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STREET & SMITH'S

1st MAR.
NUMBER
1938

SPORT*

STORY MAGAZINE

THE GREAT GOTCH

By ARTHUR MANN

DOC TAKE-APART

By DABNEY HORTON

OTHER STORIES

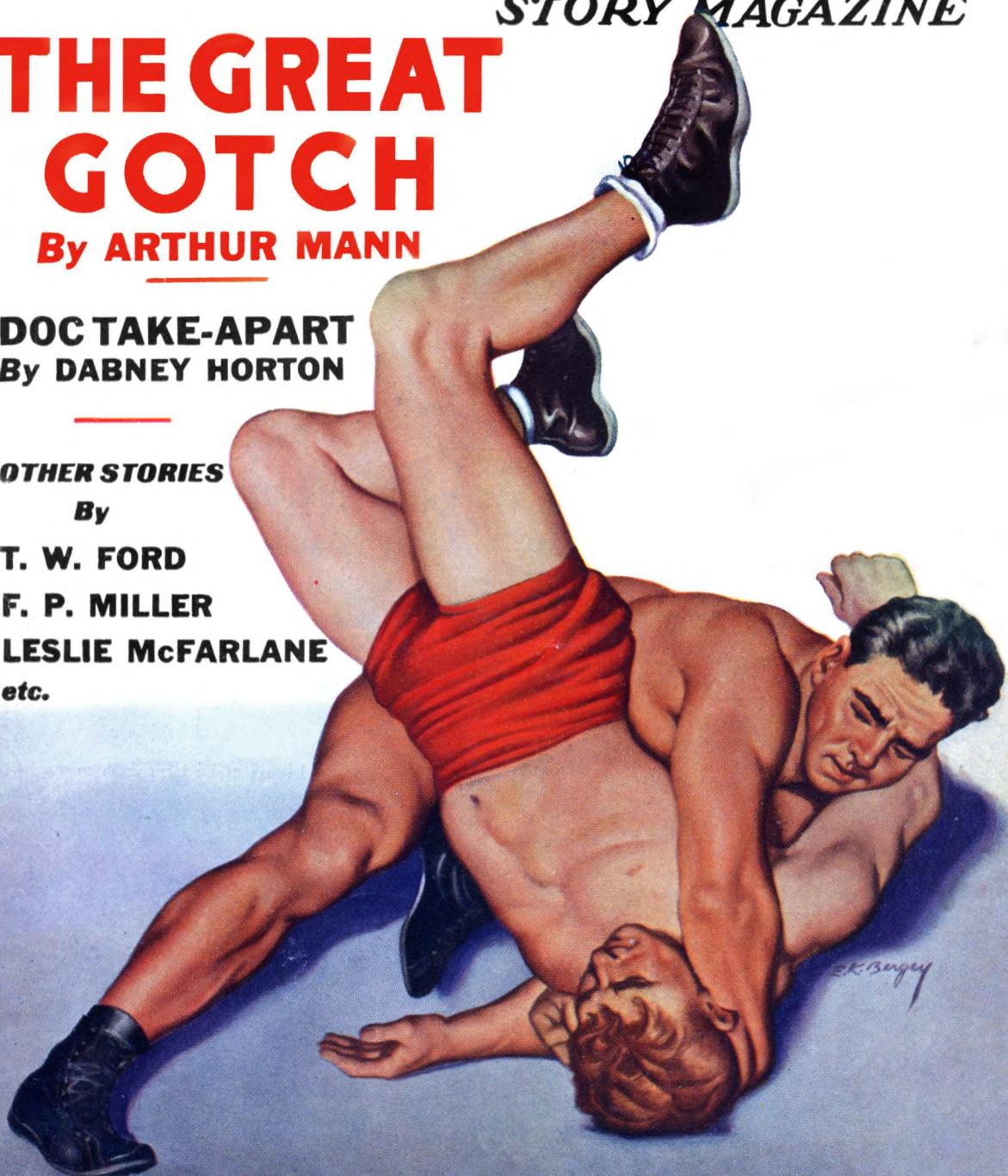
By

T. W. FORD

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etc.





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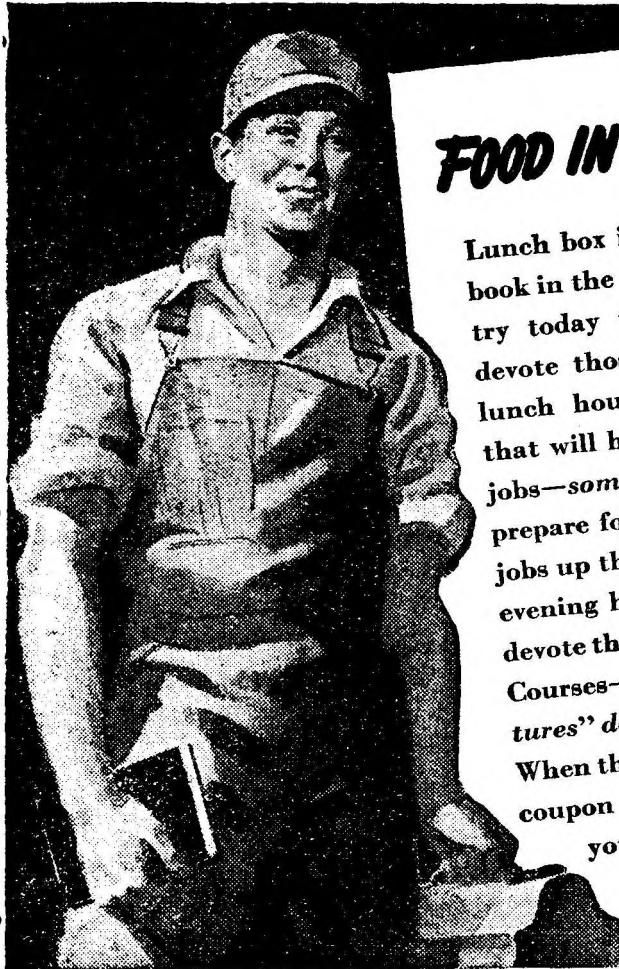
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Vol. LVIII
No. 5

