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FIGHTING FOR FAIRVIEW

By WILLIAM HEYLIGER

THE MAKING OF PETER CRAY
THE FIGHTING CAPTAIN
DORSET'S TWISTER
QUINBY AND SON
THE SPIRIT OF THE LEADER
DAN'S TOMORROW
HIGH BENTON
HIGH BENTON—WORKER

Fairview Series

CAPTAIN FAIR AND SQUARE
THE COUNTY PENNANT
FIGHTING FOR FAIRVIEW

St. Mary's Series

BARTLEY, FRESHMAN PITCHER
BUCKING THE LINE STRIKE THREE!
THE CAPTAIN OF THE NINE
AGAINST ODDS OFF SIDE

Boy Scouts Series

DON STRONG OF THE WOLF PATROL
DON STRONG, PATROL LEADER
DON STRONG, AMERICAN

Lansing Series

QUARTERBACK RECKLESS BATTER UP
FIVE YARDS TO GO THE WINNING HIT
FAIR PLAY STRAIGHT AHEAD



“I—I’m going to fight,” Van said [PAGE 176]

FIGHTING FOR FAIRVIEW

BY

WILLIAM HEYLIGER

AUTHOR OF

"DON STRONG, PATROL LEADER," "THE COUNTY PENNANT,"

"CAPTAIN FAIR AND SQUARE," ETC.

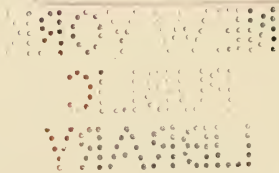
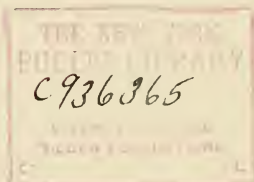


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FIGHTING *for* FAIRVIEW

CHAPTER I

A MEETING OF CAPTAINS

THE Great World War had brought many changes to Fairview, just as it had brought changes to other places far removed from the far-flung battle lines of Europe. The old frame high school was gone. In its place stood a long, low building of white brick.

Twice that day Buddy Jones, captain of the nine, had gone through the building, from the laboratory on the top floor to the gymnasium and dressing-room in the basement. To-night he stood across the road and surveyed it once more with proud eyes.

Quick steps came along the sidewalk. Buddy glanced over his shoulder. "That you, Schuyler?"

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"Yep." Schuyler Arch, star pitcher of the nine, halted beside the captain. "Looking her over by moonlight?"

Buddy nodded.

Schuyler chuckled. "She's sure worth watching. We'll have about three times as many students as we had last year. How many fellows do you think will turn out for the nine?"

Buddy shook his head. "Fifty, maybe."

"That's more than used to turn out in three years. Did you look at the lockers to-day?"

"Twice."

"Bully, aren't they?"

"Great."

Schuyler drew a deep breath. "Who ever thought little Fairview would have lockers and showers, and fifty candidates turning out for the nine?"

Certainly Buddy had never thought it. Eighteen months ago, when the Fairview Iron Works had received a war order, the matter had seemed only of passing moment. But more orders came, and soon the railroad built a branch line from Irontown. Other shops sprang up like magic, and mechanics came to work in the shops. Two-family houses, rows of houses, were hastily built in the side streets.

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The grammar schools were swamped with a rush of new boys. Almost overnight Fairview ceased to be a village and became a town.

The Board of Education had solved the need of more schools by moving the old high school to a new site and making it a grammar school. That had happened the moment the spring term ended in June. At once the work of building a new high school had been started. And now it was finished.

Buddy's eyes sparkled. Last year he had captained a nine that had called itself lucky in the possession of three substitutes. This year there would probably be a complete second team, and a man in the faculty who would coach—— The captain turned suddenly to his companion.

“Ever hear of ‘Mystery’ Ferris, Schuyler?”

“Of Yale? The pitcher who beat Princeton and Harvard with shutouts? I guess yes.”

“Ever hear of the Mr. Ferris who's coming here from Jersey City to teach Latin?”

Schuyler jumped. “My eye, you don't mean——”

Buddy nodded.

“You're fooling me,” cried the pitcher.

But Buddy's eyes were very, very serious. Schuyler gave a long, amazed whistle. “‘Mystery’ Ferris

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coming to Fairview. Well, what do you know—— Will he coach us, Buddy?"

"I think so."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because he helped coach both the eleven and the nine when he was at Dickinson High School in Jersey City. Doesn't that look good for us?"

It looked better than good; it was glorious. Schuyler went home thinking how fine it would be to take pitching lessons from the man who had been the greatest college hurler of his day. And Buddy went home thrilling to the thought of who would help the nine in its next fight for a pennant. He found his brother Bob sitting on the porch.

"How's the school?" Bob asked. "Anybody steal it while you were away?"

Buddy laughed. He was used to this good-natured chaffing. "Schuyler and I were talking about how changed things will be," he said.

"Oh!" Bob's voice lost its banter. "How?"

"Every way. Take athletics. Instead of only a few candidates there'll be dozens of fellows out for the teams. Look at the difference that will make."

The boy's voice rang with eager confidence. Bob settled back slowly in his chair.

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"You're counting on a big year, aren't you, Bud?"

"The biggest Fairview has ever had."

"How many have graduated, Yost and McCarter?"

"The whole nine except Schuyler and me."

"That means you'll have to pick a new man for practically every position." Bob was silent a moment. "Expect any trouble?"

"In getting a nine?" Buddy demanded. "With all those candidates to pick from? I guess not."

"They'll be strangers to you," said Bob. "You never saw them play before."

"Mr. Ferris will know," the boy answered confidently.

"Suppose they don't fit into Fairview—I mean at first? They'll come from widely scattered schools, and they'll bring different ideas and different customs. You know the trouble you had with Schuyler when he first came here."

Yes; Buddy knew. But Schuyler had come around—that was the main thing. He put out a hand and rubbed his brother's head.

"Fairview's clean," he said. "That will mold them."

"Maybe you're right," said Bob. He was quiet

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until Buddy went into the house; then he sighed. "Good luck, kid," he murmured. "You're up against a tough game and you don't know it."

There were only three days left before the opening of school, but it seemed to Buddy as though those three days would never pass. He had tried to keep track of the new boys, but they had poured into town too fast. Oh, well, three more days and they'd all—that is, all the big fellows—be under the same roof. Then the new life would start.

The afternoon before school was to open, he went to the village field with his catcher's mitt. A scrub game was already on and the sides were full, so there was nothing for him to do but wait until he could take the place of some player who had had enough. He sat on the grass with his knees humped up and watched the game.

There was a strange boy on the side in the field, a tall, rangy, supple-muscled lad at third base. Twice in that inning vicious grounders came his way. He stopped them, held them, and threw out his man.

"That fellow can play ball," said Buddy, and sat up straighter.

The side in the field came to bat. Schuyler, on

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his way out to take up the pitching burden, halted beside Buddy.

"Watching him?" he asked excitedly.

Buddy made a shrewd guess. "Who, the third-baseman?"

Schuyler nodded. "Isn't he a bird? I heard him say he's coming to high school."

Buddy sprang erect. No time for lounging on the grass now. If this fellow could hit nearly as good as he could field——

It was an inning later, though, before the third-baseman came to bat. Lightly, gracefully, well-balanced on his feet, he waited at the plate. Schuyler's first pitch did not tempt him.

"Strike!" ruled the boy who was umpiring.

The batter smiled.

"Looked pretty wide," Buddy muttered.

Schuyler pitched again. Suddenly all the boy's muscles seemed to gather themselves. The bat swung out.

Away through the outfield sang the ball, to fall safely between two running fielders. Buddy, after one appraising glance, did not waste time watching the hit. He watched the runner.

The boy seemed to skim over the ground. There

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was something of the trained runner in his work. Almost before Buddy could believe it he was at third, where a babbling coacher held him to safety.

The shouting died away. Buddy found that his heart was beating wildly. He was impatient for the inning to end. When the third boy was out, he walked to the foul-line and waited for the pitcher.

“What did that fellow hit, Schuyler, a straight ball? One right in the groove?”

Schuyler grinned. “I guess not. That was my best.”

“Your fadeaway?” Buddy’s voice was incredulous. Why, no schoolboy batter had ever been able to do much with that ball.

“My fadeaway,” said Schuyler. “Isn’t he a bird?”

Buddy walked back to where he had left his mitt. A boy quit the game, and a voice called to him and asked him if he wanted to play. He shook his head. If Fairview was going to get fellows like that; what a school she’d be. What a school!

Presently, as he stood there dreaming, somebody dropped down on the grass near him. It was the third-baseman. Their eyes met, and the other boy smiled.

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Buddy spoke impulsively. "I'm captain of the high school nine—Jones. That was a corking hit. I'm going to feel sick if you don't come out next spring."

"If I don't come out," the boy laughed, "it will be because I am sick. I think they're calling me." He scrambled to his feet.

"Soak it again," Buddy urged.

"Going to try to," came the answer cheerfully.

"I'll be rooting for you," Buddy promised. An inspiration came to him. "And I won't even know who I'm rooting for."

The strategy brought a grin to the other boy's face. "Terry," he said; "Terry McCarthy," and went out to the plate and shot a clean single to center field.

"Oh, for about six more players like that," Buddy breathed.

That night, at the supper table, he told Bob a glowing tale. His brother glanced at him sideways.

"He isn't any better than you, is he, Bud?"

"Mackerel!" said Buddy; "I never could hit like that." He went out to the porch whistling, and waited until Schuyler appeared. They walked up

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and down the lawn talking excitedly about the opening of school on the morrow, and of the possibilities of the new Fairview—and of Terry.

Another boy came down the dark street and paused at the gate. He was Jimmy Powers, captain of the high school eleven since Carlson had graduated.

"I'm scared," he announced briefly; "scared stiff."

Buddy looked at him in surprise. "Of what?"

"Of to-morrow. Football practice will start almost as soon as we get settled, and it's going to be different. Last year I knew weeks ahead just about what I could count on to make a team. Now I'll have to handle fellows I never saw play, and——"

"You'll have Mr. Ferris helping," Buddy interrupted.

"I know; but we don't know how things will go this year. Fellows from here, there and everywhere, and maybe they won't fit together. That's what gets my goat."

It came to Buddy that Bob had said something like that. He thrust the thought aside, and told eagerly of what a friendly chap Terry McCarthy was for all his great ability.

"A star, eh?" Powers asked.

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"You bet he is," said Buddy.

The football captain shook his head. "That's it. We'll get some fellows who were star players at other high schools and they'll want to do as they please."

There was a moment of silence. This was a new idea—a mighty uncomfortable idea, too.

"Will they?" Schuyler asked softly. "Well, they'll soon get over that."

Buddy went to bed that night troubled and uneasy. But in the morning his anxiety was gone as though the night's sleep had washed it away. He was prepared to find to-day different from any other opening school day he had ever known, but in just what ways it would be different he could not even guess.

On the occasion of other school openings there had been a deal of pushing, and clamoring, and good-natured shouting. To-day, when he reached the school grounds, he found very little sky-larking. The old Fairview boys seemed a bit awed by the presence of so many other students.

"They'll get over that," thought Buddy. He waved to Schuyler, and started for the imposing stone steps that led to the wide entrance.

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The stairs were crowded. Over his shoulder he saw Terry McCarthy. The boy gave him a quick nod of recognition.

Inside the building all was confusion. The new students entered Dr. Minor's office at one door to receive their class assignments, and came out another door carrying little cards marked with their periods. They were all more or less absorbed, and most of them disdained help and roamed through the corridors consulting the numbers on doors.

Old Fairview boys stood in little knots and watched the strange students file past. There was very little talk.

"My eye!" said Schuyler; "what's all the excitement about?"

Buddy had known that to-day would be different, and yet he had not expected anything like this. Without knowing just why, he was vaguely disappointed.

Terry McCarthy came out of the principal's office. His eyes, wide and friendly, swept the scattered groups.

"Anybody know where Room 14 is hidden?" he asked. Somehow the corridor changed, as though a bit more of the morning sunshine had entered.

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"That's my room for the first period," Buddy said eagerly. "Come along."

"And mine," said Schuyler, falling into step.

"And mine," said another voice.

Four or five students escorted Terry to Room 14. The little sign on the door said: "PROFESSOR DELEVAN, ENGLISH LITERATURE." Terry sat on the edge of a desk and spread his long legs across the aisle.

"Safe in port," he said cheerily. "I know you, Jones, and I know Schuyler Arch. Somebody introduce me to the rest of the gang."

Buddy performed the ceremony. This duty over, the boys stepped back. Terry, completely at ease, smiled at them.

"Question number one," he said. "I'm ready. Fire away. What do you want to know about me?"

Somebody laughed. And somebody else asked: "Where are you from?"

"Jersey City," said Terry; "Dickinson High."

"Wasn't that Mr. Ferris's school?" Schuyler asked quickly.

"Right-o!"

"Did you play under him?"

"Two years—football and baseball."

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Buddy asked the next question, and asked it eagerly: "How is he?"

"He's the best little coach in the world," said Terry. The easy-going light was gone from his eyes, and in his voice was a world of respect and affection.

The assembly bell rang then. As Buddy went out with his class, his eyes met Schuyler's. Wouldn't it be great to have a coach who could make players feel like that?

Assembly that morning was short. There was a constant shuffling of feet until Dr. Minor arose to speak. Then the noise stopped abruptly.

"Let me," said the principal, "welcome all new students to Fairview. No doubt some of our ways of doing things may seem to you strange and queer. But you will soon find that Fairview stands staunchly for all that is cleanest and best in work and in play. We have a school song that you will learn to sing by and by. Two lines run:

'No stain shall darken any page
Of Fairview's splendid story.'

"On questions of right dealing boys who want to play fair can never disagree. And that is why,

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regardless of what traditions and customs you may bring with you from other schools, you will soon be glad to call Fairview yours, and Fairview will be glad to call you hers."

"My eye," Schuyler whispered as the classes filed out; "that was some talk, wasn't it?"

Buddy nodded.

"Makes you glad you're a Fairview fellow to hear things like that," Schuyler went on.

Buddy was wondering how it would make the new boys feel. It came to him again that Bob had warned him that the new boys might not fit into Fairview. Why, if that happened, sports and school spirit and everything might go to smash for quite a while. His eyes were puckered as he entered Mr. Delevan's room; and the pucker was still there when the period ended.

"What do you think of the school?" he asked abruptly of Terry when they were out in the corridor.

"Help!" cried Terry. "Give me a chance, will you?"

"But——" Buddy bit his lips. Of course Terry was right; how could a fellow tell in so short a time? And yet he was disappointed because Fair-

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view had not made an instant appeal to the boy from Jersey City.

His last period that day was with Mr. Ferris. Since morning he had been looking forward to this hour. He was a bit late getting to the room, and the teacher and Terry McCarthy were chatting like old friends. He went to his seat quietly. Just after the class was called to order Mr. Ferris asked: "Will Jones please stand?"

Buddy stood up.

"Do you mind waiting in, Jones, when the others go?"

Buddy said that he did not mind in the least. His voice was suddenly husky.

The other students smiled knowingly. The new coach was consulting with the school captains the first day. Fairview wasn't going to waste any time this year.

All during the hour, Buddy's heart had spells when it fluttered foolishly. He liked Mr. Ferris—the way he carried himself, the straight-ahead look from his eyes. A conference with this man held glorious possibilities.

Three o'clock came at last. The class was dismissed. Buddy and the teacher were alone.

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"Jones," said Mr. Ferris, "how are you fixed for a coach?"

Buddy's eyes opened wide.

"Because," the man went on, "if you think I might be of any help——"

"Why," the boy burst out, "that's what we've been thinking ever since we heard of you."

A fleeting smile touched Mr. Ferris's lips. "Thank you, Jones. Oh, just a moment. What do the boys call you? Any nickname?"

"Buddy, sir."

The coach laid a pad on the desk. "Well, Buddy, let's get down to business. How many players are left from last year?"

The boy's heart glowed. Buddy! No wonder Terry McCarthy said he was the best ever.

"Only two left," he answered. "Schuyler Arch and me. Schuyler was our star pitcher."

"That means we pick a new team, doesn't it?"

"Yes, sir. But there's one fellow here who's a wonder. You know him from Jersey City—Terry McCarthy."

"A good player," said Mr. Ferris. He made a mark on the pad. "What's your position, Buddy?"

"I'm a catcher."

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"Oh!" Mr. Ferris gazed at a blackboard thoughtfully. "That's Terry's position, too," he said, and turned his eyes quickly toward the boy.

"I'll bet he's a good one," Buddy said without hesitation.

The same fleeting smile touched the coach's lips. "Jones," he said, "you and I are going to get along famously."

Buddy thrilled in every nerve. On the way home his head was in the clouds. At supper he told Bob all about the interview.

"How does that affect you?" Bob asked.

Buddy was puzzled. "What?"

"This other catcher?"

"It's great," the captain answered at once. "It's mighty shaky business going through the season on one catcher."

Bob nodded, and his eyes grew soft. "I daresay you and Mr. Ferris *will* get along famously," he said.

Next morning Buddy hoped to see some of the old happy-go-lucky Fairview spirit in evidence. For one thing the second day usually saw the start of football practice, and players in uniform always had a tonic effect. When he came in sight of the

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grounds a football sailed up into the air end over end. Ah! That was something like it!

But only a handful of boys were handling the pig-skin. Jimmy Powers caught a punt, stuck the ball under his arm, and walked toward him.

"I can't get this thing started," he said in a worried voice. "No interest at all."

"Have you talked football?" Buddy asked.

"Until I'm hoarse. You might just as well tell it to a wooden Indian. You ask a fellow, and he says sure, he'll be out in a day or two. How long do they think the football season lasts?"

Buddy looked about the grounds. The new boys were far livelier than yesterday—and yet, somehow, they didn't seem to mix. They seemed to keep by themselves in little earnest groups.

Buddy wrinkled his forehead. This football depression was certainly bad. Something was in the wind.

"I spoke to Mr. Ferris," Jimmy said next.

"Oh!" Buddy roused himself. "Great, isn't he?"

"Y—yes," Jimmy answered. "Well, that's how I feel," he went on defensively as he met Buddy's eyes. "He told me to let it alone for a few days.

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That's nice, isn't it? At Irontown and the other schools they're practicing *now*. Every day counts."

Buddy knew that. Yet his faith in Mr. Ferris was strong. Maybe the coach saw something clearly that they did not see at all. Maybe there was a reason.

"Mr. Ferris knows what he's doing," Buddy said confidently.

"I—I suppose he does," Jimmy admitted reluctantly. "But it's mighty queer."

He had refrained from posting the usual notice calling on football candidates to report. At noon the bulletin board in the main corridor blossomed with other signs:

A meeting of all students interested in tennis will be held this afternoon at 3 o'clock in Room 12.

Fellows who want to start a track team will meet at 3 o'clock in Room 15.

Basket ball players are asked to meet after classes in Room 6.

And not a single word about football.

"Isn't that the limit?" Jimmy demanded. "Tennis comes next summer and they're talking about it already, and I can't open my mouth about something we ought to be doing now."

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Buddy was badly puzzled as he walked home. If Mr. Ferris said it was all right why it must be all right. And yet——

He was eating his dinner when the truth came to him. He saw it all in a flash. Tennis and basket ball players, and track and field boys, had come to a school that had never listed these sports. Naturally, they wanted to have tennis, basket ball and track established. They were bound to cause unrest until they settled things to their satisfaction. Evidently Mr. Ferris did not want to start football practice until he could have the whole-hearted sentiment of the school at his back.

“Pretty foxy,” Buddy said in admiration. After classes he met the football captain.

“It’s all right,” Jimmy said cheerfully. “Mr. Ferris explained that he wanted the school to settle its agitation for other sports before he started football.”

Buddy smiled wisely.

He did not go near any of the meetings. That night a strange boy came to his house.

“I’m Al Davis,” he said. “They elected me captain of the tennis team to-day. We want to have a meeting of all team captains and get some

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rules fixed. Is to-morrow all right for you?"

Buddy said it was. He wanted to talk over this unexpected summons; but Al Davis announced that he had to find Jimmy Powers and went hurriedly down the road.

Buddy, somehow, had a feeling that a big game had started, and that he was being lost in its mazes. Bob laughed.

"It's a different Fairview now, Bud. You said yourself there would be changes."

"I know," Buddy admitted; "but—— Oh, well, I suppose it's all right."

Next day the bulletin board carried this announcement:

Captains of all teams will meet this afternoon to formulate rules for the future conduct of athletics. These rules will be submitted to the Fairview Athletic Association for adoption.

And under it was this:

Candidates for the football team will report for practice at 3:30 o'clock to-morrow at the village field.

POWERS, Capt.

FERRIS, Coach.

That last sign made Buddy feel better. Somehow, it robbed that other notice of its vague threat.

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At noon, he found Jimmy Powers waiting for him.

"I think I have that meeting figured out," Jimmy announced. "You and I are the old-timers here, and they want to ask us about things. I suppose they plan a few changes—stuff they had at the big schools."

Buddy, after a moment, nodded his head slowly. Jimmy's reasoning seemed sound. The more he thought of it, the more he became convinced that Jimmy was on the right track. Why, of course these new captains would want older Fairview boys to set them right.

He was greatly relieved. He did not think about the meeting again until that afternoon when the 3 o'clock bell rang. His last period had been with Mr. Delevan. When it was over he remained behind to ask a question. The teacher kept him for ten minutes, and when he reached the meeting-room, the others were all there.

Al Davis greeted him with a wave of his hand. "Waiting for you, Jonesie. This is Hurst, the new track captain, and this Marcy, head of the basketball bunch."

Buddy shook hands. He wondered just how much information the three new captains would

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want. He took a seat next to Jimmy Powers.

"Let's get down to business," Davis said briskly. "There will be five sports now, and we can't have fellows coming out for everything in sight and forgetting their books. If that starts, athletics will soon be frowned on by the faculty. Let's set a limit. How about saying a fellow can't come out for more than one sport to a season? If he plays football, that will bar him from basketball."

"They're not played in the same season," said Jimmy.

"I'm classing cold-weather sports as against warm-weather sports," said Davis patiently. "If a fellow plays a cold-weather sport, he's through until a warm-weather sport comes. If he plays baseball, he can't try for tennis or track."

"Suppose," said Jimmy, "a fellow's a good tennis player and a good ball player, too?"

"And suppose," said Davis, "the tennis team has a match the same day the nine has a game? I guess that settles you. Any objections to my plan? No? Then we'll call it carried. Now how about fellows getting their school letter?"

"Everybody gets an F who plays in a scheduled game," said Marcy. "I inquired about that."

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"Dead wrong," said Davis. "The A. A. ought to vote the letter only to fellows who deserve them because of good playing. Right?"

"Right," said Hurst. "Then the letter will mean something."

A moment later Davis announced that this proposition was carried, too.

Buddy was bewildered. He and Jimmy weren't being asked anything. Apparently the new captains had decided to enforce at Fairview the customs of the schools from which they had come, and had arranged all the details of the present conference in advance. Probably everything they advocated was all right. But—but— There was that "but."

Buddy threw off these thoughts. Davis was saying something about a watch fob at the end of a season for captains who had distinguished themselves.

"It isn't the value," he said. "You can get those fobs for about two dollars. It's the honor of getting one for work well done. Lots of schools have that custom. How does it look to you, fellows?"

It seemed to look all right to Hurst and Marcy.

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They voted for it at once; and as they, with Davis, formed a majority, that settled it. The meeting broke up.

Buddy looked at Jimmy. Jimmy's mouth was hanging open. Davis came down to them.

"I knew all this would be satisfactory to you chaps," he said. "I told Hurst we'd get through the whole meeting in five minutes. We'll make things jump now with five sports. This will put us on the map. A big school has to have more than just football and baseball."

Buddy admitted to himself that this was so.

"I'm going to the upper end of town," Davis went on. "Anybody coming my way?"

Nobody was, it seemed, so Davis went out alone. Marcy and Hurst had already departed. Buddy rose slowly from his seat and walked toward the door. Jimmy followed.

When they came outdoors Fairview's three new captains had disappeared. Jimmy gave a sickly grin.

"Nice meeting, wasn't it?"

Buddy tried to smile. But his smile was just as dismal as Jimmy's grin.

CHAPTER II

LOST

THREE days later the Athletic Association assembled and passed the rules advocated by the captains. By this time Buddy had recovered from the shock of the meeting. After all, the changes would probably be good for the school. He decided to forget the high-handed way Davis and the others had acted. At the A. A. gathering he spoke in favor of the resolution.

“What’s the matter, Buddy?” a voice chuckled. “Going to need a watch fob?”

“I’m going to earn one,” said Buddy, and the remark raised a cheer. In fact, the meeting became quite noisy. It was the first sign of spirit that had yet been shown.

Meanwhile, football practice had started. Buddy hurried from the meeting to the field.

There everything seemed to be at sixes and sevens. About seventy boys had turned out, and

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the field was over-run. Jimmy Powers, sweating and excited, was trying desperately to do a dozen things at once.

"For the love of Pete," he panted as Buddy came up, "look at that mob! I'm up to my neck. How are we ever going to pick a team?"

Buddy didn't know. The work had an appearance of hopeless confusion. Instead of saying what he thought, he asked what he should do.

"Search me," said Jimmy. "Do all big schools go through this? Ask Mr. Ferris. There he is."

The coach seemed not in the least disturbed by the rush of candidates. Alert and watchful, he was going about the field from group to group. From time to time he made strange marks on some cards he carried in his hands.

"Anything for me to do?" Buddy asked.

"Just a minute." Mr. Ferris approached a charging line. "Here, you—you on the right end. What's your name? Robinson? How do you expect to charge from a flat-footed stand? Get on your toes. No, no, no. Balance your body. An opposing forward could pull you around at will. Here; this way."

The coach illustrated. Buddy marveled at how

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evenly he was balanced. His feet seemed planted in just the right place, and his back, strongly arched, seemed designed to withstand strategy and assault.

"Gee!" Buddy murmured. "Carrots O'Toole never showed us a pose like that."

Carrots, a town boy, had coached the high school teams until he moved to Irontown and bought a small vegetable store.

Mr. Ferris came back clapping the dirt from his hands. "All right, Buddy. You'll find a football under that tree wrapped in a sweater. See those centers and quarters passing? Get in there. There's one center too many. Grab him and have him pass to you."

Buddy ran across the field and got the football. Four centers were passing to three quarterbacks, two of the centers taking turns handling the ball. As he began working with the odd boy, he wondered how Mr. Ferris could have remembered, amid all the uproar and disorder, that here was a group with a quarterback short. He fumbled the first two passes.

"Give it a chance to come to you," said the coach's voice. "Don't try to grasp it too soon."

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And then he wondered how Mr. Ferris had got around to him so quickly.

All that afternoon Buddy's head was in a whirl. It seemed that the longer the practice lasted, the worse the disorder became. When the passing ended, a group of boys began to kick, and he found himself catching punts. Other boys trotted up and down the field in a line passing the ball from one to another. Still another group fell on a ball and picked up fumbles. And all the while a thin stream of players trickled out of the practice toward the side of the field, and other players kept coming out to take their places.

Presently Mr. Ferris's voice said: "That's enough for you fellows," and Buddy found himself walking from the field. He was breathing heavily, and was conscious that he was tired. It dawned on him that he hadn't loafed a minute. Neither had anybody else loafed. Somehow, amid all that apparent confusion, some strange force had brought about a miracle of industry.

On the side-line near him he saw Terry McCarthy. Terry seemed perfectly at ease, as though the turmoil of the field had passed him by. It came to Buddy that Terry was almost always

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more or less like that—calm and confident, and quite sure of himself.

“Hello,” Buddy said. “Where were you out there?”

“In your squad.”

“I didn’t see you.”

Terry smiled. “I guess it was your first experience with a mob. I remember the first time I hit a big field. I was so rattled I couldn’t do a thing.”

“I wasn’t rattled,” Buddy said defensively.

“I was the first time, and the second and third times, too. We had over one hundred candidates out.”

Over one hundred? Why, at that rate, a mere seventy must seem of small moment. No wonder Terry could be so calm. Buddy experienced a sense of inferiority to this other boy to whom today’s experiences brought no flutter of the heart. And he was ashamed because he had denied what must have been apparent.

“Maybe I was rattled,” he confessed.

“Of course you were,” Terry laughed. “Everybody goes through the rattle stage.”

Buddy wondered if he would ever have this vet-

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eran's poise. "Are all first days as bad as this?" he asked.

"Oh, this is mild. Generally it's worse."

"But how can they pick a team?"

"A week from now you'll wonder at the change."

It did not seem possible that this disorder could be ironed out in seven days.

"What are you out for?" Buddy asked.

"Quarterback," said Terry.

Buddy's nerves jumped. That was his position. His eyes met Terry's, and for a moment they surveyed each other frankly. Terry's gaze was shrewd and good-natured.

"You and I aren't going to scrap about it, Bud."

"Not much," Buddy said stoutly—and fell to patting the turf thoughtfully with his foot.

Schuyler Arch had come out for the team. Now he came toward them buttoning on a coat sweater.

"Finest bunch of lunatics in the United States," he announced, nodding toward the field. "I bet I did everything but eat the ball and get kicked for a goal. Maybe I'll get that to-morrow."

Terry laughed. "Is it so much different from last year?"

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"My eye, yes. Last year we gave out signals the first day and began to scrimmage."

"And had fellows fumbling all season."

Schuyler's eyes opened wide. "How did you know that?"

"I played on that kind of team in grammar school," said Terry.

The practice broke up, and the players scattered. Buddy and Schuyler walked off together.

"Terry's a pretty decent chap," Schuyler said. "No airs at all. I bet he's a bully football player."

Buddy had meant to tell that Terry was out for quarterback. All at once he changed his mind.

Next day Buddy found the field just as mad a scramble as the day before. The third day conditions were no better. But on the fourth afternoon, out of the turmoil and the uproar, order and system began to show its head. There was less confusion—less running around willy-nilly—less of one group of players getting in another group's way.

It seemed, too, that there weren't so many boys out. After the day's work Buddy asked Jimmy Powers.

"Ten were dropped last night," said the captain in a low voice. He had caught some of the coach's

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calmness. "Mr. Ferris told me it was not good policy to say much about that. Some fellows are sensitive, and it makes them sore. So——"

"Sure," said Buddy; "I'll keep quiet." He walked home shaking his head. Any man, he thought, who could pick hopeless players instinctively from such a scramble, was a wonder. Fairview was certainly getting a brand of football coaching that she had never had before.

True to Terry's prophecy, order began to come at the end of a week. The squad was now down to forty-odd boys. Schuyler was among those kept; but when Buddy spoke of them both making the team, he smiled wryly.

Friday afternoon, after the practice, Jimmy Powers called to the players to form a group.

"We have decided," said Mr. Ferris, "to start scrimmage work Monday. As you know, our first game comes a week from to-day. We have broken the squad into two groups——"

"School team and scrub?" a voice interrupted.

"No," said Mr. Ferris seriously; "merely two groups. We have made no attempt to select a school team. What we want now is scrimmage work, and we have placed each boy where we think

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he will be the most useful. I have signals here. As your name is called, step up. Kellogg."

The first boy stepped forward and was handed a slip of paper.

"Oh! Just a moment," the coach called. "I forgot to say that on each slip is a list of names. Those names indicate what other boys are in that particular group. I have—rather, we have—done that so that boys of one group will not be showing signals to boys of another group. McCarthy."

Buddy's name was near the end. He did not look at his paper at once. Presently the distribution was over. Schuyler had not been called.

"They forgot you," said Buddy as the group broke up.

Schuyler shook his head. "I'm through. This bunch is too fast for me. I wouldn't stand a chance."

"How do you know?"

"Mr. Ferris admitted it. He was holding me to give me a season's start in case I was bound for college. He said I showed promise. When I told him I was booked for a job next summer, that ended everything."

