incidentally, was an ardent admirer of the late Al Smith. That is, he admired everything about Al except one of his remarks that became famous. Every time Doyle heard it, he shuddered—and why shouldn't he? If you sported Doyle's spotty ring record, you would shudder, too if someone mentioned Al's favorite quote to you: "Let's look at the record."

(Continued On Page 92)

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(Continued From Page 91)

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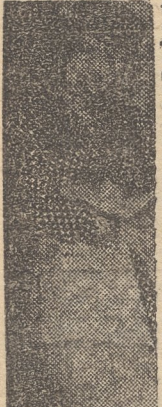
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bartender asked, "Hey, buddy, did you just come from the ball game?"

"Yes, I did," replied the Britisher. "It was all very dull; I didn't stay for the finish."

"What was the score when you left?" asked the bartender.

"Oh, I cawn't figure it exactly," replied the chappie. "When I left the score was somewhere up in the millions!"

REASON ENOUGH TO BEEF

At the Jamaica Race Track not so long ago, Goodman Ace, the comedian, was bemoaning his hard luck with the horses.

"The trouble with me," wailed Goodman, "is that I'm always getting tips on nags that are supposed to walk in.

They do, too—but the other horses run in!"

TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN FICTION

So you would like to be a baseball umpire, eh? All right, go ahead be one.

But what would you do if you were wearing the boots of an umpire in a small Southern minor league about two decades ago? He rendered a decision on a very unusual play, satisfactory to both teams, that was blessed with the wisdom of Solomon.

A batter caught hold of a fast pitch and drove a long one toward the right field fence. Just as the pellet was about to go over for a four-ply clout, it split in two. Half of it went over the fence; and the right fielder caught the other half.

Naturally, there was a terrific "to-do." The team at bat claimed it was a home run because half of the ball had gone over the fence. The team afield was equally adamant and insisted the batter was out because half the ball had been caught.

Now, my newly-crowned umpire, what would have been your verdict in this case? What's that? You have resigned already? O.K., we'll have to give you the ruling of the umpire on the field which satisfied both teams:

DOPE FROM THE DUGOUT

At any rate, Doyle had a bit of a joust with the law not too long ago. Jack, who is six feet two inches tall, entered a bus at Kill, County Kildare, Ireland. The driver asked him not to enter because there was no more room in the bus. Jack brushed him rudely aside. The driver called a cop. The latter, who was six feet two inches tall and weighed two hundred eighty pounds, also sported the monicker of Doyle.

Said Officer Doyle to handsome Jack Doyle, "There's no more room on the bus, me bye; be nice and leave at once." Without a word, Jack lifted his two-hundred-eighty pound namesake and dropped him unceremoniously on the sidewalk.

Officer Doyle tooted his whistle for the riot squad. In no time at all, tse police reinforcements arrived and hailed Doyle before the local magistrate.

The good Justice, who was a bit of a wit, put on a serious face, stabbed a menacing finger at Doyle and observed, "It seems to me that this isn't a case of Doyle vs. Doyle, but rather a case of whether Doyle equals Doyle. You are not unknown in Irish public life; you're supposed to be a pugilist a sportsman—and I hope, a gentleman.

"However, upon this occasion, you acted neither as a gentleman, nor as a pugilist nor as a sportsman. You are fined two pounds. Next case!"

JUST LIKE AN ENGLISHMAN

One of the funniest baseball stories we've heard in a long time was told to your scribe by Jack Ppearl.

It concerns the Englishman who was seeing his first baseball game in America.

The visiting team scored three runs in the first inning and the home team scored two in the same inning. The rest of the innings up to the eighth were scoreless.

The Englishman was getting bored with the proceedings. He informed his friend that he was leaving to get a drink, which promised to be much more exciting. This happened just as the home team was coming up for the eighth inning.

He strolled into a nearby tavern. The

(Continued On Page 94)

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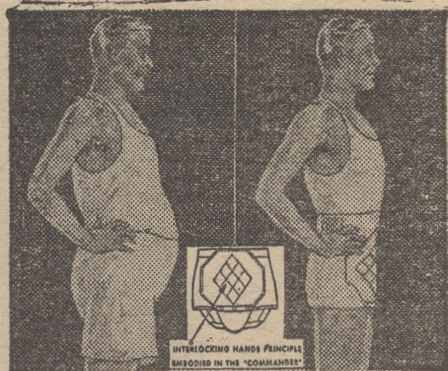
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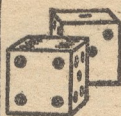
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SUPER SPORTS

(Continued From Page 24)

The team at bat got a half run because half the ball dropped over the fence!