STREET & SMITH'S

1st March
No., 1938

SPORT

STORY MAGAZINE

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A place where the editor and readers meet and talk things over.		

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THE LOCKER ROOM

WITH winter just about reaching its peak, the sports whirl goes merrily on. Winter sports are in full swing in the snow country; basket ball, track, hockey, and boxing are packing the indoor arenas. Wrestling isn't exactly packing 'em in, but the grip-and-grunt game still has its followers. In Southern climes, golf, tennis, polo, and swimming are the order of the day. It's a great sports world.

That was a funny one about the exhibition tennis match which Don Budge lost to Von Cramm in Australia in December to the tune of 6-1, 6-3.

The reports tell that Budge put up a listless exhibition, and did not appear to be half trying. But there were a lot of cash customers who had paid as high as \$7.50 for the privilege of seeing the kind of tennis that a Budge-Von Cramm match leads one to expect.

Budge's alibi was that he wasn't keyed up to the match, seeing that there was nothing at stake; that he wasn't a machine and couldn't be

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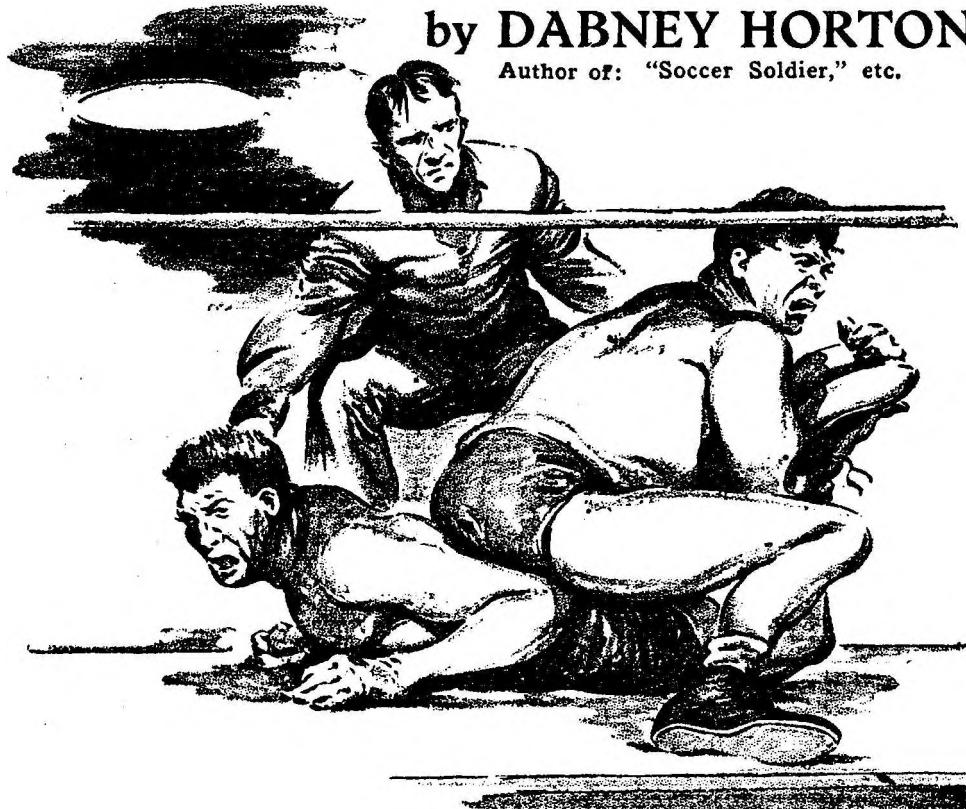
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Doc Take-apart

by DABNEY HORTON

Author of: "Soccer Soldier," etc.



"Winnie" wasn't quite sure whether medicine helped his wrestling, or wrestling helped his medicine, so he practiced both.

IS name was John Joseph Winnegard, and he weighed a pink and rosy two hundred pounds. His eyes were baby-blue, and his light wavy hair a nice taffy blond; and the two things he loved most in this world were anatomy and wrestling.

He studied anatomy at the Empire City College of Physicians & Surgeons as part of his medical course, and it helped his wrestling.

John Joseph was going to graduate

from medical school in June, and then his wrestling days would be practically over, because a hospital interne doesn't have much time for such amusements. But during his college career, John Joseph, commonly called "Winnie," had cleaned up in all the interscholastic tournaments, and in the A. A. U. affairs, until there was nobody left to wrestle with any longer.

One of his opponents told this one about Winnie:

"I saw Winnie training for our bout

in the gym one day. He had an old skeleton down from the medical school, and he was going to the mat with this bunch of wired bones, like he was wrestling with temptation or something. He was studying out a leg hold, and watching what a little twisting around the knee did to the joint. Then he gave the bones a little twist, and something clicked outa place. Boy, I was glad they weren't my bones!"