Buddy scratched his head. It was almost un-

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canny, this habit the coach had of seeing ahead and making judgments.

"My eye," said Schuyler, "I think he's practically got his whole team mapped out now."

Buddy's lips narrowed. As soon as he reached home he studied his list. There were fellows even he had recognized at once as good players—Terry, Jimmy Powers, Kellogg and Sanderson. None of the four was in his group.

"I wonder what that means?" he asked himself slowly.

Several times that night his mind strayed from his books. He had been quarterback of the team for two years. Twice he had led it in its big game against Irontown. But in those years the squad had been small. He had really had no competition. Now the field swarmed with players, many of whom had been stars at other schools. Could he hold his own against these stars?

It was the first time he had asked himself this question. The afternoon he had discovered that Terry was a rival for quarterback, he had taken it for granted that he would have an equal chance. Would he?

In imagination he pictured Terry on the field,

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and his heart sank a little. The next moment he braced his shoulders. Mr. Ferris and Terry may have been friends at Jersey City, but the coach was not the sort to play favorites. Everybody would get a fair chance.

"I'll fight it out," Buddy told himself. Nevertheless his eyes were wistful as he once more read the names of the boys who formed his squad. If only Jimmy Powers, or Kellogg, or Sanderson were on that list he would have felt better.

Over Sunday he crammed on the signals. He had the quarterback's vital knack of memorizing quickly. Monday after classes, when he went down to his locker to don his moleskins, he had the signals mastered.

Mr. Ferris had said that no effort had been made to form a first team and a scrub, or to form distinction between the squads. For all of that Buddy was sure that to-day marked a crisis. Suppose one group showed a marked superiority. Wouldn't that be an indication that it had been selected for its probable strength? Wouldn't that be an indication that Mr. Ferris had had *some* idea of the composition of the real school team?

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It all depended, of course, on whether to-day's scrimmage was to be the real thing or just a gentle welding together of the parts that make a football machine.

"Look at Mr. Ferris," said a voice.

Buddy glanced down the room. The coach had been coming out in the same clothing he wore in the class-room. Now he was donning a faded canvas jacket with a Yale blue jersey underneath.

Buddy's heart leaped. It was to be the real thing!

Every player felt the challenge of that uniform. On the field, each group kept by itself. Mr. Ferris and Jimmy Powers, off to one side, talked earnestly. The captain's first nervousness was gone, and he looked far more competent. It was as though association with the coach had molded him and had formed him wonderfully. Suddenly Mr. Ferris walked toward Buddy's group.

"Lively, fellows," he said. "I'll call a team. The rest of you to the side lines."

When he had finished, eleven boys of that group were left on the field. Buddy was one of them.

"Speed doesn't count for much at present," said the coach. "We want accuracy. We'll use four

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simple plays for a start—run around ends, thrust outside tackle, drive at center and a kick. I want you to walk through your plays. Ready, Buddy? Line up.”

Buddy called a signal. The team walked through the play. Mr. Ferris, running back and forth in the rear, guided them so that each boy came to his appointed place at the right time.

Over and over again those four plays were tried. Slowly but surely the speed increased until the execution quickened into a trot. Whenever the ball was kicked, Buddy had time to look down the field. The other squad, under Jimmy's direction, was walking through its plays, too.

By and by he came to believe that after all there would be no scrimmaging to-day. And then, just before quitting time, Mr. Ferris scooped up the ball and shouted to Jimmy. The other squad came up the field on a run.

“We'll play a seven-minute scrimmage,” the coach announced. “This squad will carry the ball for three minutes, then a minute rest, and then you other fellows will take the ball for three minutes. Line up! No kick-off. Ready! Go!”

The two elevens crouched. The old battle-thrill

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ran through Buddy's veins. He heard the tense breathing of the players, the sharp encouraging cries of the backfield men—and then he called the signal.

Seven minutes later it was over. Neither side had done much. There had been a deal of fumbling and of scrambling for a loose ball. The squads had not yet found themselves.

Buddy, drying himself after his shower-bath, was sure that as yet there was nothing to show whether he was on the first team or the scrub.

The next day there was more of walking through plays and of scrimmaging. The third day the thrusts and drives, instead of striking at tackles and center, began to spray all along the line. The scrimmage period was lengthened to ten minutes. Buddy worked for a while, and then came out to give another quarterback candidate, Johnny Boice, a chance. But nobody, in the other squad, relieved Terry McCarthy.

The fourth day brought two changes. Two players were moved from Buddy's group to Terry's, and a forward pass formation was introduced. And that day, too, Terry's eleven began to push its opponents steadily down the field.

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Buddy was sober as he dressed in the locker room. There wasn't much doubt that Terry's group was to be the school team. Mr. Ferris touched his arm.

"Wait in," said the coach.

Buddy, watching, saw that the man also spoke to Boice. He was not surprised, when the other candidates left, to find that Johnny lingered behind.

"Can you fellows carry two sets of signals in your head?" the coach asked abruptly.

Buddy nodded.

"I can," said Boice. "I've had to do it before."

Mr. Ferris gave them each a slip of paper. "These are the first team signals. Master them. We go to Hasbrouck Saturday for the first game, and I'm going to take you along."

Buddy put his paper in his pocket. He saw Jimmy Powers watching him with grave concern, and he tried to smile. He had an idea that Jimmy thought he was hurt. Outside Boice said:

"Looks like Terry's going to be first choice quarterback."

"Yes," Buddy said shortly. He was conscious of a sore spot some place within him. He tried to push aside the thought that bothered him, but nevertheless it clung. Why should Mr. Ferris select

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Terry when there had been so little work, so little real opportunity to judge?

"Going to Hasbrouck Saturday?" Bob asked him that night.

He nodded, but did not speak enthusiastically as was his habit. Bob laid a hand on his arm.

"Big schools and big squads make a difference, Bud. Somebody must play second fiddle. Play your game. That's what will count with Mr. Ferris."

"I'll play it," Buddy said stoutly. But it seemed strange to find the season about to start, and he only an understudy. And it seemed a long, long time since he and Schuyler had rejoiced in the glorious changes that would come to Fairview.

At Hasbrouck no call came for him to play. Terry led the attack from the first whistle to the last. Using the simple football it had thus far been taught, the team won by a score of 13—0.

It was the first time Buddy had ever waited idly through a Fairview game. On the way home Jimmy Powers sat beside him and talked a blue streak. When the stage came to Fairview and they dismounted, Jimmy kept shifting his grip from one hand to the other.

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"Look here," he said nervously, "you understand, don't you? It's all right, isn't it?"

"Sure," said Buddy. "Mr. Ferris knows best."

During the following week the scrimmages gradually developed into grim battles. But fight as hard as Buddy's squad might, Terry's squad was the master. Buddy was used to playing on a team that if it did not win at least was always dangerous. It came hard to give his best to a discouraging task, to a scrub that always seemed to lose ground and never seemed to gain. Sometimes he felt the inclination that tempts many scrub players—the inclination to relax, to let up, to permit the first team to have its way.

That week he and Boice began to get short stretches of running the first team through signals. Up to this point Buddy had looked upon himself as second to Terry. Now he began to question if this was so. For Boice had a competent pair of hands for handling the ball, and a cool head, and a deadly arm for throwing the forward pass.

"Watching Johnny?" Schuyler asked him as they walked home from one practice period.

Buddy nodded. Boice had done some wonderful forward passing that day.

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Schuyler stole a look at his face. "The school is stronger than it ever was," he said. "We fellows who were leaders before may be merely small potatoes now."

Buddy gave a wry smile. "You're not the only one finding that out," he said.

The next game was against Lackawanna at home, and Lackawanna was routed. Before the end of the third period the score was 39—0. In games as easy as this, a coach usually sends in some second string players before the finish. Buddy waited on his toes. But it was Boice who was sent in early in the fourth quarter to try his forward passing. Buddy swallowed a lump in his throat.

He wondered if he would ever get a chance. Boice, not in the least excited, shot four successful forward passes before the game ended. It began to look to Buddy as though he would be third among the quarterbacks.

But in spite of his discouragement, he played in practice as hard as he knew how. And then came the third contest, with Pompton as the opposing team.

It was another at-home game. It was also another slaughter. The powerful Fairview attack

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scored two touchdowns in the first quarter, one touchdown and a field goal in the second, and three touchdowns in the third. During the minute rest Buddy saw Mr. Ferris staring toward the substitutes.

"Get ready," he said to Boice.

But it was his own name that the coach called.

He bounded toward the field. Twenty seconds later he was crouched behind the center. A short time thereafter Fairview had scored her seventh touchdown.

"Pretty work," cried Jimmy Powers.

Buddy experienced a happiness he had not known for days. When Fairview secured the ball again, he drove mercilessly at Pompton's defenses. His ambition was to play fast, to roll up a score, to show Mr. Ferris what he could do. In his eagerness he reached too soon for a pass from the center.

"Ball!" screamed Jimmy Powers.

Buddy's heart stood still. Pompton boys and Fairview boys were scrambling for the bounding oval. He saw a chance and threw himself forward. A Pompton player blocked his path. He slipped, twisted on one leg, and felt a sickening shock of pain.

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It seemed hours later that the sea of tangled arms and legs righted themselves. The referee's voice said, "Pompton's ball." The players scrambled to their feet. Buddy lay still.

Jimmy ran to his side. "Hurt? Where?"

"Ankle," Buddy said weakly.

They carried him to the side-line, and Boice went in. Mr. Ferris examined the hurt.

"Slight sprain," he said. "This will keep you off your feet for a while, Bud."

Buddy sighed, and looked out at the field. Fairview had the ball again; and while he watched, Boice shot one of his perfect forward passes. The boys who had formed around him as he was carried off, cheered and broke away, and ran up the field to follow Fairview's gain. Schuyler and two of his own squad carried him home.

For three days he chafed in a chair while his mother kept cold compresses on his ankle. Mr. Ferris came once to see him, and every evening for the first few days some of the players dropped in. After he started to hobble around the visits ceased and he was left alone.

Five days later he was back in classes. He spoke to Mr. Ferris about coming to the field.

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"Next week," said the coach. "Give that ankle a chance to mend."

So it was not until the tenth day that Buddy once more donned his uniform. For a moment, in the locker room, the squad hovered about him—but only for a moment. There were other things to think about; and, besides, there was no novelty to an injury ten days after it had happened.

Buddy strapped on an ankle bandage. By the time he was ready the locker room was deserted. When he reached the field the practice was on. Boice was running the second team.

Buddy had pictured the practice running on day after day just as he had left it. Before many minutes had passed, his heart was down in his shoes. While he had been away the character of the work had undergone a complete change. There were criss-crosses, and trick plays, and special formations, and plays in which boys in the line circled back to run with the ball. He had never seen such a variety of offensive skill. He felt that he had been hopelessly left back. He was lost.

All during the practice he waited for the call that did not come. After all, why should they put

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him in when he knew only the simple formations? The squad was far past that.

At the end he tramped back to the locker room. He went along on the outskirts of the crowd, listening, but taking no part in the shouting and the talking.

The school, Buddy reflected, had become too big to hold back and wait for those who lagged. If a player faltered, somebody else took his place. It was necessary. It was the luck of the game.

He was no longer a player of importance. He was merely a cog in a busy, highly-efficient machine. It was something new, this merely being a cog. There had been no cogs at the old Fairview. It was all right, of course—but it stung.

CHAPTER III

A QUESTION TO DECIDE

BUDDY'S standards of what was right and what was wrong were probably as high as those of any boy at Fairview. He believed in standing by. It was part of his creed to play fair. But he had never before been called upon to take the poor, unnoticed portion of the scrub, to spend his days in obscurity, and to stand aside in silence when the games were played.

At little Fairview there had been no stepping aside. Even the substitutes were important because there were so few of them. At big Fairview, though, all this was changed. Everything seemed a business-like, self-centered scramble, with those players who could not stand at the top ingloriously cast aside.

Buddy would have been indignant had anybody told him that he was selfish. And yet that was

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just his trouble. He was piqued to find himself of such small importance.

Nor was he entirely to blame for his feelings. Fairview in the past had been too small to teach him some valuable lessons of service. Students of big schools learn to accept the scrub cheerfully, for it is only the lucky few who make the teams. Buddy, on the other hand, was used to a system where, with only a handful of candidates, almost everybody won a place. He was going to find it difficult to accept a minor part and yet give his best with a whole heart.

There was one person at school who understood pretty well what was passing through his mind. And because he did understand, Mr. Ferris tried to soothe the unaccustomed hurt. Perhaps, he thought, a friendly word of explanation would set the boy right. When Buddy left the locker room, he followed him to the hall and took his arm.

"Upstairs," he said.

Buddy went wonderingly. Was Mr. Ferris going to tell him that he had better not come out any more? He braced himself to take the blow.

The coach led the way into his class-room. From

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the desk at the front of the room he took a paper.

"Ankle all right?" he asked.

Buddy said it was, and moved it quickly from side to side.

"Good! Here are the signals for the new plays, and diagrams of how they go. Can you get them in a couple of days?"

Buddy's head was in a whirl. Was he going to get another chance?

"Yes, sir," he managed to say.

"All right! Now, here's the idea, Buddy. Ankles are the trickiest spots in a football player's body. Once you injure them, you never know when you're going to have a come-back that same season. You lost ten days when the eleven was just finding itself as a team. Added to that, you have the liability of a suspicious ankle. Those two facts almost bar you from the first team. Mind, I don't say you can't make the team, but the chances are against it."

Buddy's face lengthened. The hand that held the paper fell to his side. Of what use was it to learn new plays if the way to the school team was barred?

"The sooner you master those plays," said the

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coach, "the sooner you can begin to run through them with the scrub. By next week I can put you in the practice scrimmages."

Buddy's face did not brighten.

"I'm depending on you," said Mr. Ferris.

Something in the way he said it made the boy look up. After a moment his eyes fell.

"To do what, sir?" he asked.

"To help me move Boice over so that he can give all his time to the first team."

Buddy's face went blank. Was the coach coaxing him to deliberately push a rival player into the place of honor?

"I'm afraid you do not understand," Mr. Ferris said gently. "The first team must have at least two quarterbacks. If these two boys can devote all their attention to that one job, the first team's playing will become smoother and stronger. If you can pilot the scrub successfully, Boice can devote all his time to helping Terry. It will be the old story of a one-job man knowing that one job well. But it's all up to you."

Buddy's hand moved, and he looked at the paper. Somehow, what the man had said thrilled him. He

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could not quite understand it, but the sting in his heart was soothed.

“What you will be doing,” the coach went on, “will be just as important to Fairview as though you were out there with the team.”

There was an interval of silence.

“I’ll do my best,” Buddy said at last. When they came downstairs, later, the coach’s hand rested on his shoulder.

Monday Buddy went to the scrub with a grim determination to do what Mr. Ferris had asked. When the final whistle blew Terry McCarthy yanked off his head-piece and rubbed a dirty sweater sleeve across his face.

“Fast work,” he grinned.

Buddy grinned in return. He wasn’t going to let anybody see that he didn’t enjoy his job.

“Come on, team,” cried Mr. Ferris; “up to the locker room on a trot.” Then, almost as an after-thought: “Hurry, scrub.”

Terry turned away. Buddy watched him cross the field. Suddenly, for the first time since their paths had crossed, he felt that there was something about Terry that he did not like. It was not jealousy.

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It was something that Terry did—something he could not analyze.

That afternoon, in the dressing room, Mr. Ferris went over that day's play while the first team, partly dressed, crowded around him. Nobody advised the scrub. Buddy went out with a wistful, side-long glance at the group.

Five days a week he worked at the drudgery of furnishing stiff practice for a stronger, abler team. On the sixth day—game day—he sat on the side line and watched that stronger team play. He had all the first team's signals now, but there was never a call for him to go in. Nor was there ever a place for him in the councils of war that were held at the coach's home. Terry McCarthy sat in them—and so did Boice.

"Anyway," Buddy told himself sturdily, "I'm giving Boice his chance."

One day there was a bitter, wearying practice on a muddy field. All afternoon the scrub was kept on defensive. The first team battered away until it had perfected three new plays.

"That's all," said the coach.

A raw chill had come down out of the north. Buddy was tired and sore. Terry, carelessly swing-

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ing his headpiece, went past him whistling. All at once the feeling of antagonism came again. There was something about Terry now that he did not like and could never like.

To-night, as he went back toward the school, Schuyler Arch walked at his side.

"I've been wondering," said Schuyler, "how I'd feel next spring if some new fellows should walk away with all the pitching honors."

"Well?" Buddy asked sharply. He was the baseball captain, and this interested him.

"If that happens," Schuyler answered, "it will be easier for me to swallow it after seeing the way you've played on the scrub."

Buddy drew a deep breath. His tired back straightened. It was good to know that even in the lowly scrub it made a difference to somebody how you carried your load.

In the days that followed he tried hard to throw off the resentment that stole over him every time he watched Terry play. The quarterback always greeted him with a smile and a cheery word, and many times walked with him from the school to the field. Terry's friendliness made him feel guilty, as though he were harboring dark thoughts against

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a boy who deserved better treatment. What was it about the quarterback that aroused his ire?

The feeling was with him when Fairview defeated Saddle River. It was with him when the team tore through Gates's defenses. It was still in his heart when, in the final game of the season, Fairview beat the ancient enemy Irontown as no Irontown eleven had ever been beaten before.

Substitutes and students ran shrieking along the side lines as Fairview piled up her score. Buddy, burrowing deep into the warmth of his sweater, walked the line in silence. Why was he dissatisfied even in this great moment of victory? Why was he dissatisfied?

All of a sudden the mists were gone and he knew. Terry was playing a great game, but it was the great of the superb, natural-born athlete to whom all games are easy. It lacked a certain divine something that was in the playing of Captain Jimmy Powers. Had you asked any boy in school was Jimmy as good as Terry, there would have been a laugh. And yet Jimmy had the thing that Terry McCarthy lacked.

Not that Buddy doubted the quarterback's loyalty. Terry was for Fairview. He played easily

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and well because it was his good fortune to be able to play easily and well. Where another boy would not have been satisfied short of the best that his strength could give, Terry was content to rest on just being very good. A defeat would have filled him with genuine sorrow; but it would have been sorrow because the team had lost a game, and not sorrow because the record of the school had suffered a black mark.

All this Buddy now saw clearly. If Terry was going to play baseball like that—— He thrust the thought aside. Why borrow trouble? Anyway, if a fellow could play a game like sixty, maybe it would be unfair to ask him to strain himself to play it like seventy.

But for all that, Buddy knew that he would never be satisfied with anything less than any player's best.

As soon as the final whistle shrilled, the hilarious students charged out upon the field. Jimmy Powers and Terry and the other players were hoisted on willing shoulders. A noisy procession moved toward the school. Fairview's hymn rose triumphantly from throats to whom it was almost new:

Fairview's Glory

Words by
WILLIAM HEYLIGER

Music by
FRANK J. WALSH
Arr. by John Schilling

Marcato

Piano introduction in D major, 2/4 time. The music is marked *f* and *Marcato*. It consists of two staves: a treble staff with a melody and a bass staff with a harmonic accompaniment.

First vocal line with piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Come lift your voices let them ring to / Though storms may threaten to engulf and". The piano part is marked *f*.

Second vocal line with piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Fair-view's praise and glory No stain shall darken / tempests may endanger Her courage will throw". The piano part has a *fz* marking.

Third vocal line with piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "a - ny page of Fair-views splen - did stor - y } Then / off the yolk and make of woe a stran - ger)". The piano part is marked *p*.

here's to her long may she light the path of hon - or

and of right Fair-view the brav-est of the brave long

may her no - ble ban - ners wave Fair - view the

brav. est of the brave long may her no - ble ban - ners wave.

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Never, Buddy thought wistfully, had the old school hymn sounded finer. He wondered how much it really meant to one of the boys up there.

He stood listening until the crowd turned a corner. Several sweaters had been left where the first team players had piled them. He gathered them up, and followed in the wake of the procession.

At the school there was a great deal of shouting and cheering coming from the basement. The main corridor was deserted. Near the head of the staircase leading to the locker rooms he met the coach.

“Good boy, Buddy,” cried Mr. Ferris. “I was on my way back for those.”

Buddy handed the sweaters over and started down the stairs. The coach’s hand detained him.

“What did you think of the game?”

“Great, sir.”

“And the team?”

Buddy read what lay behind the question. His lips formed a wry smile. “You were right—the scrub was where I belonged. They were too fast for me.”

“And yet,” said the coach, “it was the scrub that hardened the team, and toughened it, and made it

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what it was to-day. You stood by me and you stood by the school."

"I wish I could have done more," Buddy said huskily. It was the first time he had really wished that. He hurried down the stairs.

That night, with his football togs tied into a bundle, he reached the gate just as Bob came down the street. They walked into the house together.

"Season over?" Bob asked.

Buddy nodded.

"Did you get a chance to-day?"

The boy shook his head. The Irontown game was far from his thoughts. "Mr. Ferris is a prince," he said, and went upstairs to put the uniform away.

A week later the football season was only a memory, and the school turned eagerly to basketball. But though Buddy encouraged the new sport at practice periods and attended the games, his heart was back with the season that had ended. Time and again his mind reviewed three scenes—the day he had first met Mr. Ferris, the time he had been asked to surrender his ambitions and to content himself with the scrub, and that last talk at the head of the locker room stairs.

He felt toward Mr. Ferris as he had felt toward

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no other man. Respect, and admiration, and fervor all united to form a sentiment that was almost hero worship. It was electric; it filled him with an emotion that was deep and profound. Oh, but being captain of the baseball team would be wonderful next spring. He would be in Mr. Ferris's confidence; he would go out to his house and sit with him and plan. A warm thrill ran through his veins.

Sometimes he thought of Terry. Would Terry play baseball as he had played football? Usually Buddy shrugged his shoulders and cast the thought aside. Why worry now? But sometimes he sighed. Why couldn't Terry have that ounce—just that little ounce—of hot, passionate ardor?

The basketball team had an indifferent season. It was not one of Mr. Ferris's games, and he did not try to coach. The team made poor progress. Sometimes it won, but most of the time it lost. Irontown, in the last game of the season, took ample revenge for her football defeat, and went home singing *Men of Iron* with lusty joy.

The basketball season ended in January. After that there was a lull. Down in the gymnasium, broad jumpers and high jumpers got some prac-

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tice, but everything else seemed dead. About the middle of February came days that were almost mild. Suddenly the track candidates assembled, and went out for easy jogging runs through the town.

Buddy told himself that it would soon be time for baseball. That afternoon Mr. Ferris stopped him in one of the halls.

"How about starting something?" the coach asked.

"Could we?" Buddy demanded eagerly.

Mr. Ferris smiled. "There's a lot to be done. We know nothing about most of these boys. Can you come to my house Friday night?"

Could he? Buddy drew a deep breath. He would like to see anything stop him!

Friday night he sat in Mr. Ferris's library with fast-beating heart. Two chairs, deep and wide and comfortable, were drawn up in front of a glowing grate fire.

"The first thing," said Mr. Ferris, "is to find out what material we have, what it can do, and how well it can do it. We must find that out at once."

"Before practice starts?" Buddy asked.

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"Oh, yes. Then we won't be swamped the first week or two."

This was something new. Buddy never before had heard of getting a line on a player before a ball was thrown.

"Can we?" he asked.

"Well, not absolutely, but after a fashion. I have thought of using a sort of card index of our resources. This is what I had in mind. What do you think of it?"

The coach held out a slip of paper. Buddy took it and read it slowly:

NAME
AGE HEIGHT WEIGHT
WHERE DID YOU PLAY LAST
HOW LONG WHAT POSITION
HOW DO YOU BAT THROW
BATTING AVERAGE FIELDING AVERAGE
IF PITCHER GIVE GAMES WON LOST

Buddy stared at the paper a long time. He couldn't grasp just what it all meant.

"In asking how they bat," said Mr. Ferris, "we're looking pretty far ahead, perhaps. If almost everybody should happen to be a right-handed hitter, it

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might be good policy to take special pains to develop a few left-handers."

Buddy could see that. Many school pitchers who were strong against right-handers, seemed to be bothered by a left-handed boy's position at the plate.

"How about age, height and weight?" he asked.

"Weight is important. If a fellow carries too much, he's apt to be slow. If he carries not enough, he may lack stamina. We want his height to judge what his weight means."

"And age?"

"An 18-year-old player ought to be better than a 16-year-old. He's had a two-year advantage in learning to play his game."

Buddy thought he began to see all the possibilities of the card.

"And the games won and lost will give us a line on the pitchers," he said eagerly.

The coach smiled and shook his head. "That line is plain fishing. It's a good thing to know, but you can't rely on it too much."

Buddy's eyes asked why.

"Because," Mr. Ferris explained, "a boy who won a lot of games may have pitched poor ball and yet have won because his team-mates could slug.

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A pitcher possessing what looks like a poor record, may have done good work for a very weak team."

Buddy was frankly puzzled. What good, then, was that last line?

"If we know his school," said the coach, "we can easily learn what teams it faced and their strength. That will help some."

Buddy nodded. He saw it now. Nobody but Mr. Ferris, he was sure, would ever have thought of such a scheme.

"Like it?" the coach asked.

"Great!" Buddy cried impulsively.

"Shall we have the cards printed?"

"You bet. Gosh! we're going to have baseball with science, aren't we?"

"We'll try," Mr. Ferris smiled.

On the way home it dawned on Buddy that the coach had not once said "I." It had always been "we." He thrilled at this fresh evidence of their partnership.

When the cards came from the printers, a notice was posted calling upon all baseball candidates to register. That afternoon forty cards were given out. By Friday all were returned, and Buddy went again to Mr. Ferris's house.

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For more than an hour they worked at the library table. Then Mr. Ferris leaned back in his chair and smiled. Buddy's face wore a wide grin.

"Gosh!" he said; "can't those fellows hit? What's the grand average?"

"Let me see." The coach searched for the paper he wanted. "Here it is—.285."

Buddy's eyes snapped. A team with such hitters ought to make trouble for any pitcher.

"It's a nicely split up squad," the coach went on. "Five pitchers, four catchers, thirteen infielders and eighteen outfielders. Just enough of everything and not too much of anything. And the fielding averages are good, too."

"We ought to be able to get a swell team," Buddy exulted. His mind was still on the batting averages. "Who was high?" he asked.

"Terry McCarthy," said the coach.

Buddy nodded. "I might have known that. I saw him hit in a scrub game last September. What's his average?"

"For eighteen games, .349."

Buddy whistled. With Terry hitting like that and playing like sixty—— His face grew troubled.

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Would Terry play with all his heart, or just with his capable, natural skill?

Mr. Ferris saw the troubled look, and immediately jumped to a conclusion. "What was your batting average last year?" he asked suddenly.

"Two-eighty-five," said Buddy. He threw aside the thought that kept plaguing him every so often. The talk turned to the five pitching candidates. An hour later, when Buddy started for home, he left behind him a coach who thought, regretfully, that the first pangs of jealousy had entered a captain's heart.

But jealousy had no place in Buddy's thoughts. He did not view Terry as a rival. He was the captain. He had supreme authority to say who should play and who should sit on the bench.

Not that he would ever have insisted on playing had he believed it to be against the best interests of the school. But he had been elected captain for what? To lead, of course. To his mind, being captain of a team was like being captain of a company in war. You were expected to lead because it was your place. You had to be out in front, encouraging, urging, and showing the way. Of course, in minor engagements, a lieutenant could

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be sent out to take command; but when the big moments came a captain's duty was to be in the van. Playing ability, as Buddy saw it, didn't altogether count. In war, captains weren't selected because they were better fighters, but because they were better leaders while the fight was on. How could a captain lead from the bench?

If Buddy gave Terry, as catcher, a thought at all, it was to view him as a lieutenant. It never dawned on him that sometimes even a captain might have to stand aside.

The following Wednesday the baseball candidates got their first taste of work. They came crowding to the gymnasium as soon as classes were over. The windows were protected by heavy wire, and there was plenty of room to throw a baseball around. They raced 'out on the floor, and were promptly shooed off.

Buddy and Mr. Ferris had decided that forty boys in the place at once would be too much. The squad was broken into three groups. Sixteen boys were assigned to practice from 3 o'clock until 3:30; fifteen from 3:30 to 4, and nine for the last half hour. Those nine were the pitchers and the catchers.

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As soon as the first group had taken the floor, Mr. Ferris outlined the program:

“Ten minutes of exercises to limber up, fellows, and then twenty minutes of throwing and catching the ball. Everything is barred except gentle tosses. That will be the program until we get outdoors.”

“Gee!” said a voice. “Nothing but baby throws.”

“Right!” said the coach. “Your hands will get used to the feel of the ball, and your throwing muscles will come to life. That’s all we want now. Of course, if any of you fellows know more about this than I do, or have a better plan——”

“You’re the boss, coach,” a laughing voice called, and the first squad got to work.

Buddy found this a wonderful afternoon. It was exhilarating to take his place in that last group and to feel a baseball once more plunking solidly into his glove. It was greater still to find Mr. Ferris behind him watching the work with quiet, steady eyes. It filled him with a confidence he had never known before.

Two of the pitching candidates threw to him—Schuyler Arch and a boy named Dodd. Down at the other end Vanelli, a stocky lad, threw to Terry

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McCarthy. The other pitchers and catchers were sandwiched in between.

When the work for the day ended, Terry threw his glove into his locker. "Husky-looking bunch," he said genially to Buddy.

Buddy nodded eagerly. "We ought to find the makings of a good team."

"Ought to," said Terry, and went off down the room whistling.

Buddy frowned. Then Schuyler's voice sounded in his ear.

"They shape up great, don't they? How was Dodd? A little wild?"

Buddy nodded again, this time absently. Why couldn't Terry show a little of that quick interest?

A week later the gentle work had limbered muscles that had lain dormant over the winter. Baseballs were now being thrown with some force. Even the pitchers were using a dash of speed.

There were times when those forty candidates made Buddy's head swim. Without Mr. Ferris's aid, he knew, it would have been impossible for him to have handled so many boys.

The pitchers bothered him the most. He had caught them all in turn, but seemed unable to judge

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their abilities. Schuyler Arch, he knew from experience, was good. Dodd, he was sure, would fail because he could not control the ball. With respect to the others—Vanelli, O'Rourke and Stuart—he was completely in the dark.

Inquiries had been sent to their old schools. There came a day, at the end of the practice, when Mr. Ferris drew him aside and handed him three letters.

"There's the dope," the coach said. "We know now where we stand."

"Just from what the letters say?" Buddy asked.

"From that, and also from what we can see in here. Stuart is out of it. He goes to pieces after three or four innings. His weight looked to be against him all along. Remember? We spoke about that."

Buddy wrinkled his forehead. Yes; the coach had made that prediction.

"O'Rourke's record looks good, and I have liked the way he handles himself. That brings us to Vanelli. I think he's going to be our big gun."

"Better than Schuyler?" Buddy asked.

"I think so."

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The captain was astounded. He had had a dim idea that stocky, slow-moving Vanelli was too sluggish.

"He's just as calm with the bases full and none out," said the coach. "That's his nature. Unless I miss my guess, he'll move fast enough when there's cause for speed."

Buddy looked down the room to where Vanelli was standing in front of his locker. Once more he felt how good it was to have Mr. Ferris to lean on. He would never have suspected great possibilities in the pitcher.

Terry McCarthy, ready for the street, sauntered down the room. "Hello, Bud," he greeted, and turned to the man. "That chap Vanelli looks like the goods to me, coach."

"Thank you," Mr. Ferris said smiling. "We'll keep an eye on him."

Terry went up the stairs. Buddy turned slowly toward his own locker. Mr. Ferris gave him a quick look.

Back in the football days Buddy had felt a sense of inferiority when Terry was around. Now he experienced the same sensation. It made him uncomfortable. Plainly Terry's knowledge of the

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pitchers was greater than his—and he was captain and supposed to know most about his team.