It did the nine at bat no good, however, because they eventually lost by the most unusual score in baseball history, 2 to 1 1/2.

AND IT WASN'T

Then there was the fight manager who was known as "Honest" John because it was never proven that he stole a ferryboat!

RECORD IN REVERSE

Some years back, on the very same day that Joe DiMaggio hit safely in his 44th straight game, Pee Wee Reese of the Dodgers, in a terrific slump, hit "unsafely" in 24 straight at bats.

When quizzed by your reporter as to the reason for such a deplorable state of affairs, Pee Wee growled, "I'm out to show that DiMaggio isn't the only one who can break a record!"

KIN YAMAGINE THAT

Dave Kahan, commenting on our story recently about the punch-drunk fighter who opened a restaurant and ate up all his profits and became munch-drunk, says he knows a fighter who went into the cracker business and ate up all the profits, too.

He became crunch-drunk!

THEN THEY BELIEVED HIM

Did you hear about the mile runner whose friends wouldn't believe he burned up the track till he went out and showed them the cinders?

AND HE WAS, TOO

An hour after watching Chief Throwing Bull, a bald-headed Sioux Indian grappler, burp and belch all over the premises of a mid-town N.Y.C. wrestling arena, we noticed him walking down Broadway sporting a toupee and carrying a tent over his head.

"What," we gasped, "is the idea?"

"Oh," he chuckled, "I'm just keep-

DOPE FROM THE DUGOUT

ing my wig-warm!"

NO WONDER HE WAS SAD

As the college football team streamed off the field after its great upset of its traditional rival, the faces of all the lads were bathed in happiness. All, that is, but one player.

A newspaper man, noting this, took him aside and asked, "What's the trouble, son? You should be the happiest guy in the world after the way you sparked your team to its great victory."

"It's my girl," explained the player. "She promised me she would be true to the end."

"Well," asked the reporter, "isn't she?"

"She is," sadly replied the youngster—"but you see—I'm the half-back!"

THE END

CROOK, FINE, AND STINKER

(Continued From Page 69)

eye and we all stand in great amazement and alarm.

That eye ain't got no eye but is a eyeless socket!

"Well!" says the Boss. "Now what can this be? I do not understand!"

Magic Eye puts his hand over his eye and says, like this, "I would like to make a statement," he says, "I have been held up and robbed and I am very unhappy that I have been unable to serve you. But," says Magic Eye, "I will get even with the lowdown crooks who have done this outrage to me."

"What are you trying to tell me?" demands the Boss.

"I am sitting alone in the hotel and waiting for some time to come to the arena when some one unlocks the door and hits me on the head with a jack. When I feel better I note that my Eye has been took and I know I cannot help Socker Sosin without it. So -"

You mean you did all that whammy stuff with a glass eye?" whoops the Boss.

"Yeah," says Magic Eye Fine. "What is wrong with that?"

THE END

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SUPER SPORTS

(Continued From Page 62)

derstood what it meant. He jumped from the bench and shoved the burly coach back against the lockers with a heavy hand.

"That's the second time you've said 'safe,' smart boy," he said harshly. "Now I know how that money got in my hotel room two years ago. You put it there!"

Eastman's eyes flamed hate and he snarled: "You're crazy, Madson. You threw the game, and—"

"Then how did you know there was a safe in the hotel wall?" Steve broke in. "It never came out in the papers, and the only way you could've known was by being in the room yourself!"

Eastman yelled nervously: "Somebody grab him. He's out of his mind!"

But no one moved. The boys just sat there and stared coldly, and Steve went on in a low monotone:

"You wanted to get me tossed out of pro football, Mister, because you hated my guts. But that wasn't enough for you. You had to get me down here, and make me take the lousy job of browbeating these guys—just so you could ruin me for good. Why, you dirty—"

Eastman put his hands in front of his face and pleaded: "Don't hit me, Madson! Yes, I did it! I did it!"

Steve said distastefully: "Why, you sniveling slob, I wouldn't dirty my dukes on you. But you better get the hell away from this field before I change my mind. These boys will be my witnesses, and tomorrow there'll be more headlines, Eastman—only this time you'll be in 'em too, and you won't like 'em as much as the last time."

"You mean you're not going to call the cops?" Bud Andrews said in amazement. "You could have him locked up for compounding a felony!"

Steve shook his head and said: "What's the use? Let the bum just try to get a job after this. It'll be better for him to find out what it's like with the chips are down." And then he smiled, knowing that the Ramblers were on his side and that all the hate was forgotten.

"Besides," he added. "We've got a game out there to win. Let's go, guys, and make those Owls hoot!"