His professor of anatomy said' of Winnie:

"Winnegard's one of my most brilliant students, and I wish he wouldn't waste so much time in that fool amusement he calls amateur wrestling, trying to throw some other young idiot shoulders-down on a canvas mat. A boy who knows so much about the construction of the human body ought not to spend his spare time trying to pull it apart. It's not decent, somehow."

But Winnie himself explained it like this:

"When I get out on the mat, I begin to understand how Frank Gotch and Doctor Roller and those other famous

old-timers did their stuff. And I find I can understand that inside legwork of Gotch's too. And my trying it out on a wired skeleton is just like looking up the answers in the back of the book."

In fact, Winnie Winnegard's two favorite books were F. R. Toombs's "How to Wrestle" and Quain's "Anatomy of the Human Body."

And if he hadn't had hopes of one day becoming a famous surgeon, he would rather have been a second Frank Gotch, the Iowa farm boy who licked 'em all.

All of which explains why John Joseph was first in line for a ringside seat one night at the Empire City Coliseum to watch what was emphatically



billed as a "Fight-to-a-finish" wrestling match for the championship of the world.

ALTHOUGH Empire City is not on the big-time wrestling circuit, the promoter, Frankie Johnson, had been glad enough to bring the show there.

In the first place, the big German-American wrestler, Hans Berger, who was recognized as the world's champ in New York, refused to wrestle in Chicago. And the equally big Greek-American wrestler, Dan Hippopolemus, recognized as the world's champ in Chicago, refused to risk his title to a New York referee.

In the second place, Empire City was neutral ground, halfway between Broadway and the Loop, and both "world's champions" felt that they could get an even break.

In the third place, Empire City was the center of a State where amateur wrestling was as big as baseball, and Frankie Johnson knew that his show would draw a big gate. The Coliseum had been built as a convention hall, and then grand stands had been added for the amateur wrestling bouts. It was nearly as big as Madison Square Garden, and just as full of noise when some wrestler's shoulders hit the canvas.

John Joseph was all keyed up for what he thought was going to be one of the big nights of his life. He was still young enough to be a hero worshiper, and these two mighty grapplers, Hans Berger and Dan Hippopolemus, were both described in that important little book, "How to Wrestle."

There was a photo of Berger, looking like a panther ready to spring. His muscles seemed to ripple along his legs and shoulders. His eyes defied the world, and his hands were ready to tear it apart.

"Hans Berger," said the book, "is one of the leading contenders for the

world's championship. Fast, powerful and clever, his movements on the mat are like those of a leaping tiger. Many critics of the mat game have compared him to Frank Gotch."

The photo of Dan Hippopolemus showed him wearing the championship belt, just stepping out of his gorgeous two-colored silk dressing gown in the ring. He held the silk wide apart from his sinewy body with both hands, as if it were the canvas on which his statuesque figure was painted.

"The Greek champion," said the book, "has become the king of the wrestling world because of his tremendous strength and his fighting heart. Able to withstand terrific punishment, he wears his opponents down with his crushing holds and his body slams. Yet with all his muscular ability, he is one of the most scientific grapplers of the present day."

Both photographs showed young men full of pep and electricity, as good to look at as old-world gods in marble. So Winnie Winnegard knew he was in for a big evening. He had made his college mat coach come with him, and for some reason, it had taken quite a little persuasion, too.

Winnie's eyes began to bulge with the very first of the preliminary matches. A Cherokee Indian, who looked to be Irish, and a real Irishman started the evening by throwing each other around the ring like rubber balls. When they hit, they bounced, and they seemed to be taking turns at it.

"Why doesn't that Indian pin his man while he has the chance?" John Joseph asked his wrestling coach.

"This is professional wrestling," was the only reply he got.

FOR twenty-five minutes, the bouncing act continued, and the fans who didn't understand wrestling yelled their heads off. Then the Irishman began to do all the man-

handling, and the poor Cherokee was slammed from one side of the ring to the other.

With each slam, he grew weaker, and finally the Irishman lifted him up above his head, and gave him the airplane spin, and then flung him to the mat like a girder falling through a burning building. And this time, the Indian didn't bounce.

John Joseph was very puzzled. And the next two prelims left him even more puzzled.

"I guess those rasslers are just learning their business," he said to his coach. "When Hans Berger and the Greek come on, we'll see some real rassling. Berger's supposed to be another Frank Gotch."

"The pro game will never see another Frank Gotch," said the coach.

Then Hans Berger and Dan Hippopolemus made their appearance. Yeah, "made their appearance" is right. Other wrestlers merely stepped into the ring, or climbed through the ropes; but Hans and Dan made appearances.

As challenger, Hans's business was to scowl at Dan like a gorilla being annoyed by a leopard. And the Greek undraped himself from his orange-and-black dressing robe like unveiling a statue of Hercules, another Greek hero of old.

And when they shook hands, the German-American challenger stuck his mitt out as if the Greek was going to knife him with the other hand, and they both scowled at each other.

Then began the world's championship wrestling match.

The Greek champ stalked his enemy in a circle, rounding the ring on the balls of his feet, his elbows safely in, and his hands ready to grapple with thunder and lightning, if necessary. He sure looked vicious.

While the Greek circled, the challenger turned with him, feinting to make a sudden spring. At each feint, the

Greek recoiled sharply, as if the German had made a lunge at him with a rapier.