It was a long time since he had gone to Bob with a school problem, but he went to him to-night.

“How about Jimmy Powers?” Bob asked. “He was captain. Was he a better football player than Terry? Did he know more about the game?”

Buddy shook his head. No; Terry had been the best player on the team, and had known most about the game.

“It isn’t so much what a captain does himself,” said Bob. “It’s what he does for the team.”

Buddy gave a sigh of relief—and then his face grew thoughtful. What he does for the team! A new idea came to him.

Next morning he met Mr. Ferris outside the school. “Could Terry come to our conferences?” he asked.

The coach’s face was expressionless. “Why?”

“He knows the game,” Buddy said simply.

He wondered what Mr. Ferris would say to that. The coach said nothing just then. Somehow, though, it seemed to be understood that Terry should come. They walked into the school building together.

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"Buddy," said the coach, "I was beginning to worry about you."

"About me?" the boy asked in surprise.

"But not now." Mr. Ferris smiled at him, and gave him a playful push toward the cloak room.

At noon he met Terry, and asked him could he come Friday night.

"Sure thing." Terry glanced critically at the swelling buds on the trees. "When will we get outdoors?"

"Next week, I guess," said Buddy.

But it was twelve days before the squad, shouting and skylarking, poured out of the locker room for its first practice on the village field.

And now Buddy found that his days were filled with a wonderful zest. In the soft spring afternoons he caught the pitchers, and batted to the infielders, and tried to give watchful attention to everything that happened. Ten boys had been dropped, and the squad was now down to thirty. But even thirty kept him busier than he had ever been before.

Best of all were the times when he walked about the field with Mr. Ferris, watching the work and discussing the players. Little by little he began to

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see things through the coach's eyes—a fault here, a virtue there. He learned more baseball during those walks than he had ever known, and his respect and admiration for the man who taught him grew richer and deeper. Whatever Mr. Ferris said was law. He longed for the time when the first game would be played, for then they would go into battle together—he directing the battle from behind the plate, and the coach advising and encouraging from the bench.

By and by two teams were formed and practice games were started. Sometimes he played on one team, and sometimes on the other. Sometimes he caught Vanelli, and at other times Schuyler or O'Rourke. Dodd had been dropped, but Stuart had been held. Stuart would come in useful if a pitcher had to be rushed into the breach at the tail end of a game. He was always good for two or three innings.

Sometimes Buddy's team won; sometimes Terry McCarthy's team won. After one of these tussles, Schuyler walked back to the locker room with the captain.

"How is Mr. Ferris rating Vanelli?" the pitcher asked. "Better than me?"

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The question was like a bomb-shell. Buddy hesitated.

"Oh, of course he is," Schuyler broke out. "What's the use of dodging? There's a whole lot of us who were stars last year who are going to play second fiddle this year." He was silent a moment. "It's great, though," he went on, "to be tied up with a bunch like this. It's going to be a great team."

Buddy nodded in spite of himself. Yes; it was going to be a great team. In a corner of the locker-room he told the coach what Schuyler had said.

"Was he sore?" Mr. Ferris demanded,

"No, sir."

A boy came limping with a slight spike cut. Mr. Ferris examined the wound, gave directions for its care, and sent the player away.

"In a big school," he said, "only a few can have the honors. Service—that's what counts. That's what the big school teaches. To do the right thing even though it hurts, to step aside because it seems best——" He broke off abruptly, and though Buddy waited for him to go on, he said no more.

Buddy's mind was troubled. What did the coach mean?

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“Van had a hop on his fast one to-day, didn’t he?” Terry called across the room.

Buddy hadn’t noticed. He stared hard at the other boy. Step aside—— And then he shook his head impatiently. He was imagining things.

March gave way to April. Up to a certain point, the work of the squad had increased steadily in smoothness and speed. Now, though, it seemed to have halted. Boys were moved from one team to another and different combinations were tried, but all to no purpose. Improvement seemed to have come to an end. And yet Buddy felt that the candidates were capable of far greater effort.

They talked it over at the Friday night conferences—at least he did. On this one subject Mr. Ferris was strangely silent. Terry was openly hostile.

“I don’t know where you get that complaint,” he said. “If you ask me, I’d say that the bunch was playing mighty swell ball.”

“They are,” Buddy agreed. “But if they would try harder——”

“What’s the difference?” Terry argued. “Good is good. We’re in a county league. When you win

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a game you get just so many points whether the score is 15—0 or 2—1.”

That was true enough. Nevertheless, Buddy felt that the logic was false. And he was sure that Schuyler Arch would not have uttered it, or Jimmy Powers, or any one of a dozen boys who were no longer at Fairview.

It was almost time for the county pennant fight to start. Wednesday of next week the first games were to be played—Fairview at Saddle River, Iron-town against Pompton, Brunswick against Hasbrouck, Lackawanna against Bloomfield, and Gates against Garrison. And as yet Fairview had not selected her team.

Perhaps, Buddy thought, that was why Mr. Ferris had made no comment while he and Terry had argued. The coach was probably weighing the merits of this player and that.

Monday's practice was tense with uncertainty. For two hours Mr. Ferris kept the players hitting, hitting, hitting. Twice Terry McCarthy sent the ball screaming to the outfield, and turned away from the plate with his easy, confident air. Buddy found himself wishing that he could hit like that.

When the work was done he walked off with the

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coach. Mr. Ferris's forehead was puckered as though he was deep in thought. Once or twice Buddy imagined that the man gave him quick, side-long glances, but he was not sure. As they came in sight of the high school building the coach broke the silence.

"Suppose we pick the nine to-night. I'll be looking for you at eight o'clock."

"I'll tell Terry," Buddy cried, "and——"

"No," said the coach; "Terry's out of this. Just you and me to-night."

To Buddy, this was fresh evidence of their intimacy. Other fellows could come into small conferences, but when the big questions came, it was he and the coach alone. Oh, wouldn't it be great to catch that opening game and to feel that Mr. Ferris was back there on the bench to help in an emergency—partner, coach, and friend?

He was in high spirits at the supper table. Tomorrow, no doubt, the batting order would be posted. Many boys would be disappointed. That thought sobered him.

Nevertheless, his nerves were jumping with excitement as he rang the coach's door bell. He expected this conference to be wonderful indeed; yet,

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when they sat down with the list of players between them, an atmosphere of gravity, of something stern that had to be done, settled over the room. His mind, strangely, went back to something the coach had said—to do the right thing even though it hurts, to step aside because it seems best!

“Suppose we play Rood at second,” Mr. Ferris said. “He’s almost a sure fielder on ground balls. His throwing arm isn’t any too strong, but the throw from the second-base position to first is short.”

“He’s a good waiter at the plate,” said Buddy, “and a foxy base-runner.”

“Let’s make him lead-off man,” said the coach.

So Buddy wrote “Rood, 2B.” The construction of Fairview’s batting order had started.

Half an hour later it was almost finished. The boy stared at the result. Many of the choices he would not have made, but Mr. Ferris had shown him that they were wise:

Rood, 2B
Meyers, CF
Grant, RF
Walters, SS
Lewis, 1B
Baxter, LF
Daly, 3B

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"There's no need of telling you," said the coach, "the importance of winning the first game."

Buddy shook his head. This was not his first year as captain. He knew.

"It starts you off with confidence," the coach went on. "A team that loses its first game always goes into its second struggle wondering if it will lose again. You understand that, Bud, don't you?"

Buddy nodded again.

"Good! Now, as to the pitchers——"

"Vanelli," Buddy said promptly. Schuyler was his friend, and he wished with all his heart that he could give Schuyler this important assignment. But facts were facts. Vanelli was unquestionably the better pitcher.

The coach wrote the name. Then he began to play idly with his pencil, making strange, grotesque figures on the paper.

Buddy sat back in his chair, and a peace stole through him. The tension was over. The selections had been made. And as he sat there the minutes passed. Nothing was said. Gradually it

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dawned on him that this silence seemed queer. He did not know what to make of it.

The coach looked up. "There's still one position to fill," he said quietly.

Buddy nodded. His own position. There did not seem to be any question about that.

"Who'll catch?" Mr. Ferris asked.

"Why," Buddy stammered in surprise, "I thought I would——"

Suddenly the red flamed into his cheeks. It burned him, scorched him, stung him. Gone from his heart was that sense of peace. He understood now why Terry had not been invited to that conference.

"Why," he stammered again, "I thought that I——" He could not go on. His voice choked. All his world seemed to have toppled over in a moment. He, the captain, and not in the first game of the season?

"There's no hurry," Mr. Ferris said gently. "Suppose we let this go over until to-morrow."

Mechanically he stood up, and got his cap, and followed the man to the door. What was said there he did not know. He passed out into the

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balmy, sweet-smelling spring night and turned toward home. Everything seemed unreal—the houses, the trees, the lights in the windows—everything except the fact that the coach thought that Fairview's captain was not the boy to lead Fairview into its first game.

CHAPTER IV

BATTERY ERRORS

WHEN Buddy reached home, Bob was sitting at the dining-room table reading a technical magazine.

"Hello!" he said in surprise. "I thought you went to Mr. Ferris's house to pick the team."

Buddy sank into a chair. "We did."

"You don't look as though you had a happy time."

"Mr. Ferris does not think I ought to play."

Bob closed the magazine slowly and pushed it aside. "What did he say?"

So Buddy told what had happened. Bob began to drum on the table and to whistle under his breath. Presently he asked:

"Well, what are you going to do?"

"I—I don't know," Buddy answered helplessly.

"Terry can outhit me. There's no question of that.

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But—— Oh, I don't know what to do. Hitting isn't everything."

"Mr. Ferris didn't say you couldn't play, did he?"

"No; he couldn't say that. I have the right to pick the team. But——" Buddy fell into a silence and stared across the room.

"It isn't that I want the glory of playing," he said at last. "Of course, I'd like to play. Every fellow who came out for the team would like to play. I want to do what's best for the team. But I'm captain. The team expects a captain to lead. The school expects it. That's why captains have the final say as to who shall play. If this was any other game than the first—— You know what I mean, Bob?"

"Yes," said Bob.

Once more Buddy was silent. Suppose Terry should play the same easy game behind the bat he had played as quarterback. Wouldn't it be better for a team to have a leader who would give everything he had—everything? Of course he couldn't say that to Mr. Ferris. It would sound like knocking. He couldn't even say it to Bob.

"If only this question hadn't come up," he told

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himself wistfully. But it had come up, and it had to be met.

He knew that sometimes a player will merely play the game in one sport, and throw himself heart and soul into another. He couldn't sit still on the bench and watch Terry take things easy while Fairview fought for the county pennant. He couldn't! It meant too much. If he was sure that a new Terry would go behind the bat, a Terry who would give just that extra ounce——

"I'd play him," he muttered.

"What's that?" Bob asked. "You'd play whom?"

"I was thinking," said Buddy. His eyes met his brother's across the table. They stared at each other for one long, full minute.

"What would you do, Bob?" Buddy asked in a low voice.

"It's your problem," Bob said gently. "You're the captain."

Buddy went upstairs. Instead of going to bed he sat beside the window. It was his problem. Bob had refused to help solve it. Mr. Ferris had placed it squarely in his hands. Either he would lead Fairview or Terry would lead. The decision was his to make.

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He had a feeling that on that decision much depended. It seemed, somehow, that the whole future of the nine was involved. If he made a mistake, it might affect the nine all season. He wanted to do what was right—but what was right?

As he sat there, he remembered that day in the locker room when the coach had spoken of service. He remembered the exact words: "To do the right thing even though it hurts; to step aside because it seems best."

"But is it best?" Buddy asked himself miserably. "I know Terry's better than me in some things. But look how he jumped on me for saying the fellows should play harder."

The memory of that argument was fresh in his mind. "What's the difference?" Terry had argued; "good is good." Buddy sighed. There was a difference. Good could never be good enough while there was a chance for it to be better.

He arose from his place and began to undress. His mind was made up at last. He would play!

He went to bed determined to tell Mr. Ferris the first thing in the morning. But when morning came his resolution was sadly shaken. He put his books under his arm and walked slowly to school.

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He met Mr. Ferris in the main coach was on his way to the principal's office.

"Hello, Buddy!" he greeted. There was nothing to indicate that anything out of the ordinary had happened last night.

Buddy had it on his tongue to say what was on his mind. Somehow, the words would not come. They chatted a moment. Mr. Ferris glanced at his watch, said he'd have to hurry, and disappeared into Dr. Minor's office. Buddy went up the stairs.

"Who'll pitch the opener?" Schuyler Arch whispered as they met. "Vanelli?"

Buddy nodded.

"Saddle River won't touch him," Schuyler predicted. "Got the whole team picked?"

Buddy nodded once more.

"Better post it," Schuyler advised. "The squad is getting restless."

Buddy knew that. It had been apparent during yesterday's practice. He could have gone into the locker room and have posted the line-up that minute, but first he wanted to tell the coach. He went to his class-room hesitatingly, as though something whispered to him to turn back and announce his intention without delay.

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At noon he saw Mr. Ferris again—and again the words would not come. He had no appetite for his dinner. He returned to school hoping he would meet the coach, and glad that he had not. And so the afternoon passed, and classes at length were over.

Buddy came out into the corridor. Near the stairs Mr. Ferris was waiting.

“We must post that batting order to-day,” the man said gently.

The captain flushed. All at once he felt like a boy who had tried to run away and who had at last been cornered.

“I—I’m going to catch,” he said.

It was out now—at last. He wondered if the coach would try to change his mind. To his surprise, Mr. Ferris made no comment.

“Suppose we get a line-up typewritten?” he asked. “That will look more business-like. It won’t take but a moment.”

Buddy, waiting in the hall, heard the clatter of typewriter keys. Presently Mr. Ferris came back. Across the paper was typed in capital letters:

THE FOLLOWING PLAYERS WILL REPRESENT
FAIRVIEW IN THE GAME AGAINST
SADDLE RIVER.

BATTERY ERRORS

They walked downstairs. Buddy was sorely troubled. What did Mr. Ferris think of him? He wanted the coach to understand that he wasn't trying to squeeze into the limelight.

"I—I think it's my duty to catch," he began. "I——"

"It's all right, Buddy," Mr. Ferris interrupted. "You're the captain. You don't have to explain."

And then they were in the locker-room.

Buddy was sure that Mr. Ferris was disappointed in him. He walked to the announcement board, posted the notice, and abruptly turned toward his own locker.

A silence fell over the room. All around him he could feel a dramatic tension. There it was, the fate of the squad, and yet not a boy moved toward it. No one, apparently, wanted to show too much anxiety.

"Gentlemen," a deep voice called, "step forward and view the plums and the lemons."

That brought a shout of laughter. The tension snapped. There was a rush for the board.

Buddy watched the squad covertly. Rood and Grant, catching each other by the arms, did a crazy dance down the room.

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"We made it," Grant cried.

Other boys turned away disappointed. Vanelli, after a slow reading of the names, went on with his dressing as though there was nothing to get excited about. Buddy envied the pitcher his calmness.

Terry had been lacing his shoes, and had not joined in the rush. When all the others had turned away, he walked forward. There was something dramatic in the fact that he was the last boy to approach the board. Buddy felt a strange tightness in his throat.

Terry whistled softly as he read the line-up. If he was chagrined not to find his own name there he did not show it. Still whistling, he got his glove and waited at the door for the others.

Buddy made short work of getting into uniform. Now that he had made his choice, he was impatient to go into action. He felt that his judgment was on trial. He had elected to go contrary to the coach's wishes. It was imperative that he prove that he had done the wise thing—and the only place to prove it was on the field.

The squad crowded upstairs in a body. Outdoors they split up into groups of twos and threes. Buddy found himself paired with Terry. He wondered if

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the other boy had planned to walk with him, and if so what his purpose was.

Buddy was no feather-weight, but alongside Terry he seemed dwarfed. His shoulders were wide, but Terry's were wider. He was tall, but Terry was taller. Back in the old football days he had experienced a sense of inferiority. To-day he felt something of the same sensation. Even their shadows in the road seemed to emphasize Terry's physical advantages. Of a sudden a word popped into Buddy's mind. The word was "Outclassed," and it made him wince. Perhaps—perhaps he should not be on that list.

"How about Saddle River?" Terry asked. "Can she hit?"

"She could last year," Buddy answered.

"She'll find Vanelli tough picking," Terry went on. "He can't be rattled. He's a regular ice-house. Give him a two-run lead and you can count your game won."

That was Buddy's idea. He thought, too, that two runs should prove easy for the team that had been selected to battle for Fairview. But he made no comment on the line-up. That seemed a dangerous subject.

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They were in sight of the field now. Terry looked down at his glove and began to pluck at the stitches.

"Sometimes," he said slowly, "I think a catcher has the hardest job on the team. When the game is tight, and men are on the bases, and the pitcher is whipping them in, it—it keeps the catcher's heart jumping and fluttering."

"You bet," Buddy agreed.

"Now there's Van." Terry cleared his throat. "He's a tough man to handle in a pinch. When he really cuts loose, his ball has a hop that makes it just zip at you. If you're not right up on your toes and ready for anything—— Say, I'm going to get out there and hit fungoes."

Terry ran out to the field and caught up a bat. Buddy walked on thoughtfully. Was Terry trying to warn him that perhaps he might not be able to hold the pitcher? Or was Terry just sore and trying to worry him?

"No," Buddy told himself honestly. "Terry wouldn't do that." Then Mr. Ferris called him, and he hurried off in answer to the summons.

There was no game to-day, not even a five-inning battle with a scrub. Instead, the newly-formed

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team stayed in the field, and the other boys of the squad went to bat and tried to work their way around the bases. Mr. Ferris explained that the work was intended to give the nine a chance to perfect its defensive play and its defensive signals.

Vanelli occupied the pitching mound for the first fifteen minutes. Buddy, behind the bat, hoped he would cut loose his best if only for one pitch. But Vanelli contented himself with serving the ball with nominal speed. When his time was up he gave way to Schuyler Arch, buttoned a sweater, and disappeared up the street leading toward the school.

Another pitcher, Buddy thought, would be greatly excited at the prospect of pitching the opening game of a league season. Van was surely a queer one. He would probably go back to the locker-room, dress, and then sit on a bench and study until the squad got back. Maybe he did have a vicious curve that he used only when hard pressed in a real game. If that were so, how should Terry know about it? Terry had never seen him in a real game.

"Sleeping, Buddy!" Mr. Ferris called.

The captain, with a start, saw that one of the second string boys had made a clean steal of third base. Thereafter he paid attention to his game. Two

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other base-runners, presuming on that one lapse, took too big a lead off first base and were nipped by quick throws. Buddy refused to be caught napping twice.

When it was all over, Mr. Ferris joined him. "What was the matter, Bud? That was a bad one."

"I was thinking," Buddy answered.

"About what?"

"About something Terry said to me."

The coach looked up quickly. "To-day?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Ferris's face clouded. Just then Terry came along swinging his glove the way he used to swing his nose guard.

"Hello, coach," he called genially. "Hello, Bud. That was nice throwing."

Mr. Ferris's face lost its anxiety. Whatever had been said, the two catchers had not quarreled.

The locker-room that afternoon was a bedlam of excited shouting. Buddy was all on edge for the morrow's game. He remembered how last year, and the year before that, the whole school had been baseball crazy the night before the opening of the league season. He wanted to talk baseball with the squad. But the lockers of the players were scat-

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tered; and besides, baseball merely divided attention now instead of holding all interests. The track team had done something wonderful that day, too—what it was he could not catch—and track team boys wanted to talk only *their* sport. The tennis candidates were all on fire, for they had just received permission to use the courts of the Fairview Tennis Club. For all that the tennis and the track team boys seemed to care, to-morrow might have been the middle of January instead of the start of baseball.

Buddy walked home alone. Now, as never before, he felt the bigness of the school—its divided interests and its scattered energies. Why, there had been a time when everybody had a complete grasp of everything that was happening at Fairview. Times had indeed changed. You could not even keep track of what was going on in your own squad. He was leader of the nine. He was to catch the first game. For all of that, another player had warned him that the pitcher he was to catch had a delivery of which he was wholly in the dark.

Terry had said, "Van's ball takes a hop that just makes it zip at you." Buddy shook his head impatiently. He had caught Vanelli in practice battles.

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He had never seen any tremendous change in Van's delivery. And yet, wasn't it just possible that quiet, slow-moving Van might have something in reserve, something he held for use in supreme moments?

But how would Terry know?

The question was too big for Buddy. He told himself that he'd forget it, and catch his game just as he had caught other games. But the ghost of the problem kept rising in his thoughts all during the hours before bed-time, and it was the first thing that popped into his mind when he opened his eyes in the morning.

It was a glorious day for baseball. Under the stimulus of the sunshine and a balmy southwest wind, Buddy succeeded in banishing his fears. He hurried to school. Somebody told him that Mr. Ferris had gone to the village field with several boys, and he turned his footsteps in that direction.

The coach was driving stakes into the ground in back of the first- and third-base lines, and running ropes from stick to stick.

"Hello, Bud!" he called. "We're getting ready to handle the crowd."

Buddy's heart jumped. A few more hours and that field, now almost deserted, would echo to Fair-

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view's cheers or be dreary with Fairview's dejection.

The work was soon completed. Mr. Ferris glanced at his watch.

"No hurry, fellows. Ten minutes before the first bell. Going back, Buddy?"

The captain nodded. The coach fell into step with him, and asked:

"How did you sleep last night?"

"All right, sir."

"No dreams about scalping tourists from Saddle River?"

Buddy smiled. "No, sir; I just slept."

"Good boy. That's the spirit. Worrying about a game never helps."

Buddy wanted to say that he had worried about curves that took a hop and came at you with a zip. However, having taken the responsibility of placing himself in the line-up, he felt that he could not very well fish for encouragement.

He would not have a study period with Mr. Ferris that day. When they entered the school building, the coach stopped short and put out his hand.

"Let's shake, Buddy."

"On what, sir?"

"On good luck to Fairview."

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They shook hands gravely. Buddy hurried up to his room. His eyes held a strange moisture. What a prince Mr. Ferris was! He had practically refused to follow advice, and yet Mr. Ferris met him on terms of the same old friendly intimacy.

"Maybe," Buddy told himself wistfully, "maybe he'll understand when he sees how hard I'm trying." If Mr. Ferris would understand, nothing else would matter—much.

At noon the school began to take notice of what was to happen that afternoon. The track candidates voted to abandon practice for the day and go to the game, and posted a notice to that effect. When classes reassembled, school flags were much in evidence.

Schuyler Arch, his cheeks flushed, paused at Buddy's desk. "This is like old times, isn't it?"

The captain nodded. Yes; this was like the old Fairview. He wondered if the tennis team would cut its practice, too.

As soon as classes ended, the baseball players made a dash for the locker room. They were scrambling into their uniforms when Mr. Ferris's voice sounded from the doorway.

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"No hurry, fellows. The field won't run away. Take your time."

The presence of the coach calmed their nerves. Several of the fellows laughed and joked. When the last lace was tied and the last belt adjusted, the Saddle River boys arrived. Mr. Ferris assigned them to a group of idle lockers. Fairview's warriors went out casting back appraising glances, and receiving appraising glances in return.

Mr. Ferris remained behind a moment to chat with the Saddle River coach. Again to-day, Buddy found himself walking toward the field with Terry McCarthy. He had an idea that Terry wanted to say something to him. But not a word was spoken until they were almost at the bench, and then Terry called a sudden, gruff, "Good luck," and went up behind the plate.

Schuyler Arch began to pitch. The team took turns hitting. Each player, as he took his third rap at the ball, scooted out to his place in the field. Soon the Saddle River boys straggled into view. Buddy signaled to Vanelli. The pitcher calmly arose from his place on the bench.

With the first pitch of the warm-up Buddy's heart skipped a beat. By and by Vanelli increased his

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speed, but at no time did the ball come with a zip that made it difficult to handle. Little by little Buddy's nervousness wore off. Perhaps Terry had not intended his words as a warning at all. Certainly Van had shown nothing that should make his own catcher quake. Of course he had a wonderful control——

Buddy held the glove high and to the right. Smack! The ball was there. He placed the target low and to the left. Again the ball came true.

"Pretty work," he crooned; "pretty work, Van."

The pitcher smiled soberly and signaled that he had had enough. Buddy walked to the bench.

"Nothing wrong with that control," said Mr. Ferris.

"They won't touch him," said Buddy.

Saddle River didn't—not for the first three innings anyway.

Meanwhile, Fairview had scored three precious runs, and the first Saddle River pitcher had been driven from the mound. The tallies had come in the second inning. Lewis had been thrown out, but Baxter had bounced a hit off the pitcher's shins. Daly had secured a base on balls, and Buddy had come to bat with two on the bases.

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He wanted to hit. He thought it would be a wonderful incentive for the nine if the captain should, on his first opportunity, come through with a safe blow in the pinch. But his best was a tap along the first-base line. He ran with all his strength, only to hear the slap of the ball in a glove while the bag was a step away.

“Out!” called the umpire.

Anyway, Baxter was on third and Daly was on second. He ran back toward the bench and made a megaphone of his hands.

“Hit it, Van! Hit it!” Then he flushed. Why hadn't he hit it? He saw Terry and Mr. Ferris watching the game with puckered eyes—Terry, the best hitter on the team. He wondered if Mr. Ferris had wished that it was Terry who had gone to bat, and then was angry at himself for having entertained the thought.

Vanelli was an exception to the rule that pitchers are poor batsmen. He slashed the first ball pitched for two bases. Baxter and Daly scored. Rood followed with a single and the third run was in.

“Well, now,” said Mr. Ferris genially, “that isn't so bad, Bud.”

There it was again, the old tone of comradeship.

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Buddy forgot his chagrin. He grinned broadly as a new pitcher came to the mound—and then the grin faded as Meyers struck out on three pitched balls.

Since then it had been a battle. Neither team had got a runner as far as second base.

The fourth inning passed, and the fifth. In the sixth, the first Saddle River batter hit sharply to Rood, and Rood fumbled. The next boy sacrificed. For the first time since the start of the game Saddle River had a chance to score.

Buddy's muscles twitched. Terry had said that when runners were on the bases and the pitcher was boring them in—— A fear that he had forgotten was born again. If Vanelli did carry an extra ounce of steam, this was the time to call it into play. Buddy braced himself for the shock of a vicious curve.

But Van, though he used greater speed, did not get any keener break to his curve. Buddy found no difficulty in holding his delivery.

The batter struck out.

“Two down,” the infielders shouted one to another. “Play the batter.”

Vanelli slackened. The next boy hit a roller right

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to Rood, and Rood, for the second time that inning, made an inexcusable error. Saddle River scored her first run.

Buddy bit his lips. Rood was standing near the second-base bag with his hands folded waiting for play to be resumed. Van, as unconcerned as though he was receiving perfect support, took the ball and faced the plate. A moment later he saw Buddy's fingers, and whirled and threw to first. The boy who had hit that disastrous roller was caught flat-footed for the third out.

Rood came in to the bench, winked at one of the substitutes, and sat down. "I guess I've got them all out of my system," he said.

"Let's hope so," said Mr. Ferris.

There was just the suspicion of something hard in the coach's usually quiet voice. Rood flushed. Buddy's eyes snapped. The night he had protested against the way the squad seemed to be content with its own playing, Rood was one of the players he had in mind. That night Mr. Ferris had made no comment. Now, though——

"You're up, Buddy," called the scorer.

Buddy went to the plate, and was thrown out on a rap to the shortstop. Thus far he had not hit the

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ball out of the infield. However, he had one consolation—his catching had been all right. He had justified his own selection.

Neither side scored in the seventh. It looked as though Saddle River would not score in the eighth, either. Her first batter struck out, and the first two balls served to the second batter were called strikes. Vanelli appeared to have the game in the hollow of his hands.

“Just one more, Van,” Buddy called briskly.

Van threw—and the batter hit over Meyers’ head, in center field, for three bases.

If Saddle River scored another run she would be dangerously close. The infield came in on the grass to try to prevent the runner on third scoring. Buddy, crouched behind the batter, signaled for an in.

Somehow, it seemed, the easy-going Vanelli had changed. He was like a man who had gathered himself for a mighty effort. His whole body appeared to get behind the pitch.

A strange sound came from Buddy’s throat. The ball was almost a flying speck. It struck the end of his glove, bounced, and his blood almost froze.

“Behind you!” roared Lewis, the first-baseman.

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Buddy saw the ball rolling only a few feet away. In a moment he had it. The boy on third had not tried to score. He threw to Vanelli who had run down to guard the plate.

Every nerve was trembling. His left hand, inside the big mitt, was damp with sweat. Van had thrown him a curve that had come at him with a blinding zip. He had never caught fast pitching like that. That confidence that he had built up during the game suddenly went to smash.

Again Vanelli pitched. This time the batter hit. "Mine!" Daly yelled.

The third-baseman caught the ball in foul territory. Buddy, breathing hard, was glad of a moment's rest. Over and over a question ran through his brain. How did Terry know that Van had a curve like that?

Two were out. The hardest hitter on the Saddle River team was at bat. Buddy, watching his pitcher, drew a deep breath. Van had no intention of slacking steam—not at this stage of the game with a runner on third.

The ball came in with that zipping, smashing break. Buddy held it. The next was a floater, and

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the batter wisely let it go past. Then came another scorching curve.

The batter bunted. Buddy heard a cry from the spectators, but it was a moment before he saw the ball rolling gently a few feet away. That moment was fatal. He had been caught off guard. The boy on third slid home with Saddle River's second run, and the batter was safe on first.

Buddy walked down toward Vanelli with the ball.

"Watch yourself," said Van. "We can't afford to give away runs."

The next batter hit the first ball toward Rood. The second-baseman made a perfect play this time, and the side was out.

Buddy caught a fleeting glimpse of Terry's face, and fancied he saw there an "I knew it" look. He took a place on the bench and did not say a word until the ninth inning began. Suddenly, as he buckled on his chest protector, he could have kicked himself. He had come into the game because of his belief that a captain should lead and inspire the team. What kind of inspiration was it for a captain to sit gloomily on the bench wrapped in his own dark thoughts?

This was Saddle River's last turn at bat, and he

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hoped sincerely that she would not get a runner on. The baseball fates ruled otherwise. The first batter beat out a hit to Daly, the next boy sacrificed, and then, with danger threatening, Vanelli once more pitched with all he had. Buddy's lips thinned and his eyes grew hard with desperate resolution.

High and low, out and in, Van's curves snapped. He held them, held them, held them—and all the while chills ran up and down his back.

A Saddle River boy got his base on balls. Another Saddle River boy hit a fielder's choice and was thrown out. The other runners each advanced a base. The situation was tense. Two out, runners on second and third, and only one run needed to tie.

Vanelli seemed to rise to even greater heights of skill. The ball flashed in and broke. Buddy's frantic glove stopped it, and it fell dead at his feet.

"Strike one!" the umpire ruled.

Buddy signaled for a high "in." He saw the ball start and judged where it would break. His glove went up. He felt a swish of air past his hands and he knew, in one sickening instant, that he had missed the pitch entirely.

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There was a wooden back-stop twelve feet in the rear. The ball hit the planks and bounced to one side. In a frenzy of speed Buddy ran for it. There wasn't a chance that he could stop the tying run, but perhaps he could stop the tally that would put Saddle River in the lead. His fingers closed on the ball. He whirled about to throw.

"Hold it!" Vanelli's voice came angrily. "You're too late." When the ball was tossed to him, he snapped it with a downward toss of his glove. He was plainly disgusted. When the next batter faced him, he threw a straight pitch straight across the heart of the plate. The batter hit a long fly to the outfield, and Meyers made a nice running catch for the third out.

The score was Saddle River, 4; Fairview, 3.

As Buddy came to the bench he heard somebody whisper, "They shouldn't have scored a run." Mr. Ferris made room for him.

"Too bad, Buddy," the coach said simply, and leaned over to look at the score-book.