(Continued From Page 39)

chopping, never pausing, the drumbeats of their blows without end. The crowd had taken leave of its senses.

The bell. End of round ten. End of the fight.

The referee called both men to the center of the ring.

"Yeah?" said Jake. "What does a draw with a welterweight get me?"

"The welterweight knocked you out, last time," said David past his upraised hand. "You've improved. Your brother will tell you so; your Brazilian backers will tell you so. My manager is here to make a deal with them to co-manage you in the states!"

But it wasn't until long later, when Jake Ouster, his Brazilian backers, David's manager and David, had completed their deals, and Peter Finn was contentedly looking over his rehabilitated brother, that Jake spoke his heart to David. "All right, so I read *Man Without a Country*. What good does it do me to be just like

him? What American wants to represent any foreign country?"

"You do, Jake," said David grimly, "until you've had a crack at the title. You couldn't win it for more rabid fight fans than Brazil will consist of at that time—when all the publicity has done its stuff. Then, Jake—didn't you ever hear of repatriation? When you win the crown, or even if you don't, Brazil will only remember that you fought under the colors of yellow and green! When you're proud to be an American again, Brazil will feel you are her own, and that won't hurt you. Also, Jake. I'll be proud to be in the same stable with you! Will you shake?"

Jake hesitated, then thrust out his hand. The three of them shook.

"Feed mine to Pete," he said. "He's only responsible for the honor of one country! I'll take a rain check until I figure out just what is happening to me. It may take some time—until after I've fought for the title, even!"

THE END

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HORSEHIDE DOCTOR



(Continued From Page 90)

you stole four bases in one game? You never did that before!"

"The catcher had a bum arm that day."

"How about the time you scored from first on a bunt?"

"Surprise and luck."

"Yeah" Well, how about the time I took one and pitched a full game for the first time after being knocked out of the box ten straight games?"

"You pitched against a team of first ball sluggers. They did not give you a chance to get tired, even if you wanted to. When you found you could go the full nine innings again, you regained your confidence."

Flanders walked up and jabbed a stubby finger in Dooley's chest. "You mean you started running wild on the bases to kid Red into thinking those pills would do the trick for him, too?"

"Sure. All he needed was confidence. So let's forget about those pills and take the Mohawks for a clean sweep."

Flanders grinned and cocked his ears waiting for that door to open. That Sox scout was going to push over thirty grand for Harkness and another twenty grand for Dooley.

Harkness grabbed Dooley's hand and said. "Thanks, Doc. You were my lifesaver!"

"Sure," said Dooley. "I figured the trouble with your pitching did not come from a sore bone in your shoulder. But from the bone in your head."

Harkness turned to Flanders with a grin. "Gosh!" he said. "And here all the time I thought it was something serious!"

THE END



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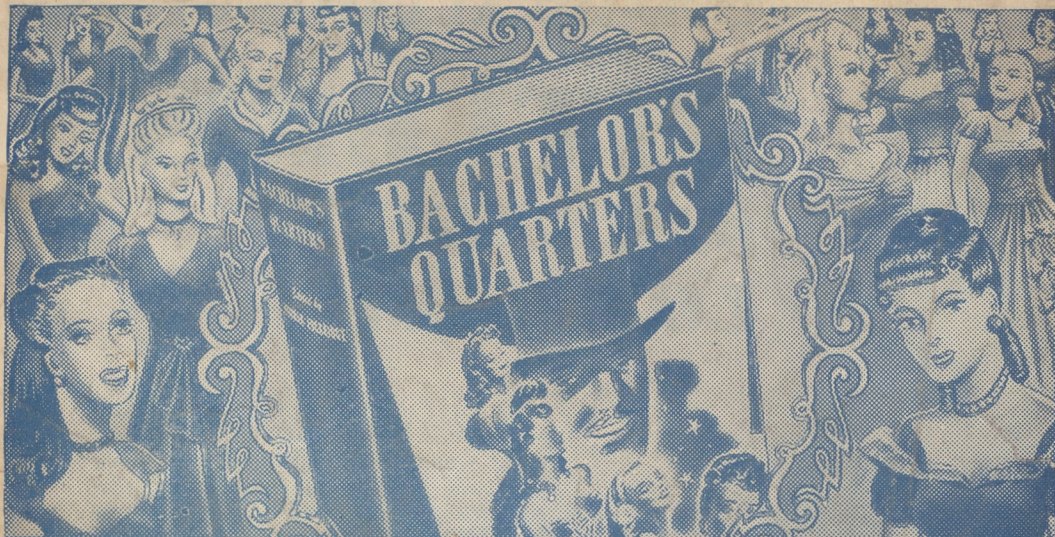
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