Then the German dived for his man, got inside his guard, and flung him across the ring with a flying mare. But he didn't fall on him or pin him. Instead, he gave a running jump and dived at him again, evidently with the intention of landing on him with all his weight and crushing him.

Dan Hippopolemus met this second attack very scientifically. He swung his left leg and met the German with a swift kick in the neck which booted Hans Berger clear to the ropes, while the Greek regained his feet.

"But—but that's not rassling!" Winnie yelled in the coach's ear. He had to yell, because every one in the Coliseum was yelling, too.

"It's what you paid to see, fella," the coach yelled back at him. "So what are you going to do about it, huh?"

The grapplers were getting warmed up now. The German returned the kick in the neck with a rabbit punch that spun the Greek around like a windmill. The Greek jumped at him with both feet, like a fighting cock.

Down went the German, and now the Greek grabbed one of the challenger's ankles and stood on the other one, and tried to pull the German apart.

The German was making terrible grimaces of agony, and the sounds that came out of his throat were like those of a mother wild cat and her cubs caught in a forest fire. Hans was clawing at the Greek's nearest leg frantically.

WINNIE breathed hard as he watched them. He asked the coach another question, although he was beginning to know the answer himself.

"Why doesn't the Dutchman kick free with the foot the Greek's standing on and bust himself loose?"

"For the same reason a trapeze performer doesn't cut the rope when his partner's flying through the air," said the coach. "It would spoil the show."

Winnie looked at the big clock. "How long do you think this bout might possibly last?" he asked.

"World's championship matches have to last at least fifty-five minutes. So this one has three quarters of an hour to go," was the reply.

"Hey, don't run out on the show," the coach added quickly, as Winnie Winnegard grabbed his coat and hat and started stumbling over spectators' feet. "Maybe they'll put on a boat race pretty soon, and we haven't yet seen the Greek do his spider act on the ropes."

"I'll be back. I gotta go some place. Wait for me. I may be needing you."

And then Winnie was up the aisle and away. Outside the Coliseum, he hailed a taxi.

Inside, the fans were yelling for more mayhem, and the German's leg hadn't come off yet. Hans Berger broke loose and was on top of the Greek now and doing a "boat race." The Greek was belly-down, and Hans sat on him, with a toe in each big hand, and he pulled the Greek feet backward until Dan Hippo-polemus was kicking himself.

This refinement of torture looked as painful as the leg split, and with each yank on the Greek's ankles, which in this position curiously resembled a pair of oars, the Greek emitted a hoarse roar of pain.

Some of the fans who sat near the ringside were amateur wrestlers themselves, and this thing puzzled them. The hold was known in New York and Chicago as the "double toe hold," but if Frank Gotch had been around to see it, he would've busted his ribs laughing at it.

The wrestling coach who had come with Winnie was smiling to himself as he watched the "boat race" being performed; but his smile was a trifle lop-

sided, because he had paid five sound smackers for his seat, and it was like paying to see Shakespeare and getting Minsky's instead.

Then there was a bit of growling among the cash customers beside the coach, and when he looked up, he saw that it was Winnie Winnegard come back, walking on their feet again, on his way to his seat. Winnie seemed dressed, or rather undressed, in an unusual fashion.

"Where's the shirt and necktie, Winnie?" asked the coach.

Winnie unbuttoned his topcoat, and under it he was wearing his wrestling tights, shoes and a sweat shirt. And there was trouble in his eyes, because they weren't baby-blue any more. They were steel-blue.

CHAPTER II. THE ANATOMY LESSON

THE champ and the challenger were putting on a great show now. The champ treated the German, and the crowd, to a lively sample of the Tarzan gorilla hold, which consisted in leaping at his man with all four limbs outstretched, and trying to wind around him like a poison-ivy vine.

This hold evidently wasn't fatal, because Hans Berger came right back with the Japanese knee lock, in which the grapplers got so involved that they had trouble getting out of it again. While undergoing this terrible ordeal, Dan Hippo-polemus did some of his finest growling.

But they finally got out of it, and with an arch of his back, Hans threw Dan across the ring and into the ropes.

Now came one of the finest treats of the evening, so far. Dan hit the ropes in mid-air and hung to them without touching the floor at all. And the recoil of the steel springs on the posts made him sway back and forth, exactly like a huge spider swinging between two

huckleberry bushes in a breeze. It was magnificent, and the crowd shouted again.

But Winnie Winnegard got out of his seat and came close to the ring, studying the grapplers. Something clicked inside his brain, and he realized what it was that had given him that first vague feeling of disappointment when he first saw the challenger and the champ enter the ring.

The photos of the "second Frank Gotch" and the "King of the Wrestling World" were photos of young men—young tigers, full of electricity and fight.

These men were almost middle-aged. Hans Berger was half bald. The Greek's roll of fat around the waistline would have yielded ten pounds of low-grade lard.

Those photos must've been taken a long time ago, when they were both young and ambitious, and real wrestlers. To-night, they looked to Winnie like a pair of vaudeville performers.

Now the Greek threw the German belly-down and gave him the double toe hold again. Winnie hadn't been present during the first exhibition of this latest addition to wrestling science.

When he saw Dan pulling backward heavily on Hans's ankles, until Hans kicked himself, Winnie couldn't believe his eyes. That hold wouldn't have bothered Shirley Temple!

The Coliseum was making a lot of noise, because Hans was making terrible faces again, and groaning blood-curdling groans.