"Tough luck," said Terry.

Buddy knew he should be out coaching, exhorting the team to make a last effort. His courage sank. What license did he have to try to inspire

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others—he who had thrown the game away? And then came another thought. What kind of captain would he be if he shirked just because the going was hard?

He jumped up and strode out toward the first-base coaching box. Without looking around he knew that Terry was staring at him, and his cheeks burned. He thought that Mr. Ferris was watching him, too.

The team was beaten. He saw that, even while he kept urging a rally. Grant popped a listless fly to the shortstop, and Walters fouled out. Lewis did not even try to half run out a hit to the pitcher. The game was over, and Fairview had lost. His team was beaten.

Buddy came back to the bench and gathered up his things—glove, sweater, and chest protector. The spectators were melting away. The players were already walking back toward the locker-room. Terry McCarthy was with Rood.

“Wait,” Mr. Ferris called; “I’ll be with you in a moment.”

Buddy halted, but his eyes did not leave the figure of the boy ahead. Terry was swinging his glove

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with that way he had, and his careless, easy stride seemed to breathe power and confidence. Somehow, as he stood there in the bitterness of failure, Buddy knew that Terry McCarthy would not have let that fatal ball get by.

CHAPTER V

LOCKER-ROOM GOSSIP

BUDDY knew now, when it was too late, that Mr. Ferris had been right. He should not have played. It was not a captain to lead that the nine had wanted, but rather a catcher who could hold up Vanelli.

Mr. Ferris had known that the pitcher would be too strong for him. If the coach had explained that— He shook his head. No; he would probably have questioned the judgment. He would have debated how even Mr. Ferris could tell without having first put him to the test. And he would still have argued that, in the opening game at least, a captain's place was to lead. That was the reasoning that had wrecked him.

He saw, too, that Mr. Ferris had known he would make this argument. That was what had lain behind the coach's words that day in the locker-room—to do the right thing even though it hurt; to stand aside because it seemed best.

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But it had not seemed best. He thought he had chosen the better course.

"All right, Buddy," Mr. Ferris said at his elbow.

He braced himself. He expected the coach to say that he had better listen to reason in the future. Instead, Mr. Ferris told him that there was good stuff in the nine, and that one game does not make a season, and that sometimes—*sometimes*—a defeat is not the worst thing that can happen.

Buddy wondered what that meant. However, he had other things to think about just then. Mr. Ferris, he saw, did not intend to chide him for his mistake. A warm glow ran through his veins. He wanted to explain, to set himself right; and yet, now that the game was lost, he knew that there was no explanation he could make. Anything he should say would sound like trying to crawl from under. But oh! how he wanted the man at his side to understand that he had done what he thought was right.

The desire to say something became overpowering. At the head of the locker-room stairs he paused.

"Mr. Ferris."

"Yes."

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"I—I'm sorry." He ran down the stairs to his locker.

The nine was seemingly not one whit cast down by the afternoon's events. There was shouting, and laughing, and plenty of rough playing. Even Vanelli seemed to have recovered from his sulks. Saddle River, rejoicing in victory, was scarcely any more boisterous than Fairview.

"Mighty queer stunt, isn't it?" said a voice.

Buddy looked up to find Schuyler Arch at his elbow. The pitcher nodded in the general direction of the room.

"I mean our nine," he explained. "Bring somebody in here who hadn't seen the game and he wouldn't know which team had won. Our gang seems to be almost as happy as the other fellows."

"You can't tell how they feel," said Buddy. He did not want to admit that anything might be wrong with Fairview's morale.

"No," said Schuyler. He fashioned his four-in-hand and ran the knot snugly into place. "Funny how Neale, and McMasters, and Pilgrim and Hill used to grouch last year over a lost game. We knew how *they* felt." He went back to close

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his locker, and Buddy was left to chew on a new thought.

Of course, you couldn't tell about a team by the way it acted after a game—not altogether. Some players laughed just to hide the hurt. Nevertheless, he thought wistfully, he would like to see the team a little quieter, a little inclined to quarrel and snap, and a little given to talking dangerously about what would happen next time.

That night he gave Bob an honest story of the defeat. "I should not have played," he said.

"Did Mr. Ferris tell you that?" Bob asked quickly.

"No; I know it."

Bob smiled, and opened a book. Later, as Buddy started upstairs to study, he looked up from the page.

"Bud! I wouldn't worry about that game if I were you. There are seventeen games left; and besides, it's all right."

Buddy couldn't see that. It seemed to be all wrong. He, the captain, had thrown the game away. Nevertheless, before bed-time he found himself taking comfort in what his brother had said.

Next morning the returns were in from the other

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games played in the county league. Irontown had won from Pompton, Lackawanna had defeated Bloomfield, Garrison had defeated Gates, and Hasbrouck had taken Brunswick's measure by the lopsided score of 8 to 0.

Buddy posted the first standing of the teams:

	W	L	PC.		W	L	PC.
Irontown ..	1	0	1.000	Pompton ..	0	1	.000
Saddle Riv.	1	0	1.000	Fairview ..	0	1	.000
Hasbrouck .	1	0	1.000	Brunswick .	0	1	.000
Lackawanna	1	0	1.000	Bloomfield .	0	1	.000
Garrison ..	1	0	1.000	Gates	0	1	.000

Very little attention was paid to the score-board. The tennis team went about its own business, and the track team was once more concerned with its own affairs. Buddy was growing used to this. He could not very well find fault if track and tennis enthusiasts paid very little attention to baseball when his own players paid very little attention to track and tennis.

But he would never grow used, he thought, to the baseball squad skylarking after a defeat. That was contrary to all his notions.

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Lewis's locker was next to his. While he donned his uniform that afternoon the first-baseman asked curiously:

"Aren't there any enclosed grounds in this league?"

"No; why?"

"Oh, nothing; I was just wondering. Seems funny not to find one enclosed field."

Buddy went on with his dressing. All at once he looked up.

"Were you used to enclosed fields before you came here?"

"Sure! So were lots of the others. Why, we used to get about 3,000 rooters out at our important games. That's the reason it seemed funny—you know, just open lots and a few hundred spectators."

"I wouldn't call it funny," Buddy said slowly.

Lewis gave an embarrassed laugh. "Oh, I don't mean funny in that sense."

Buddy went out to the practice a bit glum. He had suddenly recalled something he had read more than a year ago. "Sling" Logan, once the star catcher of the National League, had joined a team in the State League. Everybody had thought the pennant would surely be won with "Sling" in the

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line-up. But after a few months "Sling" had been released, and rumor said that the former big leaguer could not forget that he had once been a big league man.

Now, if the same sort of bug began to bite players like Lewis and Rood; if they thought themselves a little bigger than Fairview's little county league——

"Oh, rats!" Buddy told himself in disgust. "I can think up more worries than any fellow in school. The team is just naturally easy-going. That won't last. Mr. Ferris wouldn't put up with it. Look how he jumped on Rood yesterday."

So he threw himself into the practice, resolved that Fairview should work itself into trim for its game Saturday against Brunswick. The team, however, did not seem to be inclined to strain itself hustling. The playing was good, but not—not—Oh, not what it should have been. Once Mr. Ferris batted the ball to Walters, the shortstop; and Walters, scooping it up near the second base, made one of those quick, underhand tosses to Rood for the start of a double play, short to second to first.

Rood muffed the toss. Walters was only four feet away. Rood knocked the ball back. Walters

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returned it. Laughing, they batted it back and forth with their gloved hands.

Buddy, catching at the plate, took a step forward. "Come on, fellows," he cried; "play ball."

"Huh!" scoffed Walters in an undertone; "that's a nice crack, isn't it? Why didn't he play ball yesterday?"

They separated, still laughing back at each other. Mr. Ferris walked from the first-base coaching box out onto the diamond.

"I like a laugh, too," he said pleasantly. "Let's in on the joke."

"There's no joke," said Walters.

"Oh!" Mr. Ferris turned away. "I thought perhaps there was."

That settled horseplay for that day.

Buddy's blood tingled. In everything he did, Mr. Ferris stood squarely behind him. He had never complained about any of the players, he had never begged for support. After the game they would probably not mention to-day's incident. And yet at all times the coach seemed to understand.

When the day's work ended, Buddy and Mr. Ferris walked back together. The late afternoon

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was fragrant with the bloom of spring, and they were in no hurry.

"We had better announce the line-up that will face Brunswick," said the coach.

Buddy nodded. To-morrow was Friday, and Saturday there would be no school. Yes; it would be best to post the line-up without delay.

"We'll play the same team in the field, won't we?" he asked.

"Yes," said Mr. Ferris.

"I—I'm going to put Terry behind the bat."

"That leaves only the pitcher," Mr. Ferris said in a matter of fact voice.

Buddy turned away his head lest his face betray his emotion. Did ever a captain have a more considerate coach?

"Shall we pitch Schuyler?" he asked, still looking away.

"No," said Mr. Ferris; "O'Rourke."

At that Buddy swung around quickly. He had reckoned Schuyler Arch second only to Vanelli. Was he mistaken in this, too?

"We shouldn't need Schuyler this time," Mr. Ferris explained. "Brunswick was beaten yesterday 8 to 0. I understand she didn't hit three balls

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out of the infield. Why not use O'Rourke and save Schuyler for the next game?"

"Then you figure we'll win?" Buddy asked eagerly.

"We ought to," said Mr. Ferris.

The Brunswick line-up was posted next afternoon. Walters and Lewis read it, and went over to Terry McCarthy and began to whisper and to laugh.

"Cut it out," Terry said sharply.

Buddy pretended that he had not heard, but his face went red. What were they doing, making sport of his failure against Saddle River?

Ever since the start of the season he had been swayed by strange moods that he had not been able to analyze. He had not felt at home in his job as he had felt in other years. Of all the team, Schuyler was the only player with whom he had felt himself on equal, intimate terms. Now the meaning of those moods came to him suddenly. This year's team was made up of boys who were older than he, and who boasted more experience. He was the captain, but they had him at a disadvantage.

"I'll show them," Buddy vowed angrily. The

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whispers and the laughter had stung him. Age had nothing to do with it. As leader, he was entitled to their support. He'd show them who was master.

When the team took the field, instead of catching, he went to the third-base coaching box. Mr. Ferris batted grounders from the plate. Buddy watched grimly, and soon Daly dropped a throw.

"Pick it up," he cried; "lively, there."

Daly gave him a surprised look and sprang after the ball.

Next Lewis fumbled a grounder. Buddy's voice carried across the diamond:

"Come on; after it. It won't bite you."

Lewis got the ball and threw home viciously.

Buddy saw Mr. Ferris give him a surprised look. That look brought him to his senses. He saw that instead of being spurred to harder work, the infielders were becoming sulky. Walters purposely muffed the ball and walked after it with exaggerated slowness.

It had been a mistake to lose his temper. His own feelings did not count, or what was thought of him, or what was said. Besides, perhaps Walters and Lewis had not been talking about him. Any-

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way, his job was to do what was best for the team. Abruptly he turned away and walked to the plate.

"I'll catch, Terry," he said.

At once it became apparent to him that the infielders were going to give him a rough time. Whenever the ball was thrown to him, it came too low, too high, or too far on either side. The plays he had to make were all hard. He was kept constantly on the jump.

He did not make the mistake of losing his temper again nor did he complain. If a bad throw came to him in a game he would have to play it and not stand and argue. He followed that system now. Three times the ball got past and he chased it himself without waiting for an idle substitute to do the retrieving. If he wanted the team to work harder, the real thing to do was to show that he was not above hard work himself.

Gradually his punishment lessened. At last it ceased. He had the feeling that a dangerous situation had been saved. The players, he knew, would respect him for taking the gaff without a murmur.

"That's better, Buddy," Mr. Ferris said in a low tone.

The blood ran into his cheeks. For just those

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three words he would have taken his punishment all over again.

Afterwards, the coach did not ask him for an explanation. Perhaps the man understood. At least Buddy thought so. Mr. Ferris seemed to know and to understand so much.

The players brought back to the locker-room no sign of their ill-feeling. Two or three of the boys, catching Buddy's eye, even offered a sidelong grin, but whether this signified amusement or comradeship Buddy did not know. He walked home that afternoon with Schuyler Arch.

"My eye!" said the pitcher, "but you certainly did light into them, and they surely did light into you."

Buddy said nothing.

"I bet they'll play snappy ball to-morrow," Schuyler added.

They didn't. They played—just ball.

The game showed that Mr. Ferris had made no mistake in rating Brunswick. O'Rourke, the least skilled of Fairview's pitchers, had no trouble holding the enemy scoreless for the first six innings. During that same period Fairview heavy hitting

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scored eight runs—three in the second, two in the fourth, and three more in the fifth.

But Buddy was far from satisfied. He thought that more runs should have been scored in the second inning, and that at least one run had been thrown away in the fifth. He did not want to pile up a score just to rub defeat into Brunswick. What he objected to was a team that grew lax and failed to take advantage of its opportunities.

Fairview's seventh inning opened brightly. Walters, first up, hit a screaming liner to center-field, and slid safely into third base. Jumping up, he brushed the dust from his uniform. The moment the pitcher had the ball he edged off the base. The third-baseman edged off with him.

"Nice hit," said the third-baseman.

Walters turned his head. "Sure it was. That's how we do things when we——"

An agonized cry from the coacher swung him around toward the bag. Even as he started to slide back, he saw a Brunswick boy standing there. The ball was jabbed against his knee.

"Out!" ruled the umpire.

While the third-baseman had engaged him in conversation, the shortstop had sneaked down to

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the bag and the pitcher had made a quick throw. Walters laughed.

"Caught me nicely, didn't you?" He walked back to the bench. "Oh, well," he said there, "we're eight runs ahead."

"We wouldn't be," said Mr. Ferris, "if the whole team played ball like that. Let's see what you can do, Lewis."

Lewis singled.

"A run gone," said Mr. Ferris.

Walters looked down at his hands as though impressed. The moment the coach's glance turned toward the field, he made a wry, disdainful face.

After yesterday's experience Buddy knew that here was a team that could not be whipped into line. He bit his lips to keep back the hot words that trembled there. Last year's Fairview team couldn't hold a candle to this one in skill—but, oh! what a difference in heart.

Baxter bunted, and Lewis went to second. With one out, Daly hit the first ball pitched to the outfield. Without so much as a glance to see where the fly went, Lewis sprinted for home.

Buddy jumped from the bench. "What's the

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matter with him?" he cried. "That fly will be caught."

"He probably thinks two are out," chuckled Grant, the right-fielder.

Shouts of laughter from the Brunswick bench, and cries of "Bonehead" from the spectators, brought Lewis to his senses. He swung around to go back, but the fielder who had caught the ball had already thrown to second base.

"Side's out," called the umpire.

Lewis shrugged his shoulders and walked to his place at first base. When a Brunswick coacher twitted him, he grinned as though it were all a huge joke. From the spectators in back of the base came a sotto voce: "Bonehead." Lewis even grinned at that.

"What's the odds?" he demanded; "it's our game."

Buddy's eyes grew hard. "Perry!" he called. Perry was the first-base substitute. Something in Mr. Ferris's face stopped him, something that seemed to say "That's not the way, Bud." Perry, talking to a companion on the bench, had not heard him. He sighed, and leaned back, and Lewis was allowed to stay in the game.

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What was the way, Buddy wondered, to handle this team? If he tried discipline, they fought him. When he failed they made it a matter for low voiced joking. Their own lapses were taken with a light spirit of don't care. They could play ball; there was no denying that. But they would not fight, and he could not kindle in them the fighting spark. He had the helpless feeling that came to him so often.

When Brunswick's turn ended, the team came back to the bench. Lewis crowded in beside Walters, and the two whispered and laughed and cast sly glances at the coach. Without looking up, Mr. Ferris said:

"There was no excuse for that play, Lewis. Another break like that and you may not take it so cheerfully."

Lewis's laughter vanished, and he gave a quick look toward Perry. Perry, who had heard this time, got red in the face and became very self-conscious.

Buddy saw that this course was best. If he had taken Lewis off the bag the first-baseman would have sulked, and his friends on the team might have sided with him. Mr. Ferris's quiet threat would

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probably accomplish more. But—and now Buddy sighed again—if he had made that threat Lewis would have gone on whispering and nudging the moment his back was turned.

The end of the game found Brunswick a shut-out victim. Buddy gathered up his things and started back for the locker-room alone. He had not gone far when Terry McCarthy, running a bit, overtook him.

“O’Rourke pitched a nice game,” Terry said.

Buddy nodded. He wanted to say that others had played just the opposite of a nice game, but he held his peace.

“He was scared stiff at the start,” Terry went on, “and now he’s the happiest kid on the lot. It’s funny about a young pitcher’s first game. If he wins he’s full of pep, and if nobody says much about the victory he begins to think he hasn’t done anything wonderful after all, and then the pep is gone. But if everybody pats him on the back a bit——”

Buddy stopped short. “Particularly his captain?” he asked.

“Particularly his captain,” Terry smiled.

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Buddy walked back. This was what he got for thinking about his own troubles instead of thinking about the team. Well, if somebody did have to wake him up, he would rather it was Terry than Lewis or Walters or some of the others.

Ten minutes later, when he came into the locker-room, O'Rourke was with him and O'Rourke's eyes were shining. Buddy stopped in front of Terry's locker.

"Thank you," he said. "I should have known enough for that."

"Shucks!" Terry laughed. "I made the same mistake when I was captain at Dickinson."

"Oh! Were you captain there?"

"Last year," said Terry; and Buddy walked down to his own place. What sort of captain, he wondered, had Terry been?

Monday morning the returns of all the games were in. A new standing of the clubs was posted:

	W	L	P.C.		W	L	P.C.
Irontown ..	2	0	1.000	Garrison ..	1	1	.500
Lackawanna	2	0	1.000	Saddle Riv.	1	1	.500
Fairview ..	1	1	.500	Hasbrouck .	1	1	.500
Pompton ..	1	1	.500	Brunswick .	0	2	.000
Bloomfield .	1	1	.500	Gates	0	2	.000

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The league standing created scarcely a ripple. Alongside of it was a notice that the track team would hold time trials that afternoon. When classes were over for the day, almost the whole school followed Captain Hurst's runners, vaulters, and jumpers. A bare dozen boys accompanied the nine to the village field.

How different was this Fairview from the visions that Buddy had dreamed.

Wednesday the team was to play Garrison. Not until Tuesday noon did Mr. Ferris mention line-up. Then:

"Suppose we try Schuyler to-morrow, Bud."

Buddy nodded. His throat was dry. By rights he ought to catch, but after his showing against Saddle River perhaps the coach would prefer him on the bench.

"You catch," Mr. Ferris went on. "Schuyler works far better with you than with Terry."

He said a perfunctory, "All right, sir," but he felt like shouting. The moment he could get away he raced upstairs to Schuyler's class-room.

"You and me to-morrow," he said breathlessly.

"We'll show them how the old Fairview did it," Schuyler vowed.

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Next day Garrison, coming to Fairview with visions of victory, was crushed. Buddy, for once, felt none of the helplessness that so often made him powerless. With Schuyler pitching, he was sure of himself. Twice he hit in the pinch. Four times he threw out base runners. On the bench he jostled the players, and called instructions as the team went to bat, and had his part in the laughter and the talk and the snappy banter.

The final score was 7 to 1. Fairview's whole game had been peppery. Buddy was more hopeful than he had been for days. Perhaps, after all, he had been wrong. Perhaps the team had been trying to find itself. Perhaps——

"We'll see to-morrow," he told himself.

And next day the team slopped through a practice session that did not have one single redeeming feature. Could this be the same team, Buddy wondered in despair, that yesterday had beaten Garrison?

The returns from the third round of games had been slow in arriving. When Buddy reached the school, there were letters awaiting him from Gates and from Lackawanna. His list was now complete. He dressed quickly, and then sat on a bench

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and figured. Irontown, Bloomfield, Saddle River and Lackawanna had all won. The new league standing read:

	W	L	PC.		W	L	PC.
Irontown ..	3	0	1.000	Pompton ..	1	2	.333
Lackawanna	3	0	1.000	Hasbrouck .	1	2	.333
Fairview ..	2	1	.666	Garrison ..	1	2	.333
Bloomfield .	2	1	.666	Gates	0	3	.000
Saddle Riv.	2	1	.666	Brunswick .	0	3	.000

“Anybody want to see this?” Buddy called”

Terry and a few others came over.

“Where are we?” somebody asked from the rear of the room.

“Third,” Terry answered.

No more of the players came forward to look at the standing. Buddy carried it upstairs and tacked it to the board. For the first time he began to question Fairview’s ability to make a good showing in the fight for the county pennant. Was it his fault? What could any captain do with a team that showed scant interest?

It was with difficulty that he kept his mind on his books that night. The future seemed gloomy.

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Saturday the team was to go to Lackawanna for its first game away from home. Vanelli would pitch and Terry would catch. It would be a good battery, but good batteries alone cannot win games—not against teams like Lackawanna. So far Lackawanna had not suffered defeat.

And, before the fifth inning ended Saturday, it was plain that this was to be another Lackawanna victory. Five of her players had crossed the plate. Only one Fairview boy had scored.

It was a game that sent a choking lump into Buddy's throat. If the team would only fight! But it wouldn't! It played its game, but it played so deadly, so mechanically. There were the usual group of infield lapses. Once Walters failed to cover second base on what should have been the start of a double play. Another time Daly, on an infield splash, stood undecided with the ball in his hands while Lackawanna runners sprinted about the bases. When he did throw everybody was safe. It was this brand of baseball that had given Lackawanna her five runs—this, and a dropped fly by Grant in right field. Vanelli's pitching had been all he could ask.

Grant had come in after his error looking pain-

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fully guilty. But the others had shown the same old lack of burning concern. They cared—oh, yes; after a fashion. But not in the way that had made past Fairview teams fight desperately to the last ditch.

The final score was 7 to 3. The team moved off to the Lackawanna dressing-room. O'Rourke and Grant were silent and thoughtful. Most of the others went up the street friskily jumping over fire pumps they met on the way.

Buddy and Mr. Ferris sat together on the way back to Fairview. The captain was sore with disappointment. Twice he opened his lips to complain of the team's spirit, and twice he refrained. He could not forget what his own playing had been against Saddle River. What if the coach should think he was simply trying to make a big fellow of himself? What if he should be told bluntly that as captain it was his job to make the team play ball? It was so easy to just complain; so hard to lead wisely and well.

He looked up and caught Mr. Ferris's eye. The coach was serious.

"We've been mighty patient, Bud," he said. "Now it's time we tried strong medicine. Suppose

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we try Thatcher at third base in place of Daly?"

Buddy nodded quickly.

"And if that doesn't produce results, we'll make the medicine a bit stronger."

Buddy's hopes rose again. Sometimes a shake-up puts a team on its toes and makes it fight. And then came another thought. What a fool he had been to think that Mr. Ferris would miss what was so apparent to him.

Over Sunday he learned that Bloomfield, Brunswick, Hasbrouck and Pompton had won their games. Monday morning another league standing was posted:

	W	L	PC.		W	L	PC.
Lackawanna	4	0	1.000	Pompton ..	2	2	.500
Irontown ..	3	1	.750	Hasbrouck .	2	2	.500
Bloomfield .	3	1	.750	Garrison ..	1	3	.250
Fairview ..	2	2	.500	Brunswick .	1	3	.250
Saddle Riv.	2	2	.500	Gates	0	4	.000

Before classes, Daly was told that he had been benched. For a moment his face darkened; then the cloud lifted and he shrugged his shoulders and turned away.

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That afternoon Thatcher played third base. Daly's punishment did not seem to have affected the others. Once Rood and Walters fell to scuffling around second base when they should have been paying attention to the practice; and again, when a ball went through his legs, Lewis bent down low and whistled for it to come back. It was funny—but it was not baseball.

The next game was against Bloomfield. It was O'Rourke's turn to pitch but here was a place when turns had to be abandoned. Bloomfield was too strong. She had won three and lost one. The assignment fell to Schuyler Arch.

O'Rourke took the news with a smile. "I'm satisfied to fight the weak ones," he said. "It's good practice. Maybe next year I'll be good enough to pitch against the leaders."

Buddy's heart warmed toward the pitcher. If only some of the others felt like that!

He was resolved that this time, if it was at all possible, he would make the team play ball. Before the first inning was over he knew that they had to play ball, or else the game was lost. For Bloomfield, catching Schuyler before he was in his stride, hammered out three luscious runs.

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Out on the coaching lines Buddy pleaded and urged. The team had to overcome that lead! For all of that, the scorer kept marking ciphers in his big book. In the first inning not a Fairview runner got on the bases. Walters, Lewis and Baxter were thrown out one-two-three in the second. In the third Buddy himself went to bat. The Bloomfield catcher, mocking the seriousness of his coaching, cried aloud:

“Come on, now, let’s see you hit it.”

Buddy struck out. A handful of Bloomfield rooters cheered. He turned, shamefaced, toward the bench—and next inning he was out in the coaching-box again.

By this time Schuyler was pitching great guns. The Bloomfield pitcher, though, was doing every bit as well. The fourth inning passed, and the fifth. The score was still 3 to 0. Fairview seemed unable to overcome that lead.

In the sixth, Buddy came to bat for the second time.

“Yah!” cried the Bloomfield catcher. “Here’s old Pepper Coach again. Watch him hit it a mile.”

Buddy didn’t. He struck out again.

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Back on the bench somebody said, "Gee! that's the second time." It sounded like Daly's voice.

Buddy had tried desperately to hit the ball. His failure stung, not because it was a personal failing but because it seemed to typify the failure of the nine. How could a captain go out and call upon his players to do what he himself could not do? He could imagine the team whispering and nudging and taking his urging with a wink. If he himself could start a rally with a hit— Oh, what a difference that would make! Then he would be really leading.

The seventh inning passed. Brunswick was blanked in her half of the eighth. Fairview came to bat. If the Blue and White was going to do anything she would have to hurry, for the time was short.

Grant was first up. Buddy ran out to the coaching box.

"Come on, Grantie! Here's where we sew up the game. Climb into it."

The Bloomfield pitcher threw the ball. Grant swung and missed.

"Well, well, well!" cried the Bloomfield catcher. "He's hitting just like old Pepper Coach."

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Buddy heard, but his coaching did not falter. "Only takes one to hit, Grantie. Get this one; get it."

Grant "got it." The ball streaked out to deep right. When it was returned to the diamond, Grant was grinning in safety from third base.

Buddy's pulse raced. Maybe this was where the "breaks" would come to Fairview.

"Take your time, Walters. Wait for a good one. Take your time."

Walters evidently found the first pitch good enough. He swung heavily. Far out to center the ball soared, and a Brunswick fielder was under it when it fell. Grant scored after the catch. Fairview's first run was in.

Buddy's pulse dropped. One run was far from being three. The bases were clear. Fairview would practically have to begin her assault all over again.

Lewis strolled out to the plate. The first pitch was wide; the second was too high. The third drove him back to escape being hit.

"Ball three!" called the umpire.

Once more Buddy's pulse jumped. Up to this point the Bloomfield pitcher had been like a rock.

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Was he weakening? Had Fairview's golden chance come?

"Watch him now, Lewis," he pleaded. A signal went to the batter not to offer at the next. The pitcher, suspecting the batter would not try to hit, laid the ball squarely over the plate.

"Strike one!"

Buddy's voice rang out. "Use your eyes, Lewis; look them over."

It was the signal for the batter to use his own judgment. Lewis's grip tightened. The ball came in. His shoulder muscles tensed—and then they relaxed, and he allowed the pitch to go by.

"Four balls. Take your base."

Down to first Lewis ran. A thrill went up and down Buddy's spine.

Baxter was at the plate. He could hit if he got a ball to his liking, and the Bloomfield pitcher gave him exactly what he wanted. The ball shot out to right field. There a Bloomfield fielder took it on the first bound and held Baxter on first base, but Lewis ran all the way around to third.

The Fairview bench had suddenly sprung to life. The tonic of an unexpected rally had caught them all, players and substitutes alike. Thatcher went

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out to the plate, and even Daly begged him to knock the cover off the ball.

This time it was doubt and apprehension that thrilled Buddy's nerves. Thatcher was more or less of an unknown quantity. He might hit safely, or he might hit into a double play.

"Come on, Thatch," he cried. "Everybody's hitting him. Take your time. Wait for a good one. Take your time now."

Out of the corner of his eyes he caught frantic hands waving from the bench. Rood ran out to him.

"You're up next, Bud. I'll watch out here."

The captain, in his excitement, had forgotten the batting order. Even as he moved in toward the bench there was the sound of a ball plunking into a glove.

"Strike one!"

The bench groaned. Thatcher, evidently, had swung wildly. Buddy swung around to watch, just in time to see Thatcher swing again.

"Strike two."

"Good night!" said a voice. "Here's where a strike-out kills this rally dead as a mackerel."

All at once Buddy's hands twitched. He was up

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next. The game would be up to him—and he had failed twice already.

Thatcher swung again. A yell broke out along the bench.

“Come on!” shrieked Rood. “Run your head off.”

Thatcher’s bat had barely touched the top of the ball. Almost dead, it was rolling a few feet in front of the plate. Lewis could not hope to score, but Baxter was running madly for second. And Thatcher, like a scared rabbit, was legging it with all his might for first.

The Bloomfield catcher gripped the ball. It twisted out of his fingers. He caught it again with a nervous clutch and threw a bit wide—just wide enough to pull the Bloomfield first-baseman off the bag. Thatcher, and Baxter and Lewis were safe.

“Your turn, Buddy,” called the scorer.

He took a step toward the plate. The bench had become still. To do the right thing——

“Come on, Buddy,” called Rood. “Bring ’em all in.”

Could he? Was it right to risk Fairview’s chances? He had a feeling that the Bloomfield

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pitcher had weakened. He might be able to hit safely now. But he had failed weakly twice before, and this might be Fairview's last chance.

Slowly he turned back. "Hit for me, Terry," he said, and sat down. The bench broke into clamor again, yelping to Terry to sew things up. He seemed to have been forgotten. Then two hands, moving from opposite directions, rested on his knees. He knew, without looking up, to whom they belonged—Schuyler and Mr. Ferris.

A minute later the bench was in an uproar. Terry had punched out a stinging two-bagger, and Lewis and Baxter were home. The score was tied.

That hit was the finish of Bloomfield's pitcher. His next pitch was wild, and Thatcher scored. And then Schuyler singled, and scored Terry. Fairview, 5; Bloomfield, 3.

"Wow!" came a yell from the Fairview students. "How's that for a rally?"

It was all right—very much all right. Buddy's only regret was that he, the team's captain, had been forced to step aside so that Fairview could have her chance to win. His leadership, it seemed to him, was a failure. He wondered if Terry's captaincy at Dickinson had been like that.

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Schuyler went into the ninth inning with that glorious two-run lead. Bloomfield, before his skill, never had a chance. When the last Bloomfield batter was thrown out, the crowd broke through the ropes and came out on the field cheering and singing.

This was the way the old Fairview crowds used to act. Buddy's face lighted with a smile. Sometimes an uphill fight was a grand thing. Maybe this was one of the times. His depression because of his inability to hit was passing. After all, Fairview had won. That's what counted most.

That afternoon he had left in his desk a notebook he would need in preparing to-morrow's lessons. When he reached the school, he ran upstairs, intending to bring the book down to the locker-room without delay. But the book, as he lifted it, opened at a page, and something he saw there puzzled him. They were notes he himself had taken, but just then he could not decipher them. He sat atop the desk with his brow wrinkled, and the minutes raced away. Finally, a long time later, the meaning became clear. He scribbled an explanation so that he would not be puzzled again, and went downstairs.

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It was late. He noticed for the first time that daylight was fading. The locker-room was deserted. He took off his uniform, skipped under the shower, turned on the water for a moment, and then turned it off. Presently he was dry and glowing.