Winnie was standing close to the platform now, his face nearly on a level with the German's. Winnie threw off his top coat, and stood revealed in his wrestling trunks. The sudden gesture threw a hush over the Coliseum. Here was something not on the program. Many of them, and all the collegiate crowd, recognized the amateur heavyweight's blond hair at once.

They all heard Winnie say to the

Greek, "Get down out of that ring and let me finish him!"

The Greek stopped his tearing at the German's ankles, and the German stopped his awful groaning. Both of them looked inquiringly at the referee. The referee looked at Winnie Winnegard.

"Get out of that ring and I'll show you some real rassling!" said Winnie, still loudly and clearly.

Two or three ushers began sidling in to do their stuff, though they weren't trained to handle customers like this young two-hundred-pounder who was telling Dan Hippopolemus where to park his carcass.

Winnie looked about ready to get up there and throw the Greek champion out, all by himself, when some one three seats behind shouted loudly, "Get in there, Winnie!"

That was some fan who'd seen Winnie wrestle.

Then the whole Coliseum took it up, with "We want Winnie! We want Winnie! We want Winnie!" in loud unison.

The collegiate crowd was quick to see the possibilities of the situation, and the rest echoed them.

THAT referee was a clever man. He could see that the show was already stopped, and that if the crowd didn't get what it wanted, they might start a riot. You never could tell what a college crowd might do. Hastily, he separated the two wrestlers, and waved his megaphone for silence.

Then he announced: "The heavyweight championship match has been declared a draw!" That started a new uproar, and when it finally died down, he shouted, "There will now be a wrestling exhibition between Hans Berger and John Joseph Winnegard, if I got the name right."

"His name's Winnie," the student

part of the crowd yelled back at him. "We want Winnie! We want Winnie!"

"All right," said the referee. "Get in there, Winnie. You asked for it, and if you get your neck busted, why, you asked for that, too."

The Greek stalked up the aisle to his dressing room, trying to look like a tiger robbed of his kill, and Winnie stepped through the ropes.

"You're familiar with the rules of the pro game?" asked the ref.

"Sure," said Winnie. "Top man scowls and under man growls, and no kicking above the chin."

Then he darted forward, grabbed the second Frank Gotch by the right arm, ducked and heaved, and the German flew through the air in as neat a flying mare as has ever been seen since the hold was discovered.

But Winnie couldn't pin his man, because there was something very peculiar about that flying mare. Hans the German had put quite a little push-off into it himself as Winnie heaved him, and he landed on his feet too far away from Winnie for the latter to drop on him.

The crowd cheered them both, and Winnie felt disgusted.

Now the German came in, evidently seeking a flying mare hold on his own account, and he wasn't being at all careful about it. He lunged with all the confidence in the world, as if he expected Winnie to give him the hold.

Winnie batted his hand aside, and the German nearly fell on his nose.

"Clumsy fool!" he growled under his breath, and glared at Winnie.

He tried it again, with the same result, only worse, and lost his temper. He lost his temper, and began to wrestle.

Frankie Johnson, the promoter gritted his teeth in rage as he saw it. Hans Berger was forgetting everything he had ever learned about showmanship in the ring, and was fighting like the young

contender whose photo was in the wrestling manual.

But he was up against a younger and abler opponent. Besides, Winnie Winnegard was tasting for the first time the delight of being able to throw his man as far as he liked, unhampered by amateur rules.

An amateur wrestler has to keep one knee on the mat as his man sails over his head. The pro grappler is allowed to put his back, and his heart, into it. Winnie threw the German clear across the ring a couple of times for the sheer joy of it, and had him sputtering German oaths.

Hans Berger wasn't trying any fancy stuff now. He wanted to get in close to this blond menace, wear him down, and then slam him as hard as possible. He decided that a little close work on the mat would help. These amateurs were probably not trained to take what a pro could pass out.

After a rush and a tangle, Hans was able to get behind the blue-eyed intruder and start on a little arm twisting. At the first twist, Winnie spun around and reversed their positions.

Winnie grabbed an elbow and used it as a lever. Then he turned the German over onto his stomach, and sat down upon him. Hans rolled his eyes in astonishment, because this college guy had started out like a real wrestler, but you can't win a fall by heaving a man onto his breadbasket.

NOW Winnie grabbed both of the German's toes and started the boat race routine which the fans were now seeing for the third time tonight.

Winnie braced himself with both feet flat on the floor, exactly like a rower with the single sculls, and pulled hard, bringing the German's feet back toward Winnie's chest, like the handles of a pair of oars.

The first time he pulled, the German roared as if in awful pain.

Winnie pulled again, but not hard enough to break a rotten thread, although he seemed to be putting two hundred pounds into it. The German yelled just as loudly this time. Winnie was angry when the fans applauded this phony thing called the "double toe hold."

Then the referee butted in. "Quit stalling and rassle, or I'll throw you outa the ring!"

That was too much, coming from the man who had permitted three preliminary wrestlers and a champ and a challenger to stall around and toss each other in hippodrome style all evening without saying a word.

The blond amateur—that is, he had been an amateur until five minutes ago—suddenly lifted both feet and jammed them hard in back of each of the German's knees. Then he pulled again, steadily, and held it.

This time, Hans Berger didn't utter any he-man roar. He squealed like a horse being sacrificed in a bull fight.

If you want to know just a little bit of what the German was feeling, you can find out by sticking your own forearm under your knee, and pulling back on your ankle as hard as you care to, as if your forearm was a nut and your bent leg the nutcracker.

Then imagine what Winnie was doing to the German.