He was almost dressed when footsteps sounded overhead. They came down the stairs. Two boys walked into the locker-room.

"Where did you leave it?" said one.

"Here, some place," said the other, and began to search.

They were two of the substitute players. Not once did they glance down to where Buddy stood. It was doubtful, in the dusk, if they would have seen him.

"Say," said the first, "this must have been some school last year to elect a fellow like Jones captain."

"You bet," said the other. "Half the fellows in the squad can play a better game than he. Look at the botch he made in the first game."

"And look at the botch he made to-day. We'd have lost sure if it wasn't for Terry. Gee whiz! what *did* they elect him captain for?"

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“You can search— Oh! Here it is. I’d hate to lose this glove after getting it broke in.”

They went upstairs. Their footsteps echoed along the hall, and then were gone.

Buddy’s breath came in a sigh. What had he been elected captain for? Was that how the squad was talking? No wonder he could not fill them with the fighting spirit that seemed so vital. No wonder they would not follow him.

CHAPTER VI

BURNING HIS BRIDGES

A SENSE of failure was no new thing for Buddy of late. To-night he went home with the bitter taste of it in his mouth.

The days when he and Schuyler had watched the new high school rear its walls seemed far, far back in the past. What pictures they had painted of Fairview's greatness! What a brilliant future had seemed to await the school with its coming army of new students, and the powers they would bring! How they had thrilled when they had heard that "Mystery" Ferris, of Yale, would be their coach!

And it all had come to this!

Another boy, in his bitterness, might have blamed the coach for sitting quietly while the squad made light of its work. But Buddy, in a dim way, seemed to understand that great mysterious forces were at work in the school, changing conditions, changing opinions, almost changing ideals. Just

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as immigrants, arriving in a foreign land, must gradually find themselves and accustom themselves to change, so did this army of boys that had come to Fairview from far and near have to find a common spirit to which it could give expression. If Mr. Ferris allowed events to run and shape their own course, Buddy was sure that there was a reason. But, oh! it was hard to strive single-handed against indifference and have only failure as his portion.

Perhaps, after all, there was no spirit, no faith, in which these boys could unite. Perhaps, after all, the little school could never have the large, broad spirit that the big school had. Perhaps Fairview had deluded herself all these years thinking she had something that she had not.

That thought frightened Buddy. If that were so, then nothing was left. To-day, to-morrow, the next day, Fairview would go on just as she was now—alive, but with no love of school, no high principles of sacrifice, no soul.

He had meant to keep this latest disappointment to himself. But it was a question too deep, too vital, to be left to his own judgment. After supper he followed Bob upstairs; and there, in his

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brother's room, he poured out his doubts and his fears.

For a while Bob did not speak. After a time he arose and walked to the window, and stood staring out at the dark night.

"It strikes me," he said, "that we may make a comparison between nations and schools. When a man serves his country with all his strength we call it patriotism. When a boy serves his school, we call it loyalty."

Buddy nodded. He could see that.

"You seem to think," Bob went on, "that the small school may fail to teach the big things just because it is small. Then the small nation, because it is a small nation, should lack in patriotism, and honor, and nobleness. But—there's Belgium, Buddy."

Yes; there was Belgium, and her story was one the world would never forget. Buddy drew a deep breath.

"Fairview has the spirit," he said. "I—I've failed to make the nine see it."

"Only so far," said Bob.

"Only so far," Buddy said slowly. When he looked at his brother again, his eyes were once more

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full of courage. He was going to forget what the nine thought of him. It made little difference, anyway. He would try to make them see Fairview as he saw it, as Schuyler saw it, as it was. If once the vision came, never again would the nine lose with a jest, and a laugh, and a happy-go-lucky don't care. Then fighting for Fairview—fighting, mind—would be a privilege, and a duty, and an honor.

When he came to school in the morning, the results of yesterday's games were waiting for him in the letter-box. Soon a new league standing was on the bulletin board:

	W	L	PC.		W	L	PC.
Lackawanna	4	1	.800	Saddle Riv.	2	3	.400
Fairview ..	3	2	.600	Pompton ..	2	3	.400
Irontown ..	3	2	.600	Garrison ..	2	3	.400
Bloomfield .	3	2	.600	Brunswick .	2	3	.400
Hasbrouck .	3	2	.600	Gates	1	4	.200

This morning, for the first time, there was a flurry of interest. Students gathered thickly about the board.

“Gosh! Poor old Gates won a game at last.”

“Who walloped Lackawanna? Hasbrouck? Good for Hasbrouck.”

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“And Brunswick beat Irontown in twelve innings. Must have been a good game.”

Not a word about Fairview being in second place and only one game behind the leader. The pennant fight, apparently, was taken as an impersonal thing that did not affect the school at all. Buddy's jaw squared. His work was cut out for him. But his fighting blood was up.

That day, and the next, he worked as he had never worked before. During fielding practice, while Mr. Ferris hit to the infielders, he caught at the plate, and his voice rang a constant challenge to play ball. No one, hearing his cheery, optimistic battle cries, would have guessed the effort they cost him.

For it was maddening to urge, urge, urge, and then have little things happen to show the nine's lack of fire. Once, when a ball was momentarily lost among the spectators, Lewis sat down on the first-base bag, and they had to call him twice before play could be resumed. Last year's Fairview team, if one scant game behind the leaders, would have burned up the field.

A little inward voice kept whispering to him, “It's no use, Bud.” Nevertheless, he continued

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the fight to make the nine what a Fairview nine should be. Years before he had written as a penmanship lesson a sentence that had to do with dripping water and wearing stone. If water could wear stone, perhaps persistence might wear away the indifference of the team.

Saturday's game, the sixth of the season, was against Gates—and Gates was the weakest team in the league. For that much Buddy gave thanks. With any luck at all, Fairview should win. And if Lackawanna lost—

“We'll be tied,” Buddy whispered. Could the nine remain cold then?

Next day Fairview played and won. It was not an impressive victory by any means. Once or twice Gates had almost turned the tables. But as a win, it opened the door to possibilities. When the last Gates batter was thrown out, Buddy hurried over to the bench and waited for the players to come in from the field.

“Say,” he cried, “if Lackawanna lost to-day we're tied for the lead.”

Lewis scratched his head. “That's right. I never thought of that.”

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"Let's go down and telephone," Schuyler broke in, "and find out."

There was a quick nod of assent from O'Rourke and from Grant. Terry McCarthy reached for a sweater.

"Count me in," he said.

But the others held back a moment.

"Aw, shucks!" Rood protested; "what's the rush? I want to get dressed. It will be in the mail in the morning."

Buddy did not insist. What was the use? It made very little difference now whether Lackawanna had won or lost.

Monday's mail showed that she had lost. So had Garrison, Bloomfield and Irontown. Irontown, long the terror of the league, had apparently struck a bad year.

In a deadened sort of way, Buddy made out a new standing of the teams:

	W	L	PC.		W	L	PC.
Lackawanna	4	2	.666	Bloomfield .	3	3	.500
Fairview ..	4	2	.666	Irontown ..	3	3	.500
Hasbrouck .	4	2	.666	Brunswick .	3	3	.500
Saddle Riv.	3	3	.500	Garrison ..	2	4	.333
Pompton ..	3	3	.500	Gates	1	5	.166

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He tacked it to the bulletin board, and then went up to his class-room without waiting to see what happened. Fairview in the lead, and not even a ripple in the squad! Had he stayed, he would have seen Terry McCarthy in front of the board when all the others had gone.

Terry had not taken his work as lightly as some of the others. In his own way he had really played the game. But up to this point he had been unconsciously touched with the same taint that had weakened them all. This fight for a little county league pennant had not gripped. It had been taken with a sort of careless, good-natured tolerance.

To-day, though, standing in front of the board, he found himself with a quickened interest. It was not the fact that the team was tied for the lead. It was the memory of a boy who, out on the coaching-lines, had thrown himself heart and soul into games and into practice periods.

Terry, as one who had once been a captain, was familiar with a captain's itch to win. Something about the way Buddy acted seemed to him to go deeper than a mere ambition for conquest. It held a heat and passion that appeared to be part of a great cause.

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Terry, with puckered eyes, turned away from the board at last. He had seen passion like that before—in boys who, on a desperate, losing eleven, played until they were spent, and sobbed when they were taken off. He had seen it in boys who ran themselves out in vain efforts to finish third in a race, just because the one point that went to third place was needed. But these things had happened at big schools that throbbed with tradition, and at games where thousands of persons filled the stands. Was it possible that here, in this little county league, a similar spirit was abroad? If so, why hadn't he felt it?

“You do feel it—now,” said an inward voice.

It is doubtful if Terry heard a word of that morning's assembly announcements. His thoughts were confused, and he could not bring them to order. He was not an egotistical lad, and yet the football season had shown him plainly how far he and a lot of other new boys overshadowed the native students. The start of the baseball season had quickly revealed many players far superior to Buddy both in skill and in knowledge of the game. It was only natural, perhaps, that Terry should judge the school and the league by these things.

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He had taken no part in the thoughtless, low-voiced jokes at Buddy's expense. He had honestly thought he should catch that first game, but he had accepted the line-up philosophically. Wasn't it natural for a captain to play himself in the opening battle? He would have been astounded had he known that Buddy had been afraid to take a chance on him.

His baseball instinct had detected the vast power that Vanelli held in reserve, and he had been sure that Buddy would be unable to hold the pitcher when this reserve came into play. Why he had tried to warn Buddy he did not exactly know—perhaps because he was a bit sorry for him, perhaps because he wanted, just a little, to display his own wise judgment. Anyway, the warning had been given; and later he had gone out of his way to send Buddy back to hearten O'Rourke.

Privately he had thought that the older boys of the squad were about right in their judgment of the captain. For a while he had thought Buddy's fiery coaching just the desire to attain a captain's crowning glory—victory. And then had come the day when, with the Bloomfield game at stake, Buddy

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had stepped aside and had said, "Bat for me, Terry."

Terry had not expected it. Of course, Buddy had struck out twice, but wouldn't he want this chance to hit and be a hero? At the time Terry had sprung from the bench with no other thought than to lace the ball. Since then, though, many other thoughts had been crowding their way into his brain.

First, it was a mighty big thing for Buddy to have surrendered that chance, particularly as he was aware of some of the joking at his expense. A hit at that time might have silenced the knockers. Second, the captain had at no time carried himself with the unmistakable marks of a boy who thinks merely of self. All at once the heat and fire of his coaching began to seem symbolic of everything that he had done.

"Fairview!" said Terry to himself. He said it a second time. And then he said: "Thunder! what a game little fight the kid has made." He was more interested in Buddy just then than in the school.

Had Buddy known what was passing in Terry's mind, he would have found it easier to steel himself

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to go forth that afternoon and resume the fight. At noon his courage was down to zero. By two o'clock he began to arouse himself. At three o'clock, when he went to the locker-room, he was ready once more to toe the scratch.

He had an idea that things went better that day. Terry McCarthy's playing had not shown any great change, and yet— What was it that made him think there had been a difference?

In the locker-room he paused in his dressing more than once to send quick glances at the catcher. Once he was sure that Terry avoided his eyes. Why?

"Say," Schuyler whispered, "wasn't Terry in things with more pep to-day?"

So Schuyler had seen it, too. Buddy went home refreshed with a new hope.

Up to this point he had never addressed the players in the locker-room. For one thing, he had been afraid to put his fortune to the test and face the battery of all those calm, superior eyes. Next day, though, as soon as he was dressed, he walked to the doorway and faced the squad. His nerves were twitching, and his heart was pounding against his ribs. He had not told Mr. Ferris what he in-

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tended to do. He had been afraid that at the last moment he would falter and quit.

"Fellows!" he said in an uncertain voice.

The room grew quiet. He saw Rood, and Daly, and Lewis look at him in surprise. He caught Terry's eyes, and this time Terry did not look away. He thought he read encouragement in the catcher's face.

"To-morrow," he said, and now his voice was clearer, "we play Hasbrouck. As you know, Hasbrouck, Lackawanna and Fairview are tied for the lead. If we win, and if Lackawanna loses, we will be out in front. To-morrow Fairview has her chance." He paused. There was something else he wanted to say, but he could not find the words. "That—that's all, fellows," he ended.

There was a moment of silence.

"Hi, there!" Terry shouted. "Everybody on deck to get ready for Hasbrouck."

There was a race to finish dressing. Buddy, waiting at the door, wanted to hug himself. Over and over again he told himself that the appeal had succeeded. The squad was showing spirit and dash. Why hadn't he tried something like that before?

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The players, as they scrambled for stockings and shoes, joked buoyantly with Terry. "Little speed there," cried one. Another called, "How about it, Terry? Is this fast enough?" Terry, completely at ease, had a ready word for each sally.

Presently it dawned on Buddy that only an occasional word was tossed at him. Terry seemed to be the master of the situation. It was Terry to whom the players turned. Of course, he was satisfied to have the nine look alive no matter what brought it about. Nevertheless he could not strangle a wistful longing that he were stronger, or a few years older—or whatever it was that Terry was and that he was not.

"Coming, Buddy?" Mr. Ferris asked.

Some of the boys, running, beat them to the field and began to throw the ball around with plenty of snap. Mr. Ferris stooped to select a bat. The captain ran his hand into his mitt and took a step toward his place.

"Bud," the coach called in an undertone.

He paused and looked back.

"I think you're going to win out, Bud."

It was said with that warm, understanding smile. Buddy jumped for the plate. "Here!" he yelled;

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"here!" The ball lined into his glove with a resounding smack. He swung down at an imaginary runner, straightened his back, and threw toward second. Rood snapped the ball in his glove a foot above the bag.

"Wow!" he yelled. "Pretty work!"

That day's practice was the best the nine had ever shown. In some way Terry seemed to lead it, and control it, and shape it as he would.

"Oh!" Buddy breathed; "if they will only do this to-morrow. It's Van's turn to pitch, and he'll surely win if they play like that."

The nine, on the morrow, played even better. Its spicy work was good enough to win nineteen games out of twenty. But this, unfortunately, was the twentieth game. Hasbrouck had the luck. Hard hit balls went directly at her fielders. The only pass that Vanelli gave was converted into a run. And of the five hits that Hasbrouck collected, four were bunched in one inning. Fairview, for all her fighting, was beaten 3 to 2.

"Huh!" said Rood. "Who said we'd be out in front to-day?"

"All that fight for nothing," Lewis grumbled.

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“No fight’s for nothing that’s a good fight,” said Buddy.

But neither Rood nor Lewis made any comment.

It seemed to Buddy that the Fates that ruled baseball surely had it in for him. Had the nine won to-day, the prospects would have been bright for it to continue its drive. It would have been off to a flying start. Now, after this defeat, its new-found energy might dwindle. The fire might be quenched.

To add to his troubles, there was Vanelli. Van was undoubtedly the best pitcher on the team, and yet he had not won a game. He was beginning to grow discouraged. Thus far he had pitched good ball. He had tried to win. If, under the stress of continued disappointment, he began to drift into a rut, Fairview’s cause would be hopeless.

Next day came a new league standing :

	W	L	PC.		W	L	PC.
Lackawanna	5	2	.714	Brunswick .	3	4	.428
Hasbrouck .	5	2	.714	Bloomfield .	3	4	.428
Fairview ..	4	3	.571	Pompton ..	3	4	.428
Saddle Riv.	4	3	.571	Garrison ..	3	4	.428
Irontown ..	3	4	.428	Gates	2	5	.265

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This time the players stood around the board a long time. There was hope in that, anyway.

"Too bad," said O'Rourke.

"We can't seem to get any higher, can we?" said Daly.

"Doesn't seem so," said Lewis.

He said it flippantly, as though it really didn't make so very much difference. From the high hopes of yesterday down to a remark like that! Buddy felt a surge of disappointment, and then a rush of anger. This wasn't giving the school a square deal.

"Ah!" said Rood, "why can't we just play our games and enjoy them, and——"

"Because that's not Fairview's style," said Buddy hotly. There! At last he had turned on them and had fought for the school as he had never thought he would have to fight a Fairview nine.

Terry glanced at Buddy with wide eyes, and then looked around at the walls, the ceiling, the stairway, as though suddenly viewing the school in a new light. Nobody made answer. Gradually the crowd broke up and melted away until all were gone but Terry.

"I——" He paused awkwardly. For once his

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old air of unconscious superiority was gone as though he stood in the presence of something that made him seem small. "I'm with you," he blurted, and hurried upstairs to his class-room.

Buddy drew a deep breath. How many of the others felt like Terry?

Mr. Ferris would not be at the field to-day. The work would all be on his shoulders. He went to the practice sure that to-day would decide everything. Instead, it decided nothing. The playing was good in spots, and bad in spots; careless one moment, and flashy the next. Usually the good spots showed when Terry, with that air of comradeship he carried, sprang into the breach and cried for action.

"If Terry were captain," Buddy told himself wistfully, "I bet things would be different."

However, Terry was not captain. He was captain. His was the job to carry on, to face the dark hours and to struggle through to the light. Who could have foreseen that a school of good spirit like Fairview would be wrecked by the indifference and the carelessness of those who were expected to bring it strength?

Friday it rained and there was no chance to pre-

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pare further for Saturday's game with Pompton. Buddy posted the line-up in a locker-room that was almost deserted. Thatcher still held the third-base assignment; and Daly, after reading the names, stalked out without a word. O'Rourke was down to pitch, and Terry to catch.

"I thought you'd catch O'Rourke to-morrow," Schuyler said in surprise.

"No." Buddy shook his head a trifle grimly. "I'll be on the coaching-lines." Thus far his efforts to stir the team had been in vain, but the memory of the old Fairview that was would not let him shirk what was his to do.

The Pompton game tried him almost to the breaking point. The first batter hit to Thatcher, and the third-baseman fumbled. The next batter bunted, and Thatcher threw the ball over Lewis's head. The result was a Pompton runner on third and one on second, and none out. And then the third batter slammed the ball right through Thatcher's legs, and two runs were in.

"Daly!" Mr. Ferris called. "Play third."

Daly ran out with a triumphant grin. Buddy's heart sank. Daly had been taken out as a matter of discipline, and here he was back in the game

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again without having once shown that he would not commit the same fault again.

Those three errors in a row had shattered O'Rourke's nerves. He began to pitch wildly. Before he steadied two more runs were over. The scorer marked in his book a black, staggering 4. And Buddy, with the outlook black and dreary, went out to the coaching box to rouse the nine to an uphill fight.

At the end of the third inning the score still read: Pompton, 4; Fairview, 0. The team had lost the dash it had shown against Hasbrouck.

O'Rourke passed the first boy who faced him in the fourth, and then came a solid two-bagger. Terry, catching, looked inquiringly toward the bench. Buddy shook his head. There was just a chance that O'Rourke might weather this—just a chance.

But the first ball thrown to the next batter was wild. To let O'Rourke stay in the game, after that, would be to shut the door to all hope of winning.

"I think we ought to switch to Schuyler," Buddy said.

Mr. Ferris nodded. "O'Rourke is gone. I'd catch Schuyler if I were you."

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Schuyler Arch had been throwing the ball to a substitute ever since the first inning. His arm was "warm" and ready for service. Buddy took Terry's chest protector and glove.

"This fellow at bat is weak on a low in," Terry said in an undertone.

Buddy nodded. "Go out to the coaching lines, will you?"

"Sure."

"And make them fight." He said it almost appealingly.

Schuyler, using a low curve, struck out the batter. The next boy flied to Grant, in right field, and the runner on third scored after the catch. Daly threw out the third batter and swaggered to the bench. The score was Pompton, 5; Fairview, 0.

"Make them fight," Buddy whispered as he passed Terry. It was almost a confession that he could not.

For a time it seemed that even Terry was not equal to the task. But at last the nine responded to his ceaseless, patient bidding. A run was scored in the sixth, and two runs in the eighth. One more chance—the ninth inning—was left.

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And now the nine was fighting. How Terry did it Buddy did not know—but he did. Rood, first up, was thrown out by the infield. Meyers walked, and by daring base-running went all the way to third on Grant's single to right field. Walters came to the plate with the crowd imploring for a hit. There was a groan as he flied out to the shortstop.

"Oh, boys!" came Terry's clear call; "here's where we show them a clean-up."

But Lewis struck vainly at three curves. The catcher dropped the third strike, and it rolled in back of him. Meyers did not try to score—the risk was too great. By the time the catcher recovered the ball, Lewis was almost on first. He held the sphere and did not throw, and looked in disgust at Grant prancing about second base.

"Three on and two out!" Buddy breathed. "Terry! Terry!"

"Now, Baxter!" Terry's voice was almost a song of victory. "Show them something, now."

Baxter hit a tremendous fly. At first it looked good for three bases and the game. But the Pompton center-fielder, running desperately, man-

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aged to get under the flying ball. Fairview had lost again.

"Luck's against us," Rood said dejectedly.

"We didn't begin to fight soon enough," said Buddy. Terry nodded an emphatic "Yes." None of the players asked him what he meant.

Over Sunday the baseball situation was much in Buddy's mind. The team could fight when it wanted to, but he could not inspire it. And Terry could. Terry was of their own age, and had a playing skill that commanded respect. Were Terry the captain, the baseball would not now be at so sorry a state. Fellows like Rood would not be talking about the luck of the game, because the nine would be making its own luck.

Monday he posted another standing of clubs. Hasbrouck had lost Saturday, and Lackawanna now had the lead to herself:

	W	L	PC.		W	L	PC.
Lackawanna	6	2	.750	Fairview ..	4	4	.500
Hasbrouck .	5	3	.625	Pompton ..	4	4	.500
Brunswick .	4	4	.500	Irontown ..	3	5	.375
Bloomfield .	4	4	.500	Gates	3	5	.375
Saddle Riv.	4	4	.500	Garrison ..	3	5	.375

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"Two games behind," Terry said. "It isn't hard to make up two games."

"It isn't when you have the luck," said Rood.

"It isn't when you play ball," Terry said sharply.

Rood's face reddened. "Say, who do you think you are, the captain?"

"No," said Terry; "I'm not. The trouble is that the fellow who is captain has been too square and decent about things."

"To me?" Rood demanded.

"To all of us," Terry answered. He had come to understand Buddy's faith, and devotion, and loyalty. Now, all at once, in understanding that, he understood the school. He looked around for Buddy, and was glad to find that the captain was not there.

This time Rood's face went even redder, and he turned away.

Buddy had heard none of the argument. Schuyler told him later.

"How did the fellows take it?" he asked.

"One or two looked as though it hit them."

It probably had—coming from Terry. He was sure of Terry's aid, but there would always be fel-

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lows who would say: "Who do you think you are, the captain?" If Terry *were* captain—— Buddy stared ahead.

The cards that Mr. Ferris had collected at the start of the season showed the record of each new boy's school. At noon Buddy went down to the locker-room and found the card marked "Dickinson." There was the Jersey City school's record under Terry. He stared at it a long time, and finally put it away with a sigh.

Three of the players worked that afternoon in a way that set them apart—Grant, Walters and Lewis. Up to yesterday Lewis's playing at first base had been speckled with that in-and-out lack-luster that was so maddening. The first-baseman, evidently, was one of those from whom Terry's words had struck fire.

But as against this bright spot was the work of Vanelli. His three defeats seemed to have discouraged him. His customary calm was gone. He was irritable and his delivery seemed to lack the ability to deceive. During batting practice everybody slaughtered it.

The schedule decreed that on Wednesday Fairview should cross bats with Irontown. Two years

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before Irontown had been beaten for the pennant by a single game. This year she was tied with Garrison and Gates for last place. Buddy found some comfort in the fact that Van, in his uncertain frame of mind, would go against a tail-ender.

Vanelli started the Irontown game apparently lacking confidence. He skidded badly in the first inning, and was in serious trouble in the second, but superb support from Terry saved him each time. Then, in the fourth, the deluge came.

With one out, four batters in a row hit safely. Buddy, sitting on the bench, gripped his knees with trembling fingers. Was this game going to go the same old way—Fairview behind and staying behind?

The next Irontown batter hit a grounder.

“Right at Daly,” cried one of the substitutes. “Now for a double play.”

But Daly, all too eager, fumbled.

Vanelli threw his glove on the ground. Terry called him down to the plate and stood with a hand on his shoulder talking earnestly. Presently Van, shuffling his feet, went back to the mound. Terry signaled for a curve, and he pitched without heart or effort.

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The batter slugged with all his might. There was enough power in his hit for a home run. The ball, however, went right at Walters. The shortstop clutched it, winced, held to it, and pounced on an Irontown runner who had started for third. The side was out.

Vanelli, looking defiantly sullen, walked in. Buddy, his lips white, arose from the bench. This thing of a Fairview pitcher lobbing the ball up to the plate just because his support cracked had to stop. Before he could speak, Terry's voice broke in:

"Van, you're not trying."

The pitcher whirled about furiously. "What do you mean?"

"You're not trying. That's plain English."

Vanelli, after a moment of indecision, sat down. Mr. Ferris, with puckered eyes, was watching the scene.

"Ah, what's the use?" Vanelli grumbled. "Everything goes wrong when I pitch."

"Van!" Terry cried sharply.

The pitcher stiffened his shoulders. "Well?"

"Are you going to fight or play yellow?"

Van took a step forward with his fists doubled.

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Terry shifted his weight from one foot to the other. There was a moment of silence.

“I—I’m going to fight,” Van said in a low voice. And next inning he pitched like a fury.

Buddy drew down to the end of the bench. So far as that game was concerned, he ceased to exist. He could never have handled Vanelli. He—he couldn’t do anything! Another boy took his place on the coaching lines. He thought the coach would question him between innings, but the coach said not a word.

Sitting there, he watched Terry rally the nine. With the Irontown pitcher working as he was, victory for Fairview was almost impossible. And yet, with Terry out there, the players seemed to find the courage to try to do the impossible. They did not succeed; the game ended as another defeat for Fairview. But the way the nine had striven brought a lump into Buddy’s throat. To-day, in defeat, Fairview was mighty. She had a lion’s heart. Some one had filled her with a lion’s spirit. Buddy knew who that somebody was.

He thought that, even though the coach might not question him, it was his duty to explain. He did not want the man to think that he had quit.

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The players went on ahead to the locker-room. He was glad to see them go, for he did not want them to hear what he had to say. At last, in self-defense, he would have to bring up a subject on which he and the coach had both been silent—he would have to condemn his nine.

“Mr. Ferris,” he began, “when I went down to the end of the bench to-day, and stayed there——”

“I understand,” the coach said gently.

Somehow, there was a strange comfort in that. The coach understood!

They came to a corner at the foot of a steep incline. A truck loaded with iron was being drawn by three horses to one of the mills. The wagon had come to a halt and the horses, shying, and straining, and bumping against each other, could not seem to start it. The driver, coaxing, finally got all their shoulders into the harness at once. The truck moved up the grade.

“The nine is like that,” said Mr. Ferris. “The strength is there, but they don’t all pull together with a common purpose.”

“And the driver,” said Buddy. “What about him?”

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Mr. Ferris shook his head. "You're discouraged to-night, Bud."

"But what about the driver?" Buddy persisted. "If you owned three good horses and the driver couldn't make them go, you'd get a driver who could."

"I don't own horses," the man laughed, trying to change the boy's thoughts.

"Fairview does," Buddy said, "and I can't drive them." His steps quickened as though he had suddenly come to a decision.

In the locker-room he dressed with feverish haste. No shower bath to-night—he hadn't time. He wanted to have his clothes on before anybody left. What he had to say he wanted all to hear. And then he wanted to leave before—before—before he showed them how badly he felt.

There was a blur in front of his eyes as he walked toward the door. Something in his manner drew the attention of the squad. There was a whisper, a nervous flutter, and then silence.

"Poor Bud!" Mr. Ferris muttered. He knew exactly what the boy intended to do.

At the door Buddy faced around. For a mo-

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ment he had to steady himself with his legs spread wide.

"Fellows," he said huskily, "I—I'm going to quit. I guess I should never have been captain this year. When I heard how many new students were coming, I thought how fine it would be for Fairview. Instead, everything has gone wrong.

"I'm not blaming anybody. Maybe I should have quit right at the start as soon as I saw how few of the old students were on the nine. You fellows didn't have any voice in picking me. You just came and found me here. Maybe I should have let you pick your own captain right away. If I did wrong then, I'm trying to do right now. I want Fairview to have a nine that will be Fairview.

"We have a school that's as fine and as clean as any. You fellows are new here. Maybe it's too soon for you to love it. But, oh, I want you to come to know Fairview as it is. I want you to play for her from the first inning to the last, whether you're ahead or whether you're behind—because she's worth it.

"I—I'm not quitting because we're low in the league. I've been telling myself maybe things would be better if you fellows could have your own cap-

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tain. Maybe then you'll come to know Fairview as she is. So I'm going to quit. I don't know who you'll pick, but whoever he is, I'll play for him as hard as I know how. He'll be a Fairview captain, and I'll be a Fairview fellow. I—I guess that's all."

He turned suddenly and went up the stairs, stumbling once or twice on the way. This was the end of his dream!

Back in the locker-room there was silence. After a while Mr. Ferris walked toward the exit. Whatever the squad did, it was best that the players debated alone.

"Good night," he called.

"Good night, coach," Terry answered.

The room became silent again. The boys seemed afraid to meet each other's eyes.

"Say," one of the substitute players asked cautiously, "he surely soaked us, didn't he?"

"Oh, shut up!" Terry said fiercely.

The substitute player drew back. Silence again.

"We had it coming to us," said a low voice at last.

Terry looked around quickly to see who had spoken. It was Rood.

CHAPTER VII

THE TURNING OF THE TIDE

BUDDY went home that night trying to console himself with the thought that he had done what was best for Fairview. Nevertheless, now that it was all over, he experienced a deep and poignant sense of loneliness. Gone were the walks back to the locker-room with Mr. Ferris. Gone were the little conferences, rich with intimacies, during which they selected the batteries for the games. Some other boy would hereafter share the comradeship of the coach. That thought brought a lump into his throat.

In all the discouraging days that had passed, Mr. Ferris had never ruled the situation with a high hand, not even when things were at their worst. Yet Buddy knew, deep in his heart, that at all times the coach had been with him. And he believed, too, that the man understood the reason for what he had done to-night, and was with him now.

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As he walked home he pictured the squad, back in the locker-room, openly pleased that he had stepped aside. That was hard, too. He had tried to make them see that Fairview was worth the best they could give, but he was not at all sure that he had succeeded. If they would not follow his leadership when he was in command, why should they pay attention to him once he moved down into the ranks?

After supper he went upstairs to his room. He resolved to study all his lessons to-night and not leave anything for the morning, for in the morning he would have to tabulate the results of the games, and post a league—— Suddenly he sighed and opened a book. He was quite forgetting. Some other boy would attend to the results and post the league standing hereafter.

About eight o'clock Schuyler Arch came to the house. Buddy wanted to ask what had happened, but did not dare. Schuyler walked around the room restlessly.

"They elected Terry," he said at last.

Buddy drew a deep breath. He had hoped they would do that.

"Terry'll make a good captain," he said.

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"You made a good captain," Schuyler cried angrily. "It wasn't your fault. I wanted to tell them——"

Buddy sprang up in alarm. "You didn't though?"

"No." Schuyler walked over to the window and looked out. "I couldn't. It wouldn't have been fair to start trouble after what you had done to make things right."

Buddy's lips trembled into an uncertain smile. "You're a brick, Schuyler."

"Rats! I hope Terry leads them a dog's life."

"No, you don't."

"I——" Schuyler paused. "No; I don't. I want Fairview to be Fairview."

That talk with the pitcher relieved Buddy's mind. He didn't feel quite so gloomy. After Schuyler had gone, he walked into the dining-room and told his brother the story of his resignation.

"Who's captain now?" Bob asked.

"Terry McCarthy. I did right, didn't I?"

"There was nothing else to do, Bud, if you thought the nine was better for the change. How will you and Terry pull?"