Hans Berger quit squealing and began gasping. His gasps were nothing spectacular, but they were real. So was the sweat that burst from every pore in his forehead. Winnie was almost motionless, just sitting there and holding the German's feet close to his own chest.

"Quit stalling," ordered the referee.

"Ask the gentleman down below if he wants to concede the fall," demanded Winnie, giving just a little more pressure to his man's ankles.

Hans squealed again, and this time, he sounded afraid of something. He

was afraid he wouldn't be able to get out of this jam in one piece.

Now the fans got the idea and realized what it was all about, and they began to get noisy again.

"Had enough, Frank Gotch the Second?" Winnie demanded again.

The German wouldn't answer. The treachery of the attack; turning one of the most prized spectacles of the mat game into deadly punishment; the shame of admitting that an amateur had licked him; what Frankie Johnson would be saying to him about it—all these things were too much for Hans to bear. He fainted. Winnie heard his head drop to the canvas with a dull bump, and he released him.

THE referee was about to give him the rough side of his tongue, but Winnie beat him to it. "Well, I won the match, didn't I? Why don't you announce it?"

"It wasn't a match. It was just an exhibition, see!"

"And what an exhibition!" replied Winnie. "I paid five bucks to get in, and I'll bet I'm the only man in the Coliseum who got his money's worth."

Presently, groans from the German's corner showed that he was back in this world of cruel surprises. The ref wondered if this prize hippo were badly hurt. If so, it would be a long time before Frankie Johnson tossed him another refereeing job, and jobs were scarce.

"What've you done to him?" he asked Winnie Winnegard. "Is he crippled?"

Winnie was just stepping over the ropes, amid the cheering of the college boys, but he paused to give the ref a brief answer.

"Crippled, hell!" remarked Winnie scornfully. "You sound as if I'd committed phlebotomy on him. All he's got is a few lesions around the patellar re-

gion, and maybe a little extravation of the synovial processes."

"*Himmel!*" groaned the German, and fainted again. This time, they had to carry him out.

Frankie Johnson had been standing by, and thinking very fast.

If this Winnie guy was allowed to remain in circulation, he might ruin the wrestling business. He stopped Winnie in the aisle.

"Too bad, young fella, to chuck away your amateur status like that, just for the sake of getting tough with an old worn-out veteran like Hans Berger. How'd you like to rassle in the pro ring?" asked Frankie.

"I'd like it fine, if there's any real rassling."

"You'll find some real rassling, as soon as we dig up some new opposition for the champ. Come around to-morrow night, and I'll let you have a try-out, just to see if you've really got the stuff. Wanta try it?"

Winnie had never in his life turned down a chance to wrestle.

"Sure, I'll come," he promised. "I haven't anything else to do to-morrow night. I might as well keep on rassling until I get outa medical school. Won't have any time afterward."

Winnie went back uptown to his room to study some more anatomy, with particular reference to toe holds.

Frankie went into action. He called his secretary over in Brooklyn on the long-distance wire.

"Get me Dino Atzolini right away, and ship him out here to Empire City on the first train. I gotta rassling job for him."

"Gosh, boss!" protested the secretary, "you know Dino can't rassle any more. He's been barred in every State in the Union, and that includes Brooklyn. I think he's working in a labor racket somewhere now."

"I said *get him!*" was Frankie's reply, and he hung up.

CHAPTER III. THE TRY-OUT

ON the night of the try-out, Winnie Winnegard met Frankie Johnson downtown. But they didn't go to the Coliseum, or an athletic club.

"I got a little training camp out in the country for the champ and the rest of my rasslers," explained the promoter. "I manage 'em as well as put on bouts. So you'll meet a fella named Dino Atzolini to-night. Dino's very clever, a second Frank Gotch."

"You mean a third Frank Gotch," said Winnie. "The second Frank Gotch was carried out of the ring last night."

The promoter-manager let that one pass. "Empire City looks like a nice place to open a rassling show business," he continued, "I can rent the Coliseum for about one fifth of what they'd charge me in New York for the Garden, and there seems to be a good-sized bunch of fans here. Maybe if you rassled with my boys, your friends would come to see you. You'd have a nice personal following then."

And all the time Frankie Johnson was talking with a forked tongue like a snake's. He was going to open up a wrestling show, right enough, but this Winnie person wouldn't be there—not after Dino Atzolini got through with him.

They drove out into the country to what Frankie called his camp. It didn't look like a training camp to Winnie. But he'd never seen one. Anyway, it didn't matter. The place was kind of lonely looking. Nobody around, but he didn't care. He was there for a wrestling try-out.

"This is Dino Atzolini," said Frankie. Winnie thought he was shaking hands with an ape. He had half a mind to refuse to wrestle with this thing called Dino until it opened its mouth and talked like a man.

Dino's brow was low, and the ridges above his eyes like a cave man's.

"Probably doesn't know much," thought Winnie to himself, and right there, he made a bad mistake. For Dino knew one thing thoroughly, and that was how to cripple a man in a wrestling match.

It wouldn't be truthful to say that Dino's arms were as long as a gorilla's, or that he walked with a shambling gait like an orang-utan. Except for that low forehead, he was as superbly built as Winnie himself, and seemed to be in perfect condition. He was already in his ring togs.

Frankie gave Winnie a little more snake-tonguing.

"If you can handle Dino here, I'll put you on my next card at the Coliseum. Always like to give a clever amateur a chance at the pro game."

The ring was nothing but some old mats in a cleared space on the floor of the barn, but Winnie wasn't choosy about where he wrestled.

Right away, something in Dino's eyes assured Winnie that there'd be no grand-standing of any kind in this bout. Dino had a wrestler's eyes, which are the same as a boxer's or a fencer's. And he seemed very confident.

Winnie knew that his business was to get a fall, and he went about it as quickly as possible. Maybe this thing could be settled with something like a flying mare. He flashed out a hand for Dino's left wrist.

No luck. There would be no flying mare in this match unless one of them got in trouble otherwise first. Dino parried the attempt with a slashing blow on the neck with the edge of his hand. Winnie thought he'd been hit with a baseball bat. But Frankie Johnson made no protest to Dino.

This time, Winnie dived in and got a leg hold, but it was very sloppy, because Dino got just as much leg hold on his own account, and they went to

the mat in a frenzied, writhing jumble of twisting limbs.

AS quick as thought, Dino whipped a leg scissors around Winnie and started to put on the pressure, right across the stomach. Winnie knew how a rabbit feels when a big snake wraps coils around it.

There was a businesslike air about Dino's work that told Winnie he'd better get out of this scissors while he had his health. He jammed in an elbow and started using it as a lever.

Dino moved up on him, and now Winnie's arm was being jammed into the lower edges of his favorite ribs.

"This guy's out to ruin me," said Winnie to himself. "I stuck my neck into their pro game, and this is what I get for it."

He knew that if he could get that body scissors down around his legs, he could do something about it. He could throw an over scissors on Dino, and then Dino would either let go, or get a pair of bum knees that would do him no good for the rest of the bout.

Thrashing around with his free hand, he grabbed one of Dino's feet. Dino couldn't kick free, because that would open the scissors. So he began working downward toward Winnie's waist with his legs, and pretty soon Winnie had to release the captured foot.

Dino didn't care whether the two pieces of Winnie would be of equal size or not, as long as he broke him in two. He began squeezing again.

Then Winnie clapped on the over scissors, which he did by simply locking his legs outside Dino's and squeezing on his own account.

The over scissors is brutal stuff, but, after that blow on the neck, Winnie figured that a little brutality was in order.

The pressure he was putting on Dino's knees was terrific; but Dino merely grunted uneasily, and stared up

at his boss, Frankie Johnson, who was supposed to be doing the refereeing, if any.

Frankie stared back at him, and said nothing.

As Winnie put on the pressure, he thought he would burst his own ribs, because he was doubling the pressure on his own stomach. Surely, this ape-man would crack soon. That over scissors was guaranteed by the maker to break any body scissors made, if the defensive man could last long enough.

"I can last long enough," thought Winnie, "but how long is this thug going to last? He doesn't seem to know his knee's in danger of being dislocated."

Dino was tearing at Winnie's chin, and got a thumb in the corner of his cheek. He jerked suddenly, and Winnie thought his face was coming loose. The pain made him give an added convulsive movement to his own over scissors, and at once, Dino gave vent to a deep-voiced groan and rolled away from him. Winnie tried to grab him from behind, but instead, he found himself pulled to his feet as Dino got up and stood erect.

When one wrestler pulls another up onto his feet, it probably isn't for the purpose of winning a fall. It's because he wants to do something to him that can be more easily done on two feet.

Winnie was ready for trouble at once, because he knew what he had already done to this thug's knees, and in Dino's eyes was a most unpleasant light, as if some firebug had set fire to his brains.

LOOKING for an attempt at some kind of leg hold that would give Dino a chance to slam him hard, Winnie was a sucker for what really happened to him now.

Dino came in close to him as if for a waist hold, threw up one elbow, and caught Winnie a blow across the Adam's apple. The elbow stayed there as Dino's other arm whipped around

Winnie's neck, and there was Winnie Winnegard—trapped in as deadly a front strangle as ever turned a challenger's heart to water.

Like a fellow being hung for the first time, this was all brand new to Winnie. He'd never heard of the front strangle before, and he was sorry he was hearing of it now. His head was being shoved down into his chest until it felt as if his neck would snap in another moment. And Dino's elbow stabbing his larynx was choking him.

Winnie knew that the other arm was bearing heavily on the two arteries that supply blood to the brain, and that presently he'd begin to get faint, and that unconsciousness would soon follow. What Dino would do to him after that would be very disagreeable.

Winnie's legs began to buckle under him, so that Dino had to bend his own legs to go down with him and keep that front strangle on him. Winnie dropped, and his legs curled up. He looked all in.

Dino should've watched those legs; but he was having too much fun watching Winnie's face turn purple from strangulation.

As Winnie's legs came up, his two feet seemed to wobble uncertainly in the region of Dino's waist. Still, Dino didn't notice his danger. Just as Winnie's elbows got a leverage against the mat, just enough to keep his shoulders from touching, his legs straightened like two steel springs.

The impact of his feet against Dino's waist made a hollow sound. The strangle hold was broken, and Dino sailed through the air backward and feet-first. One of his legs, tensed to meet the floor, struck the wall instead, with his two hundred-odd pounds weight back of it. There was a distinct snapping sound, and a shriek from Dino. One of his shin bones was broken by the shock. To make it worse, he hit the floor with the leg still straightened out,

and the broken bone stabbed the flesh cruelly.

Dino lay there, groaning with pain. Frankie Johnson nudged him with an inquisitive toe. Dino couldn't get up.

"What a rassler you turned out to be!" said Frankie, with cold contempt. "Car fare all the way from Buffalo for a cream puff like you!"