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"All right. I'd pull with any captain. It isn't a question of captains—it's Fairview."

And yet, for all that, Buddy went upstairs again with a new thought. What if Terry, suddenly elevated to a captain's place and made to feel that he was the only hope of the school, should become overbearing with a sense of his importance? That might happen. Terry could make things mighty unpleasant if he wanted to rub in his authority.

Buddy went to school next morning wondering what the day would bring forth. The news of what he had done had spread among the students. Boys whom he met on the way looked at him curiously—and a bit respectfully, though he did not know that. He hurried on trying to appear unconcerned.

Terry was on the steps of the school building talking to an eager group. Buddy saw him and began to walk at a slower gait. Terry came running down the steps, took him by the arm, and led him off to one side.

"I suppose you know they elected me?"

"Yes. I'm glad they did. I wanted you to get it."

"You did? Why?" This was astonishing news.

"I looked up the record of last year's Dickinson

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nine. You—— Oh, you could make them fight uphill where I couldn't."

Terry shook his head and stared at the ground. When he spoke again, his voice was curiously low: "Bud, I'm depending on you to stand by me."

"Me?" This time it was Buddy who was surprised.

"Yes. You will, won't you?"

There was no doubt that Terry was sincere. Buddy swallowed hard and gave a quick nod. Then the bell rang, and he hurried toward school. One thing was certain, it wasn't going to be hard to pull with the new captain. But as for him being of any help—— Buddy smiled wistfully. Anyway, he'd do whatever Terry asked.

He had to hurry to assembly, and did not see the new league standing until noon:

	W	L	PC.		W	L	PC.
Lackawanna	7	2	.777	Gates	4	5	.444
Hasbrouck .	5	4	.555	Brunswick .	4	5	.444
Bloomfield .	5	4	.555	Fairview ..	4	5	.444
Saddle Riv.	5	4	.555	Irontown ..	4	5	.444
Pompton ..	4	5	.444	Garrison ..	3	6	.333

Above the league standing was written in Terry's handwriting:

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FOLLOW A GOOD EXAMPLE AND PLAY BALL

Buddy wondered what that meant. Surely not that Terry considered himself an example that the team should follow. He wouldn't be the kind to say that. He was still considering the question when Mr. Ferris's voice sounded at his elbow.

"Hello, Bud."

A flush ran into his cheeks. He had not seen the coach since last night, and he wondered if the man would reproach him for saying nothing of his intention. Surely a coach was entitled to know when a captain intended to resign!

"Hello, Mr. Ferris," he said feebly.

The coach nodded toward the league standing. "Three games behind and half the season over. Not a good record, is it?"

"No, sir," said the boy. He was ashamed. It was the team's record under his leadership.

"No," the coach said thoughtfully; "not a good record by any means. In fact, distinctly a bad record."

Buddy's flush deepened.

"You may wonder," Mr. Ferris went on, "why I remained silent while the nine drifted. There was

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nothing else I could do. The nine could always play ball, but it hadn't found its spirit. It had not discovered Fairview. You can't pound spirit and vision into a squad. They must come of themselves, or else be revealed by some happening—a something that will cause players to think that here, right in their school, is something wonderfully fine, something worthy of the best tradition. To quarrel with the players would have done no good. I was helpless—and so were you."

"Oh!" said Buddy. A load seemed lifted from his shoulders.

"I did not intend to tell you this. However, I do not want you to be making yourself miserable with reproaches. This talk must go no further."

Buddy nodded. A moment later he asked: "Will Terry be helpless, too?"

"Why?"

"Well, I—I stepped down and out, and I wouldn't——" He paused.

"You mean you wouldn't want to feel that that action was a failure, too?"

"Yes, sir."

"Bud, no act of sacrifice for the common good is ever wholly lost."

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That last was a little too deep for the boy. "I wasn't thinking about the common good," he said. "I did it for Fairview."

"Did you?" said the coach. His voice had grown soft. "I wonder if you really know what you have done." Then, when Buddy looked at him inquiringly, he smiled and changed the subject.

Though he did not comprehend it all, Buddy took from that talk a comfort that eased much of his hurt. He found it easier to enter the locker-room that afternoon, and go down to his place. He had dreaded the ordeal of facing the players after what he had done—had dreaded, in fact, the wise little smiles he thought might go from boy to boy, and the wise little winks.

Instead, there were neither smiles nor winks. For that matter there was scarcely any talk, and what little there was seemed forced. All the boys seemed held by an embarrassed restraint.

Terry walked down to the door where Mr. Ferris stood. "Come on, Bud," he called; "we're waiting for you."

Buddy joined them. He knew that Terry had done it to make him feel that everything would go on just as it had when he was captain. But it

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wasn't right. As captain he had valued his intimacy with the coach and had wanted no other boy to share it. The walks to and from the field had been theirs. No, Terry was entitled to the same privilege. Besides, as a plain member of the nine he did not want to be picked out for favors.

Next day, when Terry called to him, he pretended that his cap was lost, nor did he find it until captain and coach had departed.

In those two days he watched the practice with painful anxiety. Would the nine play real ball now? At the end of the second day he did not know. Sometimes he thought that everybody tried a whole lot harder. And against that were more errors than the players had ever made before. Flies were dropped, thrown balls were muffed, and grounders were fumbled outrageously. What sort of nine was this, anyway?

After Friday's practice Terry and the coach remained behind on the field. Buddy knew what that meant. They were deciding on the battery for the morrow's game with Saddle River. For the first time since the season started he would not be consulted about who would pitch or who would

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catch. He had known that this would come, and yet it brought back some of the hurt.

He had just finished dressing when coach and captain entered the locker-room.

"You and Schuyler to-morrow, Bud," Terry called.

His errors had lost the last Saddle River game. But to-morrow it would be Schuyler, and not Vannelli, who would pitch to him. The second Saddle River game, he vowed grimly, would not go the way the first had gone—not if it lay with him.

Up to this point, his intercourse with the other players had not increased in warmth. The shadow of restraint was still there. And so when he went forth to catch the Saddle River game, it was to work with an infield toward whom he felt none of that close comradeship that is so essential to team work.

Schuyler's first offering was hit to Rood. The second-baseman fumbled, recovered in a flash and threw to Lewis—and Lewis dropped the ball.

"All right, Schuyler," cried Daly. "Play the batter. This fellow won't get around."

The next boy hit a scorching liner down the third-base line. Daly sprang sideways, knocked

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down the ball, and got the runner at first. It was a magnificent play.

“Oh!” Buddy breathed; “if they only keep that up.”

The next Saddle River batter tapped a puny grounder, and Daly let it trickle through his legs.

That’s how the game went for two agonizing hours—good plays and bad plays mixed in hopeless confusion. Saddle River, presented with chance after chance, scored but three runs. Fairview scored five.

In spite of the victory, Buddy left the field despondent. This wasn’t a clean-cut try or a clean-cut win. This was simply luck. The score-book showed eight rank errors. *Eight!*

The contest had been played at Saddle River. On the ride back to Fairview the nine was hilariously merry. Had Buddy been less gloomy, he would have sensed that their joy was deeper than the mere bubble of victorious spirits. It was the joy of the worker in a job that had been done—bungled, perhaps, but done.

A man sitting next to him left the coach. Terry came down and took the empty seat.

“What do you think of it?” he asked. His voice

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was hoarse. All through the ups and downs of that game, from coaching-box and from the bench, he had urged and encouraged and made light of miscues.

"All right," Buddy answered evasively. The question embarrassed him. Terry had been selected to do what he had failed to do. How could he criticize?

The captain gave him a shrewd look. "You're thinking about those eight errors, Bud."

"I——" What was the use of fencing? Buddy nodded.

"I'm not," Terry said promptly. "Why did they make errors? *Too* eager. You didn't see any slouching after the ball, did you, when it was fumbled? Not much. These boys were trying every minute. They're playing ball now."

Buddy stiffened a bit. That "now" sounded as though Terry was drawing a distinction between today and yesterday. But why shouldn't he? There *had* been no slouching after the ball. And nobody had come in to the bench grinning and making light of his slips.

"I hadn't thought of that," Buddy acknowledged. For the remainder of the ride he stared ahead with

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clouded eyes. He was out of the captaincy only five days, and the nine was playing ball already. Of course, he had quit to bring that condition about. But it stung to find his failure so sharply defined.

He came out of his reverie to find that the coach had stopped in front of the Fairview post office, and that the players were climbing out. His suitcase was stuck under the seat. Rood gave it a wrench, released it, and jumped down with it to the street. There he handed it over with a smile.

Buddy gave a stiff bow. Rood could afford to smile at him now, he thought bitterly. He was no longer in the way. He was benched. And Rood could play ball, too—now.

He saw Mr. Ferris looking at him gravely. Next his thoughts went back to the time when Terry had sent him back to say the things to O'Rourke that he had forgotten. Was this the way for him to act? Was this standing by Terry?

"Thank you," he said with an effort.

"Oh, that's all right," said Rood. "I guess a catcher is more tired after a game than a fielder. He handles a dozen balls to our one. Going this way?"

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Buddy walked with him until their paths separated, but didn't say a dozen words. In the past Rood had been one of the worst offenders, and he could not find conversational topics on such short notice.

He was face to face with the punishing part of his task. It had been, in a sense, easy to quit. The scene had lasted scarcely a minute, and his determination had been fused hot by the emotions that had ruled him. Now came the daily strain of watching boys who had not played ball for him, play mighty good ball for Terry. A regret flashed through his mind again and again: "Why hadn't they played ball for me?"

"Here!" Buddy told himself suddenly; "I must stop this. I knew they'd play ball for Terry." Yet—yet—— "I must stop this," he told himself again, sharply this time.

Monday, when he came to school, Saturday's results had been tabulated. Irontown had beaten Pompton, Lackawanna had won from Bloomfield, and Brunswick and Garrison had taken the measures of Hasbrouck and Gates. The standing now read:

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	W	L	PC.		W	L	PC.
Lackawanna	8	2	.800	Hasbrouck .	5	5	.500
Bloomfield .	5	5	.500	Brunswick .	5	5	.500
Fairview ..	5	5	.500	Gates	4	6	.400
Saddle Riv.	5	5	.500	Garrison ..	4	6	.400
Irontown ..	5	5	.500	Pompton ..	4	6	.400

Quite a crowd gathered around the board that morning. There was more of interest than there had ever been before.

“Gosh!” said one student. “Almost all the teams hanging together and cutting each other’s throats, and Lackawanna creeping away. It’s becoming a one-team race.”

“Two,” said Terry. “You’re forgetting Fairview.”

The students looked at the board in perplexity. “Where are we any better off than the others? We’re three games behind.”

“Two,” said Terry. “We’ll beat Lackawanna next time. That eliminates one game of her lead.”

“And we’ll make up those other two games,” said Rood. “Just watch Fairview for the rest of the season.”

Oh, yes; the team would play ball now, but why should Rood emphasize that fact? Buddy turned

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away. Suddenly last night's voice seemed to say: "I must stop this." He went back to the board.

"That's Fairview's specialty," he said, "overcoming leads."

"Right-o!" said Rood.

The call to assembly broke up the gathering. Terry ran his arm through Buddy's as they went upstairs.

"Did you hear that?" he demanded. "Did you hear Rood say to watch Fairview? It used to always be the nine. Now it's the school."

Buddy was glad that he had gone back. Rood, of all fellows, talking proudly of Fairview! Perhaps what he had told them in the locker-room that night had accomplished something. His blood grew warm.

"We'll be in this fight, Terry," he said. As though by magic, his resentment was gone. Let the team play for Terry. Let it show up the failure of his own leadership. But only let it play, play, play as befitted a team that carried the traditions of the school.

That afternoon's practice was another stew of errors. Now, though, thanks to what Terry had told him, those errors sent thrill after thrill up and

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down his spine. They represented something that was good to see—eagerness, and zest, and a wild ambition. Sooner or later, he knew, the nine would steady and would play its game. Then watch out!

And it was good to see the way Terry took hold of his work. His superb energy seemed never to tire. Nothing on the field seemed to escape him. He had a way of correcting a fault that left no sting. He was—— What was it that he was?

“A natural-born leader,” Buddy muttered. The words had popped into his head. He pondered them. No wonder Terry *could succeed* where he had failed.

Wednesday's game was against Brunswick. The squad, gathered into a noisy group in the locker-room, talked confidently of winning. On the same day, Lackawanna was to play against Saddle River. Nobody had any hopes that Saddle River would be able to stop the leaders.

For once, what was expected to happen did happen. Both Lackawanna and Fairview won their games.

Fairview's victory was the skimpest kind of a win. With Vanelli pitching at his best and Terry backing him up in faultless style, Brunswick should

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never have had a chance. But another weird collection of errors made the game precarious. However, just when danger threatened to wreck their hopes, the nine always tightened and held. It was up-and-down, ding-dong, heart-breaking baseball. The final score was 5 to 4.

All during the game Buddy coached frantically from his old place at first-base. He felt a true comradeship with the players. They had a thought in common. There was none of the slackness of other days in the way they responded to his signals. A warning cry from him, and the runners would come dancing back toward the bases. A sharp call to go on, and they would be off with the word. Coaching now was a joy and not a labor.

Next day, on his way to school, he was overtaken by Rood and Lewis hurrying.

"Come on, Bud," said Rood. "Let's see how the league shapes up this morning."

Buddy hurried with them feeling thoroughly at home. Why, only ten days ago it had been impossible to get these same boys interested in the league standing. What a miracle Terry McCarthy had wrought.

Terry had the results ready for them. Irontown,

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Bloomfield and Pompton had also won. The new standing read:

	W	L	PC.		W	L	PC.
Lackawanna	9	2	.818	Pompton ..	5	6	.454
Fairview ..	6	5	.545	Brunswick .	5	6	.454
Bloomfield .	6	5	.545	Saddle Riv.	5	6	.454
Irontown ..	6	5	.545	Garrison ..	4	7	.363
Hasbrouck .	5	6	.454	Gates	4	7	.363

"The trouble is," Rood said thoughtfully, "that every time we win and Lackawanna also wins, that's one chance less we have to gain."

Buddy looked at him sharply.

Rood laughed, and winked. Buddy gave a sigh of relief. Then Terry laughed, too.

"No more of that," he said.

"Nix!" said Rood emphatically. He punched Buddy in the ribs, and Buddy laughed and ran upstairs to his class-room.

"Gosh!" he said. "Terry has surely given them the fighting spirit."

Back in the main hall Terry and Rood and Lewis stared at the stairway up which he had disappeared.

"Some boy," said Terry.

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Lewis nodded, and turned thoughtful eyes toward the score-board.

The schedule for Saturday's game was distinctly unfavorable to Fairview. The squad talked it over that afternoon on the way back from the practice. Fairview was to play Garrison, one of the tailenders, but Lackawanna was to play Gates, the other. Fairview would probably win. Lackawanna would probably win. Another chance to gain would be lost.

"And after Saturday only six games left," said Daly.

Several of the players shook their heads—not hopelessly, but with a certain hardening of jaw muscles.

"Just what do those six games mean?" asked a voice.

"They mean," said Terry, "that if we win the whole six, and if Lackawanna loses three of her six, we'll be tied. The odds are all against *us*."

"Then if we should lose one of our six——" a voice broke in.

"We're not going to lose," Terry said grimly. "Schuyler? Oh, there you are. You and Buddy Saturday."

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"That game's as good as won," said Rood.

Buddy's heart raced. Oh, this was the old Fairview! This was something like it—not because he and Schuyler were being praised, but because the never-say-die spirit of the school was alive again. He began to sing:

"Come, lift your voices, let them ring
To Fairview's praise and glory;
No stain shall darken any page
Of Fairview's splendid story. . . ."

Softly they sang with him. In the stillness of the spring evening their voices blended with rough harmony. It was good to hear.

There was never a moment, Saturday, when the game was in doubt. Schuyler's old fadeaway ball had never worked better. His control was at its best. Poor battered Garrison was beaten from the start.

There wasn't much cheering at the finish. The nine had expected to win. It was the six games ahead that concerned them all. The battle had only started.

Back in the locker-room, the talk ran soberly in one channel. Nobody pretended that the odds were not all in favor of Lackawanna. Of the next

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six games, she could afford to lose two and still win the pennant. And if she happened to win the next, and Fairview lost——

“Who *does* Lackawanna play next?” a voice asked.

“She plays us,” said Terry.

A murmur ran about the room. Boys pulled on their clothing viciously. If Lackawanna should win that game the fight would be over.

“Say,” said Rood, “wouldn’t it be a joke if Gates surprised Lackawanna and won to-day?”

“Stop your fooling,” called Walters. There was a general laugh. A moment later, though, the laugh had somehow petered out.

“It would be a joke,” Walters said slowly.

Rood, as though coming to a quick decision, jumped up and squirmed into his coat. “I’m going to telephone and see what has happened.” His shoes, unlaced, were sloppy on his feet, and he clattered noisily up the locker-room stairs.

Those left behind talked and laughed nervously. By and by the laughter stopped. Nobody mentioned Rood’s errand, but every ear was strained to hear the first sound of his return.

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At last his footsteps echoed overhead. He was walking slowly.

"Shucks!" said Walters in a tone of disgust. "Lackawanna won."

Rood came down the stairs still with that same slowness. Within one step of the bottom his self-control gave way. With a yell he bounded into the room.

"Gates beat them, fellows. Gates won."

For the next moment the locker-room was wild. Buddy found two boys with their arms around his neck. One was Daly and one was Lewis, and Daly was babbling something about why hadn't they begun to play ball long ago. That's what Buddy thought. Why hadn't they? Why hadn't he quit sooner and given Terry his chance?

Monday, it seemed, half the students came hurrying to school to view the league standing. Over Sunday, the glorious news of Lackawanna's unexpected defeat had traveled through the town. Boys pushed and crowded and fought for a place near the board. Hasbrouck had beaten Irontown, Brunswick had defeated Saddle River, and Bloomfield had succeeded in downing Pompton after a hard struggle. The standing read:

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	W	L	PC.		W	L	PC.
Lackawanna	9	3	.750	Brunswick .	6	6	.500
Fairview ..	7	5	.583	Pompton ..	5	7	.416
Bloomfield .	7	5	.583	Saddle Riv.	5	7	.416
Hasbrouck .	6	6	.500	Gates	5	7	.416
Irontown ..	6	6	.500	Garrison ..	4	8	.333

Terry stood in front of the board with a wide, happy grin on his face. "Only two games behind, fellows," he called.

"Now for Lackawanna," cried somebody in the crowd.

The cry was taken up along the corridor. Dr. Minor, the principal, looked out of his office to see what the racket was about, smiled, and closed the door. The slogan was taken up out on the school yard.

Buddy stole away. It wasn't only the baseball squad—it was the whole school. The old spirit was back.

In the class-room he came upon Mr. Ferris. The coach regarded him with smiling eyes.

"What do you think of it, Bud?"

"Great!" he said huskily. "I knew they'd do that if somebody like Terry made them know the real Fairview."

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Mr. Ferris's smile grew broader, and ever so much gentler. "Yes," he said; "they had to come to know the real Fairview."

There was a crowd of students around the field that afternoon. Cheers greeted all the good plays. First Terry and then Buddy caught at the plate while Mr. Ferris hit to the infielders. Buddy's nerves were all a-tingle with the tonic of the scene. Three times he snapped his old throws toward second base. His confidence in his ability to make the throws was superb. Rood took the ball at his knees standing directly over the bag.

"Good boy, Bud!" came ringing cries from the watchers.

Buddy laughed happily. He seemed to be on springs to-day.

Terry, too, seemed to be having a glorious time. When he wasn't catching, he was roaming all about the field. Now a shout of praise, now a warning call, and now a ringing challenge to recover a ball momentarily fumbled! He had a word for every player. When the work was over, he sat on the bench the picture of supreme confidence and happiness

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"I guess we'll give Lackawanna something to think about," Rood said with a swagger.

"And then some," Terry agreed.

But as the players trailed away toward the school, the happiness faded. Terry looked tired. Out at the plate Mr. Ferris was showing Buddy a method of tagging sliding runners who came in spikes first. They came toward the bench at last. Mr. Ferris sat down.

"Worried?" he asked.

Terry nodded. Buddy started to move. "Oh, come on, Bud," the captain called. "Don't run away. You don't have to clear out every time we begin to talk."

Buddy came back.

"I wish the Lackawanna game were over," Terry confessed frankly. "It means so much. If we lose, we're out of it. If we win, we have just as good a chance for that pennant as Lackawanna."

"Even though she's a game ahead?" Buddy asked in surprise. He had not intended to take part in the conversation, but the words slipped out unbidden..

"Even though she's a game ahead," Terry said doggedly. "We've been chasing her all season.

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It's nothing new for us to be behind. But it will be something new for her to find a rival snapping at her heels, particularly if she has just lost two in a row, and if one of those games has been lost to the team that is doing the snapping. Don't you see that?"

Buddy wasn't sure whether he did or not.

"Look here," said Terry; "let's put it another way. Lackawanna's been breezing along in the lead with nothing to worry her. She's been full of pep and confidence. I'll bet that up to last Saturday she was counting that pennant as good as won. Suppose she gets a jar. Suppose she finds another team coming with a rush. What's the answer? Her confidence is going to get a kink in its back. Instead of giving all her energy to looking ahead, part of the time she'll be looking back to see how Fairview is coming. That's going to weaken her."

Buddy saw it now. His eyes flamed.

"We must beat her, Terry."

"I'd feel better about it," said the captain, "if we could outline some form of campaign—some way to play the game. I mean something we could plan

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that would upset her, take her by surprise and break her nerve. You haven't any plan, have you?"

Buddy shook his head. "N—no."

"Well, think it over. I've been trying so hard to dope out something that my brain's getting twisted. Come on; let's go back."

"Keep thinking about that, Bud," said Mr. Ferris.

Keep thinking about it? Buddy was sure that he wouldn't have a thought about anything else.

But when he came to the field the day of the game, his brain was utterly fagged. He knew now why Terry looked so tired.

"We'll simply have to play baseball," said the captain. "I suppose that's the best plan, anyway."

The school that afternoon seemed to have gone wild. There was a general feeling that Fairview's fortune was acutely at stake, and that a reverse now would be fatal. The students gathered in a clamorous, excited group. The school song broke out in a thunder of sound. Ever and anon cheers swept the field, now low and deep like an ominous growl, and now shrill and high like a clear bugle call to arms.

It was Vanelli's game. While Terry warmed him up off to one side, Buddy caught Schuyler so

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that a relief pitcher would be ready if needed. Every chorus of the good old song sent a mist into his eyes. To think that only a short time ago enthusiasm like this had been unknown. To think that a mere change of captains had brought all this about!

Lackawanna, with a leader's arrogance, paid no attention to the clamor. Her fielding was fast and sure. A scrub pitcher went to the mound to furnish hitting practice, and her first hitter crashed into the ball and drove it far out into deep center. The Fairview students were singing just then. The song seemed to halt for a shocked second in the middle of a note. The Lackawanna players grinned and tipped their caps cockily. Mr. Ferris frowned and shook his head.

Terry came in to the bench, sat down, and watched Lackawanna's work.

"I wish we had something cooked up for these fellows," he said presently.

Buddy racked his brain again. If he could only think of something. But his mind was just as barren now as it had been during the last day and a half. Here was a chance for him to be of service,

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and he was failing the school just as he had failed her all during the season.

The game began. A Lackawanna batter went out to the plate with an air of confidence that was maddening. It was the boy who had crashed the ball far out to deep center. And now, on Vanelli's second pitch, he proceeded to hit almost to the same spot. Fast fielding by Meyers held him at third base.

"Here goes your old ball game," the Lackawanna coaches shouted jubilantly. "Here's where we settle this old pennant fight for good."

The next batter singled past Rood, and the first run was in before the game was two minutes old. And the next boy doubled to left field.

Buddy squirmed as though he was in agony. A Lackawanna boy struck out and things for a moment looked better. But this was followed by another single, and two more runs came over the plate.

Buddy, blinking his eyes rapidly and biting his lips, found himself edging toward a broad-shouldered form that seemed to offer some scant hope of encouragement. A cool, firm hand was laid on his knee.

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"We haven't had our chance yet," said Mr. Ferris. His eyes did not leave the field.

Buddy drew a deep breath. He saw the batter steal and beat Terry's throw by inches. It looked like another possible run. But the boy at bat hit a liner right at Rood, and Rood clutched it and slid into second base ahead of the runner, who was trying to get back to the bag.

Buddy stood up to go out to coach. "Three runs. Well——"

"We can overcome that," said Mr. Ferris.

Terry came in unbuckling his chest protector "They won't do that again," he said with the air of a person who has been under a strain. "It wasn't Van's fault. He was never better. They were just hitting."

Buddy went out to the coaching box. A hard, up-hill fight lay ahead. Those three runs had given Lackawanna a greater confidence than had been hers at the start. She would be harder to beat now. If Fairview showed the least sign of being shaken, of being the least bit dubious about the result——

Rood hit right into the pitcher's hands, but nevertheless ran his heart out trying in vain to beat the throw. Meyers forced the left-fielder to go far

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back to take his driving fly. Grant smashed a liner at the shortstop and was out by a step. Fairview was fighting in a way that she had never fought before—but she was scoring no runs.

Lackawanna was blanked in the second; so was Fairview. Lackawanna also failed to score in the third.

“Now, fellows,” Buddy implored from the coaching box. “A couple of hits and we’ll show these fellows the lack in Lackawanna.”

But Daly, after fouling two, was called out on strikes. Terry hit an easy fly to right. It was pie for the fielder. He set himself, shifted airily to make a fancy catch—and got the sun full in his eyes. When he recovered the ball, Terry had rounded third and was scooting for home. To catch him was hopeless. The fielder, crestfallen and not a bit airy now, threw to the second-baseman and walked back to his place with hanging head.

Fairview’s rooters were enjoying their first excitement of the game. Half of them were trying to sing, and half were trying to cheer, and the result was a ferocious, hilarious uproar. Fairview had scored a run! Fairview had broken the ice! Now watch out, you Lackawanna!

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Van came out to hit. Buddy, clapping his hands together, danced on one leg and howled for another hit. Thatcher, in the third-base box, made a megaphone of his hands and almost burst his throat.

Despite all this encouragement Van was an easy victim on a hit to the first-baseman. Rood lined fiercely to the same player. The side was out. The score read Lackawanna, 3; Fairview, 1.

Buddy knew that the nine would not have even that run had a fielder not tried to show off. The game was one-third over, and Fairview was two runs behind. The outlook wasn't any too bright. He sat on the bench at the start of the fourth inning, and held his breath, and wondered whether Vanelli would be able to hold the enemy in check long enough for Fairview to catch up.

Van was invincible, both in that inning and in the inning that followed. But the Lackawanna pitcher was every bit as effective. Buddy, in his coaching box, shouted himself hoarse. Thatcher, across the diamond, lost his voice completely. But for all the vim, and the fire, and the frenzied coaching, Fairview did not as much as get a runner on the bases. The end of the fifth inning found her

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still two runs behind. Terry McCarthy's mouth was growing grim. This game meant so much!

Buddy knew now why Terry had been so eager for a plan of battle. Once more he racked his brain. If he could think of something——

One of the Lackawanna coaches, on his way to the first-base box, passed the Fairview bench. He winked, and changed his gait, and went on to the box with a slow, stealthy, dramatic stride as though he were a villain in a play about to do a dark deed. It was a good comedy touch, but Buddy did not laugh. All at once his eyes had grown thoughtful.

He remembered plays he had seen. The orchestra would be silent. All at once the violins would begin to play a low, tense monotone, and his heart would instantly begin to beat faster. He would get all on edge. Why? Because that violin playing, so low as to be scarcely heard, was the signal that something big was going to happen.

Now, Fairview's coaches had been shouting and shrieking and dancing ever since the start of the game. Her batters had run out swinging two bats and by their actions threatening all kinds of trouble. Lackawanna was used to all that. She had been watching it since the first inning.

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But suppose the coachers were suddenly to go out grim and silent. Suppose the batters were to walk to the plate grim and silent. Would Lackawanna be startled? Would she fear something new, an unexpected attack? Would this grim silence act on her the way the low tense music of the violins acted on people who watched a play? Would it make her nervous, and apprehensive, and fearful of what might happen?

The third Lackawanna boy was out. The Fairview players came running from the field. Buddy squirmed down the bench toward Mr. Ferris.

"I've been thinking, sir—" he began.

"I thought so," the coach interrupted. "I was watching your face. Terry! Bud has a plan."

The whole nine gathered about him. Buddy's cheeks flushed.

"We've been shouting our heads off," he said rapidly. "We've been playing a noisy game. It hasn't helped a bit. Suppose we go out there now and don't make a sound."

"What good will that do?" Rood asked.

"They'll wonder what's coming," Buddy answered. "They won't know what to make of it. They'll be uneasy."

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“Well——” Plainly Rood was not convinced.

“Look here,” Buddy said. “Suppose a fellow gets mad and says he’s going to punch your eye and comes right at you. What do you do?”

“Get ready for him, of course.”

“Suppose he doesn’t say anything—just glares at you, and shuts his lips tight, and comes toward you slowly with his fists clenched.”

“Why,” Rood said slowly, “I suppose you’d get a little shiver up and down your back wondering what is going to happen. Not that you’d be afraid,” the second-baseman added hastily, “but——”

“We’ll try this,” Terry broke in. “It’s worth a one-inning try, anyway.”

Lackawanna was in the field throwing the ball around and looking a little bit curiously at the group gathered at the Fairview bench. Suddenly they saw the two boys who had been coaching all through the game walk toward the coaching boxes. They came forth with a certain grimness, their bodies a bit bent at the waist. When they reached their stations they stood there in silence, still with that grim air.

And then a boy stepped toward the plate. It was

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Grant, the right-fielder. He walked slowly, with that same grim look. He took his place. There was not a sound from the coaches—not a sound from the bench. The Lackawanna catcher signaled for a curve, but for the first time that day the Lackawanna pitcher hesitated. He glanced questioningly at his fielders. He wasn't worried. He had this game in the hollow of his hands. But he thought he'd give a whole lot to know what these fellows were really up to.

At last he pitched. Grant drove a terrific liner that went foul by inches.

Buddy had to grip himself to keep from shouting. This was the best thing that could have happened. It made it look as though Fairview was all set to do something desperate.

Ordinarily, a hit like that would have produced a riot of sound. Now, from the coaches, silence. From the bench, silence.

It was uncanny. The Lackawanna pitcher looked uneasily at Grant, waiting so still and so threatening at the plate. He reset his cap. He fumbled with his belt. And then, for the second time, he threw.

His nervousness had robbed his delivery of its

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former deception. Grant drove a long double out to center.

And still not a sound from the coaches; not a sound from the bench. And another grim figure, Walters this time, came out to take his turn at the plate.

Lackawanna did not go to pieces, but her defense cracked badly. Walters sacrificed Grant to third, Lewis scored him with a fluky infield single, Baxter fouled out, and Daly poled a high fly that the left-fielder and the center-fielder let fall between them. Lewis scored the tying run. And still, not a sound from the coaches or from the bench.

At that particular moment Lackawanna was ready to throw away the game. Terry, at the plate, should have waited out the pitcher; instead, all too eager, he swung at the first ball, and dribbled a grounder. The second-baseman got it, dropped it, got it again, and threw him out by inches. The inning was over.

Buddy could control himself no longer. With a shout he dashed toward the bench. It was the starting of the seventh, and Fairview was on even terms.

"Hold them, Van," he cried. "We'll get you another run. Hold them, now."

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"Watch me," said Van. The whole infield went out with him, patting his shoulders, rubbing his arms, begging him to keep Lackawanna away from the plate. When he hurled his first ball to Terry, the bench saw merely a streak of white.

"No runs for Lackawanna this inning," said Mr. Ferris. He smiled down at Buddy. "That was mighty good strategy."

"It was just a chance," Buddy said happily, "and it worked—that's all."

True to the coach's prediction, Lackawanna did not score. Terry came to the bench and looked questioningly at Buddy.

"Try that stunt again?" he asked.

Buddy shook his head. They had taken Lackawanna by surprise last time. Her players had had a chance to rest and talk the situation over. They might be keyed up to face a similar attack now.

So Fairview returned to her own game; and the Lackawanna pitcher, with a grin, once more held them at bay.

The eighth inning passed, and neither side scored. The ninth inning began.

"Van," said Terry, "one run's going to count for a whole lot now."

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"They won't get one run," said Vanelli. He was master of the situation. The first boy popped a fly, the second struck out, and the third hit to Daly and was out at first.

It was Fairview's turn. Last half of the ninth, and the score 3 to 3.

Out on the field, Lackawanna was throwing the ball around with a snap and a vim. She had recovered from that sixth inning scare. Buddy drew a quick breath. Could they work that grim silence again? Would the fact that only one run was needed to tie the score unnerve Lackawanna if she saw Fairview's players once more coming to the attack in that strange fashion? Would she be haunted by what had happened the last time?

"Terry!" he called. "Ter——"

"Mackerel!" cried Terry; "I was waiting to hear that. Let's give them another dose."

Buddy and Thatcher walked out toward the coaching boxes, slowly, silently, grimly. The pitcher, throwing to the catcher, saw them and hurled the ball three feet over the catcher's head. Baxter, scowling and ominous-looking, took his place to hit.

The snap and the vim went out of Lackawanna's

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fielding. Her infield, frankly concerned, gathered around the pitcher. After a while they ran back to their places. They pranced; they scooped up handfuls of dirt and threw it about recklessly; they uttered shrill cries of defiance and encouragement. But in their actions and in their cries was a sort of apprehension that seemed to grow deeper as the seconds passed.

The pitcher threw.

“Ball one!”

He threw again.

“Ball two.”

The shortstop ran to him, talked to him a moment, and ran back to his place. Once more the pitcher hurled the ball. This time it was right over the plate, the sort of ball that any batter could murder. And Baxter drove it over the shortstop's head for a single.

From the coaches not a sign, not the movement of a single muscle. They stood like statues. From the bench not even a whisper. But from that line of boys on the bench, one boy stepped out grimly—Daly.

The Lackawanna pitcher seemed fascinated in watching him take his place. He stood there with

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the ball in his hands watching, watching, watching. His whole infield seemed to be hypnotized. Baxter, bright-eyed, alert, suddenly made a dash for second.

He was almost there before Lackawanna came out of her trance. The shortstop made a frantic run to cover the bag. The pitcher, rattled, threw wild. Baxter saw the ball bound to the outfield and kept on to third.

And still not a cheer from the coaches; not a sound from the bench; and Daly waiting threateningly at the plate.

Buddy's eyes were burning. His throat was hot. A man on third and none out. Oh, a hit now, a hit now——

The whole Lackawanna infield was rattled. Twice the pitcher nodded yes to the catcher's signals, and twice he changed his mind and shook his head no. When at last he did pitch, the ball had neither speed, nor curve, nor control. Daly, striking viciously, drove the ball high and far to the outfield, and Baxter raced home with the run.

Then the silence was shattered by a high-pitched, jubilant yell. Fairview was one game behind, right on the heels of the leaders. Oh, you Lackawanna, watch your step now!

CHAPTER VIII

ON EVEN TERMS

NOT in years had the village field witnessed such a scene of celebration. The nine, gathered about its bench, seemed to have gone crazy. Players slapped each other with their gloves, and wrestled in an excess of high spirits. The score-keeper, patiently trying in the midst of the clamor to get his totals of put-outs and assists, gave up in despair when Thatcher sat down on the open book. Next the bench went over with a crash, and the score-keeper picked himself up and brushed himself ruefully.

Vanelli was mobbed. The whole team tried to tell him what a grand game he had pitched. He wasn't a bit calm now. The praise sent an excited light into his eyes.

"Shucks!" he said huskily. "Any pitcher can stick to his guns when he knows his team is fighting like sixty."

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The students had come running over to the bench. Somebody raised a cry of "Team, team, team." After that there was a whirlwind of cheering—cheers for Terry, cheers for Vanelli, cheers for every boy who had been in the game. And then the gathering in some way formed a square with the nine in the center, and away they all marched toward the school.

Buddy walked along with Schuyler. The thrill of the victory was still in his veins, but his eyes had begun to cloud. After all, he was only a boy with all of a boy's sensitive nature. He liked to feel, when he did something good, that that something did not pass unnoticed. There had been cheers for Terry, cheers for Van, cheers for everybody—He looked down at the ground.

"I guess I don't count for much," he told himself wistfully.

The hilarious parade ended at the doors of the school. The nine passed inside followed by another outburst of enthusiasm. Buddy listened eagerly. He wasn't itching for praise, but he wanted his share of the celebration—just his own little bit to show that he was not forgotten. Perhaps—per-

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haps—— But the crowd broke up and scattered without once having called his name.

The Lackawanna boys had almost finished dressing. They were a chastened lot, not a bit like the cocky lads who had taken the field two hours before. As long as they remained, Fairview's players kept themselves in check; but the moment Lackawanna and her grips and her bat bags disappeared up the locker-room stairs, the happy noise and clamor broke out again.

The talk ran fast and furious. What was Lackawanna thinking about as she rode home? Did she still count the pennant as good as won? Wasn't that some rally in the sixth? Jimmy Crickets, and did you see Lackawanna go to pieces in the ninth?

Buddy, dressed, was walking toward the stairs. He was almost at the door when Rood gave a cry.

"Say, fellows, we're forgetting who it was planned to-day's doings."

"Right-o!" Daly shouted. "Come back here, you Buddy, and be a hero."

Buddy came back. They told him it was the greatest little piece of strategy ever, and they outdid each other in trying to describe how it had swept Lackawanna off her feet. For ten minutes Buddy

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stood in their midst, and smiled, and listened to them sing his praises. Then, when it was all over, he went out. Somehow, it hadn't bridged the gap; it hadn't filled the vacant spot. He was simply an after thought, and all the nice things they had said to him were, simply an anti-climax. It had come too late. It did not move him in the least.

That night he fought his fight. If they had said only one little "Good boy, Bud," at the right time—just one word. That was what stung the hardest. They had forgotten him completely as though he wasn't one of the team at all. He felt as though he never wanted to go out and play baseball again.

His room grew dark as he sat there. By and by Bob came upstairs and paused in the hall.

"Are you in there, Bud?"

"Yes."

"How did the game go to-day?"

"We won."

"Again? Good boy! Fairview's coming into her own, isn't she?"

"Y—yes," said Buddy. After Bob went down the hall to his own room he arose and lighted the lamp. Fairview was coming into her own! He stared at the flag of Blue and White tacked to the

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wall above his desk. Whether or not the players thought of him or gave him credit seemed of less importance. Fairview was coming into her own! That was what really counted, and he was doing his bit. Players might forget him, and even forget Terry and Van, but nobody could forget that the team was but a step behind first place—and fighting.

Next morning he reached school to find the league standing already on the board:

	W	L	PC.		W	L	PC.
Lackawanna	9	4	.692	Hasbrouck .	7	6	.538
Fairview ..	8	5	.615	Pompton ..	6	7	.461
Irontown ..	7	6	.538	Saddle Riv.	5	8	.384
Bloomfield .	7	6	.538	Gates	5	8	.384
Brunswick .	7	6	.538	Garrison ..	4	9	.307

There wasn't much skylarking this morning. Yesterday's wild outburst seemed to have left a reaction. Members of the nine stared at the board soberly.

"Who does Lackawanna play next?" Baxter asked.

"Hasbrouck," Terry answered.

"And we play Bloomfield. Well, it's an even

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thing—we each face a team that has won 7 and lost 6.”

“It isn’t even,” Rood said slowly. “Lackawanna has lost her two and we’ve won our last three. She can’t lose forever; we can’t win forever. She’s due to win one, and we’re due to lose one.”

This wasn’t the talk of weakness. This was the talk of boys who, face to face with a fight against odds, were taking stock of the situation.

“There’s five games left,” said Terry. “We’ve got to make up our minds, fellows, that we can’t lose a single one of those five.”

“We won’t,” said Rood; “not if playing the game is going to count.”

The gathering broke up quietly. Later students surrounded the board and began to talk wildly about being even with Lackawanna by Saturday night. The nine smiled. Every player knew that the hardest kind of fighting lay ahead. Five games, and every one must be won. And even that would not capture the pennant if Lackawanna won all hers.

Buddy and Terry went upstairs together. Today the soft promise of summer lay over the land.

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They stopped at a landing to look out a window at the country below them.

"Bud," said the captain, "we wouldn't be where we are to-day if it wasn't for you."

Buddy took this with a grain of salt. It was fine of Terry to say it, but the players did not believe it. It wouldn't do any good for him to get sore or gloomy again, but facts were facts.

"You're the one who gets the credit," he said.

"What's that?" Terry turned quickly.

"They didn't really begin to play ball until you took charge."

"Yes; but——" Terry paused. After a moment he smiled faintly as though something amused him, and touched him, too. "Bud," he said, "I like you most for the things you don't see."

"You mean I'm a wooden head?" Buddy asked flushing.

"I couldn't mean that after yesterday," said Terry.

Buddy gave a quick look. Plainly Terry was sincere. If he felt that way why hadn't he whispered something right after the game? The problem was too big—too full of "ifs" and "ands."

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Anyway, he was playing for Fairview. He had told himself last night that nothing else mattered. It was his business to forget himself and play the game.

They went on up the stairs. Down in the main hall a thundering chorus broke out :

“Come, lift your voices, let them ring
To Fairview’s praise and glory . . .”

That, Buddy told himself, was of more moment than who got credit for victories.

At 3 o’clock the fight for a baseball pennant was on again. After the games they had pitched against Garrison and Lackawanna there was no question but that Vanelli and Schuyler were fit. Their offensive strength was almost perfect. The thing to do now was to concentrate on adding power to the attack.

So Terry sent the team to the plate for a solid afternoon of batting practice, while substitutes guarded the field. O’Rourke, out on the mound, pitched as though everything depended on what skill he showed to-day. With the pennant fight as tight as it was now, O’Rourke knew that he would not be

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called on again this season. Yet, with a smiling acceptance of Fate, he cheerfully gave his best and asked no other reward than to do his share in the general work.

Saturday, when Fairview faced Bloomfield, her batting eyes were clear and keen. The game became a rout. After the fifth inning Schuyler simply lobbed the ball up to the plate and depended on the fielders. The final score was 12 to 4.

"Wonder if Lackawanna did as well?" Daly asked.

The returns, Monday morning, showed that Lackawanna had squeezed a 2 to 1 from Hasbrouck.

"She loses two games," said Terry slowly, "and scores only two runs in the third. What does that look like?"

It looked as though Lackawanna was slipping. Rood gave a wide grin.

"Mackerel! I'll bet our twelve runs scare her stiff."

"She's scared worse to see us sticking right there at her heels," said Buddy.

"I guess that's right," said Rood. He took a pencil from his pocket. The score-board read:

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	W	L	PC.		W	L	PC.
Lackawanna	10	4	.714	Hasbrouck .	7	7	.500
Fairview ..	9	5	.642	Brunswick .	7	7	.500
Irontown ..	8	6	.571	Saddle Riv.	6	8	.428
Pompton ..	7	7	.500	Gates	5	9	.357
Bloomfield .	7	7	.500	Garrison ..	4	10	.285

Above the standing Rood wrote in a florid scrawl:

Fairview, 12; Bloomfield, 4.
And another Redskin bit the dust.

That afternoon it rained and practice was out of the question. Instead of scattering to their homes, the players sat around the locker and studied the schedule. The few games that were left seemed weighted with a wonderful hope and a deadly fear.

Wednesday Fairview was to meet Gates, and Lackawanna was to play Pompton.

“What do you think of it, Bud?” Daly asked.

“It looks good to me,” Buddy answered. “Gates is almost the weakest team in the league. We ought to win.”

“And how about Lackawanna?”

“Well——” Buddy wrinkled his forehead. “Pompton is a fifty-fifty team. She wins half

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her games. That means she has an equal chance of winning from Lackawanna."

"And if Pompton wins," said Terry, "and if we win, we'll have caught Lackawanna at last."

It was a glorious prospect.

"If we once get our teeth into first place," Rood said softly, "we won't let go until the cows come home."

Ah! this was the way for Fairview fellows to talk. The rain was still falling as Buddy left the building, but he did not mind the wetting in the least. He was changing to dry clothing when Bob came home from work.

"Bob," he said, "if you look at the clock next Wednesday about 4 o'clock root for Fairview, will you?"

Bob laughed. "Certainly. Anything else?"

"You might root for Pompton, too, if you think of it."

Bob must have been a very able long distance rooter, for along about 4 o'clock Wednesday Fairview began to bat Gates's pitchers without mercy. It was another easy win. This time the score was 10 to 3. Vanelli was taken out in the seventh

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inning to rest, and O'Rourke, to his great delight, was sent in to finish the game.

The contest had been played at Gates. Coming home in the stage-coach, the squad suddenly began to itch to know what had happened at Pompton.

"Hi there, Terry," Daly called. "Can't we telephone when we get back to Fairview?"

Terry looked at Mr. Ferris. At one time it had been the custom at the school to telephone for results each day. The coach, though, had put a stop to that. Long ago he had ruled that the nine would have to wait until next morning for its results. It had made the players calmer. It had robbed the pennant fight of a type of feverish excitement that was often fatal to good baseball. Mr. Ferris had tried to train his boys not to worry about what other teams were doing. True, Rood had telephoned the afternoon Gates had beaten Lackawanna, but the act had been a sort of afterthought.

To-day, though, was something of a special occasion. Mr. Ferris knew that at times it is wise to relax the iron hand, just as at times steam must be allowed to escape from a boiler. Perhaps it would be better to-day to let excitement run its course.

"Only this once," he cautioned.

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"Only this once," the squad promised; and he nodded his head.

Daly climbed forward and begged the driver to hurry the horse. But the driver, after giving him a drowsy glance, settled in his seat and allowed the animal to go ahead at its regular gait. Rood was for taking up a collection and bribing the driver to show a little speed. He might have done it, too, had not Mr. Ferris interfered. So there was nothing to do but wait as patiently as they could for the stage to rumble into Fairview.

At last it came to a stop in front of the post office. There was a candy store up the street with a pay station telephone. Carrying suitcases and bat bags they made a run for the shop.

"None of that," called Mr. Ferris. "We can't go storming into a business place like that. Terry'll go in and telephone. The rest of us will wait outside."

Terry passed into the store. The others glued their faces to the two big windows.

The telephone booth was in the rear. Buddy, his heart thumping, saw Terry disappear from sight. A minute passed—two minutes. His breath clouded the glass. He rubbed it clear with his handkerchief

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and looked again, just in time to see Terry come out of the booth.

One look at the captain's face was enough. Lackawanna had lost. Fairview was tied for the lead.

Buddy cried out the good news. But other eyes had also seen and read the message in Terry's face. Before the captain reached the sidewalk Fairview cheers were echoing in Main street, and the clerks who sorted the mail were looking out the rear window of the post office to see what all the excitement was about.

There was no waiting to post a full league standing. The squad hurried to the school building. The front door was locked, but the janitor's door in the rear was open. They crowded into the main corridor. Terry tacked a sign to the bulletin-board that carried just two lines:

	W	L	PC.
LACKAWANNA	10	5	.666
FAIRVIEW	10	5	.666

There, next morning, students coming from all parts of the town found it, and for a while riot reigned. Nobody was interested in the other teams,

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and it was not until later in the day that Terry put up the full league standing. Brunswick, Bloomfield and Garrison had won from Irontown, Hasbrouck and Saddle River:

	W	L	PC.		W	L	PC.
Fairview ..	10	5	.666	Bloomfield .	8	7	.533
Lackawanna	10	5	.666	Hasbrouck .	7	8	.466
Pompton ..	8	7	.533	Saddle Riv.	6	9	.400
Irontown ..	8	7	.533	Gates	5	10	.333
Brunswick .	8	7	.533	Garrison ..	5	10	.333

There was another outburst when the full standing was published. The nine looked on with bright eyes for a moment, and then hurried away to the field. Something that seemed impossible had been accomplished. Now it was up to them to hold their advantage. As Rood had said, they had their teeth in. Now it was their job to hold on.

They were all impressed with the magnitude of what confronted them. They had captured the last six games. If they won the next three, that meant nine in a row. No team in the county league had ever built up a record of nine straight victories. Gathered about the bench, they looked from one to another. Could they do it?

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"We must do it," said Terry. "How about it, Bud?"

"We're a Fairview team," said Buddy.

They started the practice. O'Rourke tried to pitch to the batters. He was as wild as a nightmare dream. When the batters did hit the ball, the fielders seemed to have palsy. After fifteen minutes Mr. Ferris called a halt.

"Too much tension," he said to Terry. "They need a rest."

So the squad went back to the locker-room wondering if they had suddenly gone hopelessly wrong. Buddy was as much in the dark as the others. While the players dressed, there was a low-voiced discussion. Finally Rood walked toward the coach.

"Mr. Ferris," he said, "if trying will help we'd like to go back again and——"

The coach smiled. "You're on the wrong track. How many times can you chin the bar, Rood?"

"Nine or ten."

"Why not eleven or twelve?"

"I tire."

"But you can do it ten to-day, and stop and rest, and go back and do ten to-morrow?"

"Yes, sir."

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"That's the condition of the nine," said Mr. Ferris. "It's been in a hard drive. It's tired. It needs a rest."

"Oh!" Rood's voice carried a note of great relief. "That's better. Will we practice again to-morrow?"

"No. I think we'll forget baseball until Saturday. Then we'll work out for a little while and prepare for the afternoon's game. To-morrow let's run over to Irontown and watch the tennis matches."

The squad had forgotten that Fairview had a tennis team in the tournament. There was an excited babble of voices as boys planned the morrow's trip. Baseball was off their minds completely—and that was what Mr. Ferris wanted most.

On the way out Buddy stopped in front of the league standing. Fairview's name on top! A great feeling of gladness swept through his veins. It was a bit hard to know that where he had failed dismally another boy had made good with exactly the same players. It was hard to give up, each day, the comradeship of the coach. But this made it all worth while.

Next afternoon the team went to Irontown. The tournament had started in the morning, and many

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of the matches were over when they arrived. Fairview had entered four players in the singles, and three of them had already been eliminated. The fourth player was beaten while they watched.

"Huh!" said Rood. "That's some jolt."

"It's Fairview's first year at tennis," said Mr. Ferris. "We couldn't expect much this year. Next year the team will be in better shape."

"How did the other matches go?" Buddy asked. "Did you hear?"

"Our boys played the game," said the coach.

"That's everything," said Buddy. He did not see Terry and Rood and Mr. Ferris exchange glances and smile.

On the way home thoughts turned to baseball again. On the morrow Fairview was to play Hasbrouck and Lackawanna was to play Brunswick. Considering the strength of the opposition each team would face it was almost an even thing.

"Wonder if Lackawanna will lose again tomorrow?" Daly asked.

"Forget it," said Terry. "We'll play our own game and let them play theirs."

Before even the umpire's cry of "Play ball!" sounded next day there was proof that the rest had

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done Fairview a world of good. The fielding was clean and sharp. The hitting in practice was of a character to make Hasbrouck show signs of uneasiness.

And that uneasiness was well founded. For the same tremendous ability to drive the ball that Fairview had shown of late was again in evidence today. Two runs were scored in the second, one in the third, and three more in the fifth. By the time the ninth inning arrived, Hasbrouck was five runs behind. In that inning Schuyler Arch cut loose with his fadeaway and struck out the side. It was an impressive performance.

"For the love of Pete," the Hasbrouck captain cried when they were all back in the gym, "what kept you fellows down in the ruck so long?"

There was a moment of silence.

"We had sand in our eyes," said Rood.

Buddy's heart leaped. Were they praising him? But none of the other players said a word. Probably Rood meant that Terry had shown them how to play the game. What was that he had written on the bulletin board? Oh, yes; follow a good example and play ball. Well, the team had done it.

Monday came, ushering in the last week of the

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season. By next Saturday night the pennant would be awarded. Fairview's fight would have been won or lost.

That morning came a new league standing: Lackawanna had won her game, this time with ease. She, too, had evidently found her stride again. The new standing read:

	W	L	PC.		W	L	PC.
Fairview ..	11	5	.687	Irontown ..	8	8	.500
Lackawanna	11	5	.687	Saddle Riv.	7	9	.437
Bloomfield .	9	7	.562	Hasbrouck .	7	9	.437
Pompton ..	8	8	.500	Garrison ..	6	10	.375
Brunswick .	8	8	.500	Gates	5	11	.312

The practice that day sparkled with good plays. Never, Buddy thought, had he seen a team that looked better. The infield killed everything that it could reach. The outfielders judged flies with unerring sight. And Vanelli, gently pitching to Terry, was his old calm, placid, unhittable self.

When the work was over, Buddy heard his name called. He walked over to where Terry stood with Mr. Ferris.

"Bud," said the coach, "Terry and I want you at

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a conference at my house to-night. Can you make it?"

He had sidestepped Terry's efforts to bring him into the intimate talks on the way to and from the field each day. This was different. This was the big conference that came in the closing days of every big fight. He knew what would come up—the careful weighing of the pitchers for the next two games. He could be useful now, for he was a catcher. Handling pitchers was his line.

"What time?" he asked.

"Eight o'clock."

"I'll come."

"You darned little fire-brand," Terry said affectionately, "I thought you'd try to duck."

At eight o'clock he walked into Mr. Ferris's library. Terry was already there. They sat around the solid library table and got down at once to the business in hand.

"The odds," said Mr. Ferris, "are still against us." He looked at the two boys with a smile. "But we're used to that, aren't we?"

Terry nodded. Buddy's face was grave.

"The next game," the coach went on, "is an even thing. We play Pompton; Lackawanna plays

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Irontown. Both Pompton and Irontown have won half their games. It's the final game of the season that worries me."

Buddy reached for the schedule.

"We play Irontown for our last game," he said.

"And Lackawanna plays Garrison," said Mr. Ferris. "Garrison is next to last. So that while we're fighting a team that's fairly well up, Lackawanna will be fighting a team that's been around last place all season."

"Gosh!" Buddy cried in a panic. "If we should lose out right at the finish——"

"Forget it," said Terry.

"It's going to be largely a matter of pitchers," said Mr. Ferris.

There was silence after that. Buddy wondered what could be done with the pitchers to make them more effective. Was that what Mr. Ferris meant?

"Van and Schuyler have been working in rotation, Terry said presently. "I don't want to break that arrangement. We can use Van Wednesday against Pompton, and shoot in you and Schuyler for the last game."

"No," said Buddy jumping up. This wasn't right at all.

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“No?” Terry looked at him a moment. “Why not?”

“Van’s the better pitcher. Besides, that last game will be a nerve game if we’re still tied with Lackawanna. I don’t mean that Schuyler can’t stand the gaff, but Van has no nerves.”

There was another interval of silence. Mr. Ferris said nothing.

“Schuyler worked Saturday,” Terry argued. “It isn’t fair to pitch him again Wednesday and purposely save the last game for Van.”

“How about being fair to Fairview?” Buddy demanded.

At that Terry began to scratch his head vigorously. “Say,” he said at last, “do you realize you’re talking yourself out of a chance to play in the big game?”

“I’m talking for Fairview,” said Buddy.

“You’re always doing that,” Terry said slowly, and partly surrendered.

Fifteen minutes later they had mapped out their program. Van would start against Pompton and would pitch four or five innings. Then he would turn the game over to Schuyler and rest up for Saturday.

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"All right," Terry agreed; "we'll try that; but it doesn't seem fair to Schuyler though."

"Schuyler'll understand," Buddy said confidently.

They told Schuyler next day. Terry watched with an anxious expression in his eyes. The pitcher took the news with an emphatic nod of his head.

"Good dope," he said. "Van's the boy to do it. In fact he ought to pitch both those games if he can stand the going."

"No," said Terry; "you do your part."

He walked over toward the bench. What a wonderful thing Fairview spirit was when you came to know it!

When the work ended that day, every member of the squad was sure that the morrow's game with Pompton would be a game of thrills. All during the practice students swarmed excitedly along the foul-lines, and twice Terry had to chase them back from the bench itself. The stage seemed set for blood-stirring action. The time was so short there would be no chance to retrieve mistakes, to recover lost ground, one bad inning, one wild throw, one fumbled ball might mean all the difference between a pennant won and a pennant lost.

And yet, when the morrow came, the Pompton

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game became of secondary interest. The news spread that a meeting of the county league directors had been called for 11 o'clock that morning, and that Mr. Ferris, as Fairview's representative, was to attend the conference.

Down in the locker-room the baseball players clamored around the coach. Would he be back in time for the afternoon's game? What was the meeting for? Were the directors going to order a deciding game in case Lackawanna and Fairview ended the season tied?

"I'm in the dark," Mr. Ferris told them. "Frankly, I imagine Fairview and Lackawanna being tied now has something to do with it. Should a deciding game be suggested I imagine Fairview will agree."

"You suggest it first, coach," Daly begged, "for fear they'll forget it."

There was a general laugh.

"Will you be back in time for Pompton?" Terry asked.

"No," said Mr. Ferris; "I hardly think so."

The laughter stopped.

"None of that," the coach chided. "Go out there and play your game. When 3 o'clock comes, I want

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to be able to say to myself, 'I can depend on my boys to play the game just as though I were there.' ”

“You can say it,” Buddy cried.

“And when I step from the stage this evening,” the coach went on, “I want somebody to meet me and tell me that the nine won again.”

“We'll all be there to meet you,” Rood promised.

“With the news I want?”

“Yes, sir; with the news you want.”

The nine kept its word. When the stage rolled up to the post office shortly before 6 o'clock, the whole squad was there.

“We won,” Terry cried before Mr. Ferris could step to the ground.

“The score was 5 to 2,” called Rood.

“Van only gave them one run in the first five innings.”

“And Schuyler gave them one run in the last four.”

“And Lackawanna won, too,” came a doleful voice from the rear of the squad. “We telephoned and found out.”

“Fine!” said Mr. Ferris. He stepped down among them and was silent after saying that one word. They suspected that something out of the

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ordinary had happened. When he walked off with Terry, they formed in little groups and followed, and were not surprised when they found their steps leading toward the school.

"He's taking us to the locker-room," said Rood.

But the walk led only as far as the building. Mr. Ferris sat on the outdoor steps. They found places on the lower treads.

"Boys," he said, "the meeting left it for me to decide whether Fairview and Lackawanna should play a deciding game in case of a tie."

"'Rah!" shouted Daly. They all began to cheer. The cheer died away. Mr. Ferris was shaking his head.

"Not so fast, boys. I told them that Fairview would not play the game. It's for you to say whether I did right."

The group was silent. Somebody sighed.

"Tell us all about it," said Terry.

"Lackawanna was willing to play the game," Mr. Ferris said. "However, examinations are over at Lackawanna just as they are over here. Three of her strongest players have taken jobs. They start to work next Monday. If we played her she'd have to use substitutes——"

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They saw it then. Faces that were glum suddenly broke into smiles.

"We couldn't take a championship that way," Buddy cried.

"Right-o!" said Rood.

"That's not Fairview's style," Terry said sturdily. "Not much."

They were all laughing now. Three or four stood up as though the talk was over.

"Wait," said Mr. Ferris. "Saturday's game will end the season. Fairview and Lackawanna will be playing miles apart, and yet each team will be keyed up to know how the other team is making out. We've arranged to take care of that."

"How?" a voice asked eagerly.

"We'll be playing at Irontown. They're going to put up another score-board. The Lackawanna score will be telephoned each inning. It will be posted right on the field. Our score will be telephoned to them. While we're playing we'll know just what they're doing, and——"

That was as much as the boys heard. They were on their feet shouting, and crying out questions, and talking excitedly all at once.

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"It will be just like a World's Series game," Terry said with shining eyes.

"Almost," Mr. Ferris smiled.

"Playing our own game," Terry went on, "and watching the score-board fearfully and hopefully, and——" His face grew serious.

"What now?" Rood asked.

"Out at Lackawanna they'll be watching the score-board, too," said Terry. "If they see a couple of runs for Fairview go up right at the start, it's going to have them on the jump. If they get the runs, it will have us on the jump. We'll be miles apart just as Mr. Ferris said, but we'll be playing against Lackawanna just as though she was out there on the field with us."

CHAPTER IX

TWO SCORE-BOARDS

NEXT morning the school wanted to talk about nothing but score-boards. The letters reporting how all the league games had gone were waiting in the box outside Dr. Minor's office. Terry took them, and pushed his way through the boys who immediately tried to detain him.

"No use posting any more league standings," one student argued. "We're only interested in Lackawanna. What do we care about any of the other teams?"

Nevertheless Terry went upstairs to tabulate his figures. When he came down he was plainly excited.

"Who said it was no use to post standings?" he demanded. "Just look at this."

There was a rush to view the board:

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	W	L	PC.		W	L	PC.
Fairview ..	12	5	.705	Irontown ..	8	9	.470
Lackawanna	12	5	.705	Hasbrouck .	8	9	.470
Bloomfield .	10	7	.588	Saddle Riv.	7	10	.411
Brunswick .	8	9	.470	Garrison ..	7	10	.411
Pompton ..	8	9	.470	Gates	5	12	.294

“Well, what about it?” asked a puzzled boy.
 “What’s so wonderful?”

“Look at Garrison,” said Terry.

“I’m looking. She’s still next to last.”

“Oh, you mush-head!” Terry cried. “She’s won again. She won her last three. She’s beaten Saddle River and Pompton and Brunswick. She’s struck a winning stride, and Saturday she plays Lackawanna. Does that mean anything?”

It meant a whole lot. And with that meaning, the two score-boards at Irontown began to hold greater, more thrilling possibilities. What a story they might tell as the sun went down next Saturday! True, Lackawanna had the advantage of playing at home on her own field, but Garrison was no longer an opponent to be despised. On the season’s record as it now stood, Garrison was only one game weaker than Irontown.

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A dozen times a day Buddy found cause to rejoice that he had made it possible for Terry to be captain. Facing the crisis, Fairview was— Well, Fairview was Fairview. The nine went about its work quietly and steadily after the manner of boys who knew their duty and were resolved to do it. The school, in countless ways, showed that every bit of its faith and loyalty were behind the players who were to carry the Blue and White into battle.

By Friday it was plain that almost every Fairview student planned to go to Irontown. Some would journey by train and some by stage. Many, who had only money enough to pay fare one way, decided to walk over and ride back. Still others intended to use their bicycles both to go and to return. One or two, whose pockets were empty but whose spirits were high, threatened to walk both ways—and meant it.

Friday afternoon the work out was short. There was fifteen minutes of fielding, a gentle warm-up for Vanelli, and then a brief batting bee with Schuyler and O'Rourke doing the pitching. After that the squad went back to the locker-room.

"Say," said Rood, "suppose it rains to-morrow. We couldn't play that last game."

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"Why not?" Baxter demanded.

"With Lackawanna shy three of her regulars?"

This was a disturbing thought. On the way home Buddy kept studying the sky. The heavens did look gray and overcast.

Twice that night he came outdoors and stared overhead. The second time he looked there was not a star in sight. Just before snuggling into bed he heard a soft sound in the trees. He ran to the window and leaned out, and a drop or two of moisture fell on his upturned face. He lay down sick at heart, and fell asleep at last listening miserably to the rain.

But in the morning a wonder of nature awaited him. The sky was blue and fair. The sun was shining. All outdoors was fresh and sweet from its wash of rain. When he ran to the front yard to gather a few early flowers for the dining-room table, the ground was firm and springy. To-day would be ideal for baseball.

At 1 o'clock the squad started for Irontown. The school had expressed a desire to do things in style with a special coach decorated with the school colors. Mr. Ferris had said no. It were better that the

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nine should try to view this as merely one of the eighteen games of the season.

But it was hard for them to view this as an ordinary struggle. The stage on which they rode was jammed with other Fairview students. Fairview boys, on bicycles, rode alongside. As they neared Irontown they overtook clusters of those whom necessity compelled to walk. Each meeting was followed by a flurry of shouts, and cries, and high-pitched cheers.

In the locker-room of the Irontown high school there was more excitement. The Irontown nine was already at the field, but Irontown students thronged the halls, and the stairs, and the gallery that ran around the locker-room itself. Their sympathies were plainly with Fairview. When the nine started for the field Irontown boys tagged along uttering good luck wishes.

"Funny, isn't it?" said Terry. "Those fellows are with us, and yet their team will fight us tooth and nail."

"It's the game," said Buddy.

"Yes," said Terry; "it's the game and it's fair. I suppose if Irontown knocks us out of a pennant

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to-day she'll be thoroughly sorry. That won't stop her fighting us, though."

"And it won't stop us from winning," Buddy announced.

Terry grinned. "Not much." He looked back at the string of players. "They're pretty calm about it."

And then they came to the field and the calmness was gone. Two score-boards stood out against the green, one alongside the other. The first read:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
FAIRVIEW									
IRONTOWN									

The other read:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
GARRISON									
LACKAWANNA									

What story would the boards tell two hours from now? Even Terry lost himself in thought as he stared.

"Come on, fellows," Buddy cried. "Start throwing that ball around. A little action, now."

Terry smiled ruefully. That was once he had been caught asleep. He plunged into the work of fielding short bunts, taking his place in a semi-

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circle of the players. The minutes passed, and soon it was Fairview's turn to take the field for her practice. Then Terry got his glove and called Vanelli, and the pitcher began to prepare his arm for the struggle.

One of the substitutes hit to the outfielders, and Mr. Ferris stung the ball to the infielders. Buddy, at the plate, caught the infield returns. There were moments when the fielding was superb and brought frantic yells from the massed Fairview rooters. There were times that the ball seemed to elude the players as though it was possessed. Buddy, in a panic, wondered if this was to be another of Fairview's desperate in-and-out struggles. His worry unstrung him, and on a throw to second he heaved the ball out to the center-fielder.

"Steady!" Mr. Ferris called in an undertone.

"But they're messing things up so——" Buddy began.

"I know. Steady. They'll find their stride. If we get past the first inning without damage the worry will be over."

If Fairview got past the first inning. Buddy felt something choke in his throat.

Presently it was time to start the game. The um-

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pires took their places. The Irontown players, poised on eager feet, crouched and waited. Buddy sat on the bench staring straight ahead.

"Coach at first, Bud," Terry called.

"Oh!" Buddy had forgotten. He ran to the box. The Fairview students were grouped around him. Their song burst forth:

"Come, lift your voices, let them ring
To Fairview's praise and glory . . ."

The Irontown pitcher threw the ball. Rood swung and met it, and it floated away to the outfield for an easy catch.

The battle was on.

Meyers, next up, was nervously eager to hit. The first pitch was wide, but he swung and tipped it. It dribbled toward the first-baseman. The pitcher ran over to cover the bag. The umpire's hand jerked sharply upwards.

"Out!"

Grant came to bat. He was calm—the only calm boy, apparently, on the Fairview team. But he, too, swung at the first offering, and once more the ball floated to a waiting outfielder. The side had been retired on three pitched balls.

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Buddy came to the bench. If Fairview got past the first inning——

“Steady!” he kept whispering without knowing he was talking. “Steady, now!”

The first two balls Van pitched were strikes. After that the batter began to foul, and the pitcher began to miss the plate. When the count was three and two at last, he had to lay the ball right over.

Buddy held his breath. The batter hit a sharp grounder to Rood.

The second-baseman had developed into one of the hardest players on the team, but he had an unfortunate habit of spoiling his plays when moments were tense. Now, while the Fairview bench writhed in agony, he missed the ball completely.

“Go on!” cried the Irontown coaches. “Go on; go on.”

Grant, the calm, had started forward to back up the play the moment the ball was hit. As Rood missed the chance, he went forward in a burst of speed. Still running, he scooped it at his shoetops. Rood had whirled and was guarding second-base.

“Slide!” screamed the coaches. “Slide!”

The runner threw himself forward spikes first. Grant’s throw came true. Rood caught the ball,

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held it this time, and brought it down with a lightning thrust. The umpire ruled the runner out.

A squeak of delight burst from Buddy's throat. He heard Mr. Ferris speaking.

"The best thing that could have happened," the coach was saying. "That will give them back their balance. Now watch them."

Buddy watched, and saw Walters throw out the next batter. The third boy lifted a corkscrew foul that Daly caught after a difficult chase with his back to the ball.

One of the score-boards blossomed with white figures:

	I
FAIRVIEW.....	0
IRONTOWN	0

Twenty-five minutes later that score-board had more of those silent white figures:

	I	2	3
FAIRVIEW.....	0	0	0
IRONTOWN	0	0	0

That other score-board was stark and bare. Thus far, not a scrap of information had come from Lackawanna.

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A racking tension was slowly taking possession of the nine. Their own game had developed into a bitter fight. Added to this was the worry about what was happening at Lackawanna. Why the delay? What did it mean? Were they still playing the first inning there with one team piling up an overwhelming number of runs?

"I hope," Terry said grimly, "Lackawanna's having as hard a fight as we're having."

"Where are the returns coming in?" Daly asked.

"At the Irontown high school. They have fellows there to bring the score here as soon as it's telephoned."

"Look!" cried Buddy. "Here comes a fellow running like mad."

A boy came sprinting toward the field. Cries of "What's the score?" greeted him, but he kept right on to the score-board. The game stopped. The whole field watched while white figures went up on the second board:

	I	2	3
GARRISON.....	0	0	0
LACKAWANNA....	0	0	0

Buddy gave a whoop. "They're having their troubles, too. Come on, fellows; get into the game.

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Who's up? Lewis? Hit it a mile, old man; hit it a mile."

Lewis did not hit the ball that far, but he did drive it far enough into left field to reach second base. It was Fairview's first solid blow. The Blue and White sections went mad.

This was a game in which one run might be all that was needed to win. Terry wisely decided to play for one run rather than for several. Baxter was sent to the plate with instructions to bunt.

He tapped the first ball pitched, and was thrown out. Lewis went to third. Any sort of hit now would score a run. Here was Fairview's chance. Hi, yi, everybody! On your toes, now!

The Irontown pitcher, gathering his strength, began to whip in the ball with terrific speed. Daly, his lips set tight, tried in vain to drive it out. The third strike, a curve, fooled him completely. He did not offer at it at all, and dropped his eyes miserably as the umpire ruled him out. Fairview's enthusiasm slumped.

And then it flared again. Terry, the team's best batter, was up. A passionate chant arose:

"Hit it, Terry! Hit it, Terry! Hit it, Terry!"

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The pitcher glanced at the rooting section, turned up his nose, and served the ball.

“Strike one!”

The chant went right on:

“Hit it, Terry! Hit it, Terry! Hit it, Terry!”

Terry caught the next ball near the handle of his bat. It popped into the air. The chant became a groan, quickly to change into a cry. The Iron-town second-baseman was running back, and halting, and running back again. The right-fielder was racing forward. One moment that ball seemed doomed; the next it appeared to have a chance.

“Mine!” called the second-baseman.

“Mine!” shouted the fielder in the same breath.

Both boys, undecided who was to make the catch, paused.

“Daniels!” the Irontown captain cried shrilly. “Get it, Daniels.”

The right-fielder tried, but that pause had been fatal. The ball fell at his feet. Lewis was in with Fairview’s first run. Terry, thinking to take advantage of the confusion, tried to reach second. A quick throw cut him down.

“Oh, well,” Buddy laughed, “we’ve broken the ice. Now let’s see if we can blank Irontown again.”

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They blanked her. The score-board read:

	1	2	3	4
FAIRVIEW.....	0	0	0	1
IRONTOWN.....	0	0	0	0

Just then another inning arrived from Lackawanna:

	1	2	3	4
GARRISON.....	0	0	0	0
LACKAWANNA....	0	0	0	1

Terry sighed. "I hope Garrison doesn't go to pieces. Come on, fellows; let's see if we can score again this inning."

They didn't. Neither did Irontown. As the inning ended, another message came from Lackawanna. Nobody bothered to watch the Fairview score-board. That held no mysteries—1 to 0 in the fifth in Fairview's favor. All eyes were on the other sign.

"Y—a—a—h!" cried the Fairview students in ecstasy as the scorer hung a 1 for Garrison. But another 1 also went up for Lackawanna. The board read:

	1	2	3	4	5
GARRISON.....	0	0	0	0	1
LACKAWANNA....	0	0	0	1	1

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The sixth inning passed, with another 0 for Fairview and another 0 for Irontown. They were playing the seventh when a messenger came running toward the field. He had news this time, for he was waving his cap above his head. Buddy scurried out to meet him, forgetting all about his coaching duties.

"Two runs for Garrison," he gasped.

"How many for Lackawanna?" Buddy demanded.

"None."

The news was over the field before the figures were posted. On the Fairview bench players punched each other, and hugged each other, and even threw themselves headlong on the coach. Back of the foul lines the Fairview rooters threw fits. One boy stepped on the wheel of his bicycle and broke four spokes and didn't even bother to give a moment's regret to the wreck. The Lackawanna score-board now read:

	1	2	3	4	5	6
GARRISON.....	0	0	0	0	1	2
LACKAWANNA....	0	0	0	1	1	0

"We ought to score some more runs after that," Terry cried. "Right after them, fellows."

TWO SCORE-BOARDS

But Irontown's defense was superb. So, too, was Fairview's. Another inning passed and the score-board read:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
FAIRVIEW.....	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
IRONTOWN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Fairview went to bat for her eighth inning. Out of the coaching lines Buddy exhorted, and on the bench Terry pleaded for more hitting. One run was so little! But for the moment the players were deaf to all appeals. One thought was in every mind. What would be the substance of the next message from Lackawanna?

At last the messenger came, waving his hat again with that motion that said he had news. Buddy did not run to meet him. He was afraid. Lackawanna may have evened things. She might even have forged ahead. The whole field grew silent.

When the scorer stood up to hang the new numbers, his body hid part of the board. Would he never step aside? It seemed that he was purposely taking his time. Then he jumped to the ground, and the result was before them:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
GARRISON.....	0	0	0	0	1	2	2
LACKAWANNA....	0	0	0	1	1	0	0

FIGHTING FOR FAIRVIEW

One frenzied shout that seemed to grow and grow and grow! This time the Fairview scorer whacked Mr. Ferris over the knees with his book, and Daly knocked off his hat. But for all Mr. Ferris seemed to care, they could have ripped his coat up the back.

"O you Garrison!" babbled Rood. "O you Garrison!"

"Two more runs," cried Daly. "That about sews up the game."

"Now let's sew up our own game," Terry said hoarsely.

The team was too excited to play ball. There had been two strikes on Meyers when the messenger arrived, and now the Irontown pitcher put over the third. Meyers came to the bench trying hard to look crestfallen, and failing badly. Grant was thrown out on a grounder, and Walters was out on a fly. Irontown's half of the eighth began.

The exercise of taking the field and throwing the ball around seemed to bring back the sanity of the nine. Hearts that were fluttering began to steady. Hands that were sweating grew dry. Eyes that were dancing once more were able to concentrate on one spot—the batter.

Vanelli, calm and unruffled, took up his work.

TWO SCORE-BOARDS

It seemed that he had never pitched better. Slowly and methodically he threw to Terry. The first boy popped to the infield, and the second hit a liner for which Rood did not have to move an inch. The third boy came to the plate.

It was Van's custom to let down when two were out and none were on the bases. He let down now—and the batter drove out a long two-bagger.

The shock of that hit gave Buddy's nerves a start, and he swallowed a blade of grass he had been chewing. While he was coughing and gagging there was another hit. He forgot the tickling misery in his throat, and raised frightened eyes to the field. Vanelli was wringing his pitching hand, and Rood was racing in for a ball that lay not two feet from the pitcher. The Irontown runner who had been on second was on third, and the boy who had hit that ball was safe on first. The game that had seemed so safe a moment before was now trembling in the balance.

"W—what happened?" Buddy gasped.

Everybody tried to tell him at once.

"He hit a liner right at Van and——"

"Must have hit the end of his fingers and——"

"Too hot to handle and——"

FIGHTING FOR FAIRVIEW

Vanelli was still wringing his hand. He walked down to the plate. There he and Terry examined the injury. Plainly the pitcher was hurt, but how badly those on the bench did not know. For the first time that season Mr. Ferris's face showed concern.

"Warm up, Schuyler," he said.

Schuyler sprang from the bench. Buddy reached for a glove.

"You stay here," said Mr. Ferris. "Let him pitch to somebody else. We may need your coaching."

We may need your coaching! Buddy grew hot, and then cold. Ah! but it was good to hear Mr. Ferris say that!

Van walked back to the box. The Fairview rooters cheered. Terry's brisk fingers telegraphed a signal. Van's arm swung out.

All in an instant the complexion of the game was changed. The ball had gone wild. The runner on third scored. The boy on first base raced around to third. The score was tied.

"Why *did* he do that?" Buddy demanded dismally. "Why?"

"His fingers," said Mr. Ferris. "They were

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stiffened from the shock. He couldn't control the ball."

Buddy looked around. "Schuyler——"

"No," said the coach. "Van will know if he's not in shape to go on. He'll come out if he isn't fit."

Van, after another conference with Terry, went back to the box. Buddy scarcely breathed. If that other run came in— He felt a shiver of panic.

Van's first ball was fouled.

"Strike one."

His next was a nice cut across the outside corner.

"Strike two."

Then came a ball that was almost wild. Plainly those fingers, while regaining their suppleness, were still not yet entirely normal.

The next pitch, the whole field seemed to guess, would be decisive. There was not a sound as the ball was delivered. Then the silence changed to a mighty roar, for the batter had swung and missed. And while the cheering was at its height, another return came from Lackawanna.

The Fairview board was attended to first:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
FAIRVIEW.....	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
IRONTOWN.....	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

FIGHTING FOR FAIRVIEW

Then the Lackawanna result:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
GARRISON.....	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	0
LACKAWANNA....	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1

“Lackawanna’s fighting hard,” Terry said uneasily. “They’ll get a fresh dose of courage when Irontown’s run is posted on their board. Who’s up first?”

“Lewis,” said the scorer.

Lewis went out to the plate, and Baxter, up next, began to swing two bats. It was all in vain. Fairview did not get a runner on the bases. Irontown, in her half of the ninth, got a boy as far as first base, but there he remained glued to the bag and watched the boys who followed him at bat fall before Vanelli’s delivery.

There had been excitement before, but now the tension rose to feverish heights. The game had gone into extra innings. The first team to score a run would probably win.

There was considerable delay when Irontown took the field, and further delay as Fairview prepared to go to bat. The umpires made no effort to hurry the players. They understood. How about the final inning at Lackawanna?

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And so, when another messenger came dashing toward the field, preparations for the tenth inning came to a complete stop. Once more the scorer's body hid the board. The Fairview players jumped up on their bench and strained their necks trying to see.

"He's putting up Garrison's score. It's——"

"It's a cipher. There! See! Over his shoulder there."

"Lackawanna scored some runs."

"How many? The big snail, why doesn't he hur——"

"It's a one," yelled Rood. "Garrison wins 5 to 4. Garrison wins."

It seemed that the cheering would never stop. Twice it slackened, only to take on greater strength. The Irontown nine seemed to catch a share of the general excitement. The players gathered near second base and talked rapidly. When they separated and began to throw the ball around, chance after chance was fumbled.

Buddy had recovered from his first sweep of dizzy happiness. He was watching Irontown. The cheering gave place to the school song, but for once he was deaf to the appeal of the grand old hymn.

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His brain was on fire with a plan that had taken shape all in an instant.

"Terry!" he called. "Terry! Mr. Ferris! Look here, fellows; I have a plan."

"Go away," Rood cried happily. "Can't you see we're enjoying ourselves?"

"But we haven't yet beaten Irontown."

That gave him his hearing. Rood's face sobered. They crowded around him.

"All this noise and excitement has Irontown upset," he said. "She can't help it. She's been keyed up during the game, but now she's letting down. She don't know that either. She's relaxed. It's going to take her a while to get up on her toes again."

"How so?" Daly asked.

"I don't know," Buddy answered, "but that's how it happens. It's like a fellow working hard—digging a garden or something. As long as he keeps on working he swings along, but if he sits down and talks a while he's rusty when he starts again. The swing is gone. It comes back after he works a while, but it isn't there at first."

"Go to it, Bud," said Rood. "What next?"

"Hustle our fellows out to bat. The pitcher will

TWO SCORE-BOARDS

be off his game for a minute. Go after the first good ball. Start the attack before they regain their poise."

"Into the game," cried Terry. "You're up, Daly. Go after the first good ball."

Daly hurried to the plate. This was the signal for another demonstration. The umpire's call of "Play ball!" was lost in the uproar. The Irontown players kept glancing nervously from left to right and shifting their positions as though they could not place themselves properly.

The umpire's voice was drowned as he ruled on the first ball pitched. The second needed no ruling. It shot away from Daly's bat out to center-field, and Daly ran to first base.

Instantly Terry was at the plate. The first ball was his. He hit to left field, and Daly stopped at second base.

Vanelli was at the plate before the ball had been returned to the pitcher. The team was losing no time. Up and hit, up and hit. That was the system. Up and hit.

He, too, struck at the first ball pitched. The shortstop sprang, but the ball was past him.

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"F-a-i-r-v-i-e-w!" came a roar from the rooters. Daly scored, and Terry reached third.

"Fairview!" Mr. Ferris said softly, and looked out to where Buddy was dancing wildly in the coaching box.

Three runs came in before the side was retired—three runs that drove the rooters frantic with joy. They made a rush for the bench, but Buddy headed them off.

"Not yet, fellows. Irontown still has a chance."

Reluctantly they retired beyond the foul lines. Buddy went on to the bench. There he sat and watched the finish of the game. His soul was at peace.

"Van could win this game now without a curve," said a substitute.

But quiet, methodical Vanelli took no chances. A strike, a ball—and the first boy hit and was thrown out. Two balls, a strike—and the next boy fled to Grant. Two out!

A slow smile spread across Buddy's face. Fairview, the old, old Fairview. What an uphill fight she had made! Fairview, the bravest of the brave. How true that was!

For the moment he forgot the game. A sudden

TWO SCORE-BOARDS

shout, a shout that seemed to say that all was over, brought him to his feet.

"Our pennant, Bud," said Mr. Ferris.

His heart swelled. The students, unrestrained, were swarming about the bench trying to lift Terry and Van to their shoulders. Boys bumped him and jostled him, but he stood there unmindful of the crowd, looking deep into the friendly eyes of the coach.

Something in those eyes was saying, "Good boy, Bud." He did not want to sail under any false colors.

"I never told anybody before," he said in a voice that trembled, "but it was hard for a while after I quit as captain. I wasn't always thinking about the good of the school. Sometimes I was sore, and sometimes I was almost sorry."

"I know, Bud."

"Oh!" That was surprising. But then, Mr. Ferris seemed always to know so much about what went on inside of his boys. "But it's all right now, isn't it?" Buddy asked eagerly.

"It always was all right," the coach said gently. "Always, Bud."

CHAPTER X

TERRY STEPS ASIDE

NOW that the game was over, the rival teams hobnobbed in a gay spirit of comradeship. Fairview players walked with Irontown players, and an Irontown bat boy helped to carry the Fairview bat bag back to the locker-room.

“We had to fight you,” the Irontown captain said to Terry. “It wouldn’t have been fair to Lackawanna to have us go slack just because we had no chance for the pennant.”

“Believe me, you gave us a good fight,” Terry said ruefully.

The Irontown captain laughed. “Didn’t we? Well, now that it’s over, let’s shake.”

They shook hands impulsively.

Fairview’s students had marched to the school in a solid body and had serenaded the victorious nine in hoarse, deep-throated song. Now the song was

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growing faint in the distance as the students made for home.

Down in the locker-room the nine refused to stop its play. Water was splashed from the showers. Players chased each other hilariously, and slipped on the wet floor, and barked their shins against benches. Who cared for a barked shin? Hadn't they captured the county pennant?

The celebration might have lasted another hour had not Mr. Ferris walked toward the telephone in the rear of the room. A warning whisper, a nod in the coach's direction, and quiet began to settle over the place. Boys tip-toed to the showers and turned off the water.

"Fairview, 500," Mr. Ferris said. Then after a wait: "Hello; Fairview Hotel? This is Mr. Ferris. I spoke to you about dinner for a party of high school boys—— Yes; that's right. Can you take care of us to-night? About seven-thirty? Thank you."

There wasn't a sound from the boys. It was Rood who broke the spell by stepping forward slowly.

"Is that dinner for us, Mr. Ferris?"

The coach smiled. "Yes."

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“A real dinner—oysters, and ice cream, and cakes, and——”

“Yes; if we get there in time to eat it.”

“Oh, we’ll get there,” cried Rood, and dove for his locker. Somebody demanded to know the time, and somebody else answered. There was a wail of anguish from Grant.

“The stage leaves in five minutes, and there isn’t another for half an hour. Nice pickle, isn’t it?”

“There’s a train to Fairview in twelve minutes,” an Irontown boy informed them, and Rood called down blessings on his head. Twelve minutes later they were at the station. Some of the boys had not combed their hair, and some had collars and ties stuck in their pockets, and Daly was holding up his trousers with his hands because he hadn’t had time to put on his belt—but they were all there on time.

Buddy climbed into the nearest car and threw his grip into an overhead rack. Not until he sank back into a seat did he realize that he was tired—that he had been tired, in fact, for a long time. While the pennant fight was on he had been keyed up by the grip of the struggle; now that all was over, he felt that he simply wanted to sit back and rest, and

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rest, and rest. It was pleasant in the car with the soft afternoon sunshine streaming in through the windows. The fact that Fairview had won her goal filled him with a warm contentment.

Schuyler shared the seat with him. But instead of resting comfortably, Schuyler was squirming about and glancing back over his shoulders.

"You seem to be out of things," he said at last; "you and I."

Buddy glanced back. The other members of the squad had the rear of the day coach almost to themselves. They were clustered about Terry and Mr. Ferris, standing in the aisle and leaning over seats, and talking in suppressed undertone.

"Terry deserves it," Buddy said. "He made a fighting team of them."

"But you made it all possible," Schuyler said hotly.

Buddy smiled. "That used to bother me, too, Schuyler. I'm over it now. My team failed. Terry's team won the pennant."

"O Schuyler!" Terry called. "Come down here, won't you?"

Schuyler hesitated, and ended by walking down the aisle and joining the group. Buddy allowed him-

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self to sink back still farther into the soft comfort of the cushioned seat. He had played his last game for Fairview, but he had no regrets. In a few weeks he would graduate and would enter the iron works. He was leaving with a clean slate. If he had hung on and had handicapped the team—— But he hadn't. That was what gave him the most satisfaction.

Schuyler came back. The hostility was gone from his face. "Terry's all right," he said abruptly. The train reached Fairview, and he pulled his suitcase from the rack and hurried down the aisle.

In fact, all the players hurried. When Buddy stepped down to the platform they had scattered in all directions. He looked about him perplexed and bewildered. Why was everybody hurrying away like that?

"Coming, Bud?" said Mr. Ferris.

They walked off together. Schuyler and Daly disappeared up a side street, and Buddy looked after them for several seconds.

"They're rounding up the students," Mr. Ferris explained. "While we're at dinner we might as well bestow the watch fob. You haven't forgotten that, have you—a watch fob to every successful Fairview captain?"

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Buddy had forgotten it completely. His face broke into a quick smile. "This will be a big night for Terry, won't it?"

"A big night," Mr. Ferris agreed.

"But——" The smile changed to a thoughtful look. "Why wasn't I also sent to pass the word to the students? Was that what you were all talking about in the car? But Terry was right there and heard it all. It isn't a secret to him."

"I must go down this way," Mr. Ferris said hurriedly. "So long, Bud."

It was very puzzling. Buddy walked home with his brows knit. Mr. Ferris had almost run away from him. Once in the house, though, the excitement of telling Bob about Fairview's victory drove all other thoughts from his head.

"No supper for me to-night," he ended. "Mr. Ferris is giving us a dinner at the Fairview Hotel. Terry's going to get a watch-fob for leading the team to a pennant."

Bob gave him a quick look. His face held no sign of envy.

"Go to it, Bud," Bob said affectionately, "and eat your head off."

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“Going to,” said Buddy, and dashed upstairs to change to his best suit.

An hour later he was at dinner with the squad. This, he thought, was great. A wide table with the whitest of table cloths, and the whitest of napkins, and the sparklingest of glasses, and the crispiest of rolls, and—and——

“Say,” Rood whispered, “did you ever *taste* such soup?”

“And the roast beef——” Buddy began.

“And the mashed potatoes——” Schuyler broke in.

“And here comes the ice cream,” said Rood. “Oh, boy!”

They ate the cream slowly. This was the end of the meal. By degrees excitement came into their eyes. Time after time Buddy saw players watching him, and turning their heads away quickly when he met their eyes. He wondered how the watch-fob would be presented; and he wondered, too, why everybody was looking in his direction.

The dinner had been held in a big room upstairs. There were folding doors at one end, but the folding doors were closed. Waiters came in and crumbed the table, and withdrew with ice cream

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plates and coffee cups and left the tables bare. A silence settled over the room.

"Boys," said Mr. Ferris.

Buddy turned in his chair to face the coach. All at once it dawned on him that Terry's place was vacant. What was the matter? Had Terry slipped away sooner than face the honors that were due him? That would be like Terry—but it would spoil everything, too.

"Boys," Mr. Ferris said, "we are now about to honor one of our number. As you know, the Athletic Association passed a rule last fall decreeing that to every successful Fairview captain a watch fob should be voted. We are here to-night to award that fob because Fairview, under a leadership that was both a stimulus and an inspiration, threw off the shackles of failure and arose to the heights of success. Baxter."

Baxter stood up. "Yes, sir."

"Rood!"

"Right-o!" the second-baseman answered.

"Please open the folding doors," said Mr. Ferris.

Grinning, they walked to the doors and slid them open. There stood the students in solid ranks, and Terry McCarthy was at their head.

FIGHTING FOR FAIRVIEW

Buddy swung around to Schuyler. "How can Terry present himself with a——"

"Ssh!" said Schuyler.

Into the dining-room came the students still with Terry at their head. A few feet from the table they stopped. Terry took another step forward.

"As I understand it," he said, "these watch-fobs are to be presented to successful Fairview captains. Am I right?"

"Right-o!" shouted Rood.

"In order to award this fob to-night," said Terry, "it will be necessary for us to look back at the season that has passed. We started with a team that had strength. It could hit, it could field, and it had the pitchers. It was a team that should have run away with the pennant. It was a team that should have won right from the start. It didn't. I've been looking up the records of other years. Up to the middle of the season, no Fairview team ever made a record as poor as this year's team. That's right, isn't it?"

"Right!" shouted a voice.

"The trouble was," Terry went on, "that we were loafing. We weren't heart and soul in the pennant fight. A lot of us were new to Fairview. We

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hadn't found the spirit. It didn't seem to matter whether we won or not. We took things easy.

"But one fellow was out there battling every day. He made errors; he even lost a game. Some of us began to wonder how in thunder he had ever been elected captain. We didn't follow him. Many of us thought we were a whole lot better than he was. Maybe we were—as players. But he had something that was worth more than all our playing skill.

"This fellow quit as captain. He didn't quit because he wanted to sneak out of a hard, thankless job. He quit because he thought the team would play better ball for some other captain. He quit because he couldn't bear to be a millstone around the school's neck. I know how he must have felt walking home that night. He must have been sick with failure and disappointment. And yet, among the fellows he left behind him in the locker-room that night, the knowledge came that Buddy Jones was the biggest man at Fairview."

Rood sprang up and began to wave his napkin. The whole room broke into cheers. Buddy's cheeks went red, and a hot mist flashed into his eyes. It was fine of Terry to say that, of course—but he wished he could slip away. He looked around fur-

FIGHTING FOR FAIRVIEW

tively. Schuyler put out an arm and blocked the space between their chairs.

“No, you don’t, Bud.”

Embarrassment ran riot through every nerve in his body. If Terry wanted to say all these fine things, why hadn’t he said it when they were alone? Perhaps, though, Terry was afraid he might feel badly about the watch-fob, and wanted to give him a share of the honors.

“That night in the locker-room,” Terry went on, “a new team came into existence. When we left, we knew that a school that could produce a captain who would do what Buddy had done was an all-right school. We saw Fairview then as she was, and we were pretty much ashamed of ourselves. That night Fairview’s team began to fight.

“They elected me captain. The team began to win its games. It played great ball—the best ball, I guess, that this old county league has ever seen. On paper, I was the leader. When the newspapers printed stories they spoke about ‘Captain McCarthy’s team.’ They were wrong. It was Buddy’s team. Buddy Jones was the real captain.”

Another burst of cheering swept the room. Buddy stole a quick glance toward the speaker.

TERRY STEPS ASIDE

Perhaps this pause meant that Terry was through. But no; Terry was standing there and holding up his hand for silence.

“Every time the team went out to play a game it was the memory of the fine thing that Buddy had done that gave every fellow the courage to keep up that long fight against Lackawanna. I was the captain on paper, but Buddy was the captain in fact. It was his spirit that inspired us and made us the victorious team we are to-night. And so when Fairview speaks of giving a watch-fob as a token of appreciation to——”

A yell from Rood drowned the last words. A great light leaped to Buddy's eyes. He saw it now. They were going to give him the watch-fob. They were going to—— He saw Terry coming right toward him, and almost unconscious of the action, he stood up.

Terry had a little jewel box in his hand. Up to this point he had gone along smoothly, but now he seemed struck dumb. He and Buddy stared at each other. Twice Terry wet his lips and started to say something, and twice he failed to utter a word. Presently somebody giggled.

“Little speed there,” said somebody else.

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"Ah, shucks!" Terry cried; "I've forgotten the rest of it. Here's the fob, Buddy. Every player thinks you ought to get it. You're all right."

Buddy opened the jewel box. There lay the fob, a small disk of silver, and on it was traced in blue enamel "Fairview, 1918," and his initials.

Everybody in the room, it seemed, was cheering. He caught a glimpse of Mr. Ferris, cheering with the others and waving his napkin. Something that the coach had said long ago came back to him—that no act of sacrifice for the common good is ever wholly wasted. He knew what that meant now. When you tried to do right, it always reached somebody. Maybe you wouldn't always get a medal or have your friends cheer, but it always counted for something.

Terry was still in front of him, grinning foolishly and blinking his eyes. Buddy's eyes began to blink, too. The cheering stopped. He knew that he was expected to say something, but his heart was altogether too full.

"Fellows," he said in a shaky voice, "I—I—
Oh, you know how I feel about this, don't you?"

"Sure we do," said Terry.

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“Right-o!” said Rood. “What’s the matter with Fairview?” He dug an elbow into Schuyler’s ribs. “Sing,” he ordered out of the side of his mouth. “Start something. Buddy’ll be bawling in a minute.”

Schuyler started the school song. In an instant the whole gathering was with him:

Come, lift your voices, let them ring
To Fairview’s praise and glory;
No stain shall darken any page
Of Fairview’s splendid story.
Then here’s to her, long may she light
The path of honor and of right. . . .

Buddy bent his head over the fob. The path of honor and of right! How could a Fairview boy travel any other?

THE END

CENTRAL CIRCULATION
CHILDREN'S ROOM

(8)

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