Even being called a cream puff didn't get Dino up onto his feet.

"I did my best, boss. I was gonna ruin him with that front strangle, like you said. You told me he was a set-up for me. What you got against me, boss, to send me up against a guy like him?"

Winnie was examining the injured leg now. "It's pretty bad," he told the promoter. "Broken tibia, and the ends of the bone are cutting the flesh clear to the epidermis. Better get him a doctor right away."

"Doctor, hell!" Frankie growled. "Better shoot him instead, like they shoot horses!"

Frankie went out, without another glance at his injured wrestler.

CHAPTER IV.

DOCTOR WINNEGARD

RUBBING his own battered neck and ribs, Winnie assured himself that no harm was done which couldn't be massaged out by morning, and then tried to make his recent opponent comfortable.

Frankie was gone, car and all, and Winnie felt that all was not as it should be, out here in the country, miles from town, no telephone, and a badly injured man to take care of. He picked up Dino and carried him into the old farmhouse.

The place was somewhat furnished. That is, it could have been lived in. But it was merely to get by the insurance rules. Only squirrels lived in it now.

Winnie laid the injured man on an

old bed covered with musty bedclothes. Then he built a fire in the rusty stove to heat some water.

"How bad is it, doc?" asked Dino, through clenched teeth.

"Where do you get that *doc* stuff?"

"Frankie said you were some kinda doctor."

"I'm not. Haven't graduated from the School of Physicians & Surgeons yet," said Winnie. "I can't practice for some time yet."

"What does all that mean?" asked Dino, still talking through his teeth.

"Something like the difference between an amateur and a professional."

"Oh! But you can tell me what's wrong with me? It hurts like hell."

"Sure. You've got a broken tibia, with the disunited ends puncturing the striated fiber; probable fracture of the fibula, and lesions and contusions of the insertion of the gastrocnemius."

"What does that mean—in my language?" Pain made Dino's eyes stick out.

"You have a busted shin bone, with the ends sticking out. That's why it hurts so. I'm going to wash it with hot water now."

"Listen, doc, you gotta fix me up. That guy Frankie would leave his own grandmother to die. I know that bird."

"I can't do much," explained Winnie. "This is a hospital surgeon's job. I mean, I could do it, but I haven't any license to practice surgery."

"I get it," groaned Dino. "Like my being barred from rassling, for giving too many guys the front strangle when Frankie didn't want 'em around any more. Guys like you, that got too ambitious."

The hot water stung his wound now, and he groaned some more.

"Listen, doc, will this thing make a cripple outa me? I gotta be able to get around. A lotta birds I've given the works will be coming after me when

they hear I've been whittled down to their size."

"You'll be all right, if you can get this wound sewed up, and the bones set. Oughta be done pretty soon, though."

Some anxious note in Winnie's voice alarmed the grappler.

"Say, doc, amacho or pro, you go ahead and do the job."

"Can't do it. I have no right to. You'll have to wait until you can get to a regular doctor for work like this."

Dino's voice was desperate as he said, "This dump's ten miles from town, not even near a real road. That's why Frankie brought you out here."

All of Winnie's study and training made his spirit revolt against the thought of this badly injured man being forced to lie there without help. That wound had to be sewed up, and the bones straightened, within the next hour.

"Sew me up, doc!" begged Dino. "You could do it if you wanted to. But I tried to give you the works, and you'll be dam' glad to see me crippled."

Winnie had seen an old sewing basket on a dresser. Maybe there were silk thread and needles in there. They could be sterilized in boiling water.

"Yeah, you want to see me crippled, I guess. You're a heluva doctor."

Winnie sounded almost savage as he replied, "All right, I'll do it!"

AS Winnie had hoped, the old sewing basket contained silk threads and sharp needles. He already had boiling water. He took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves and went to work.

Never mind the description of the job. It was a bit technical, and rather unpleasant. And this big ape-man could feel pain like a human being.

"Breathe through your mouth," ordered Winnie, as he dipped a pair of scissors in boiling water.

"And try to think about something else. That'll help a bit."

"All I know is rassling," muttered Dino. "And you're good, kid. I had orders to stiffen you, and I couldn't do it. And I can take any of these street rasslers dressed up in silk dressing gowns they call leading contenders. But they won't lemme even get into the ring with 'em any more."

"Tell me about some of your toughest bouts," said Winnie, very busy with practical anatomy down below Dino's knee.

Dino started telling about the worst of his man-fights, and it took his mind off what Winnie was doing to him.

Winnie was doing single-handed what a hospital would do with a surgeon, an interne, and four nurses to help him. By the time Dino was telling about how he once threw Dan Hippopolemus over the ring ropes, Winnie was wrapping his work up in bandages made of strips of torn sheets, boiled and laid on hot.

"Beautiful job," said Dino, grimacing. "I hardly felt a thing," which was a good lie. "But what are you sweatin' about? Was it a tough one?"

"I hope I never have to do another like it," retorted Winnie, breathing heavily. "No anæsthetics, no instruments, no antiseptic—nothing!"

"Nothing but two guys with a lotta nerve and an old woman's sewing kit," chuckled Dino. "You'll be a swell saw-bones, when you get your license, or whatever it is they give you so you can go round cutting up people."

"Thanks," said Winnie, and then his face suddenly blanched, as a horrifying sound came to his ears. Merely the sound of an automobile coming to a stop in the yard outside—but, under the circumstances, horrifying.

Steps to the door. In came Frankie Johnson, followed by a doctor carrying a black bag. And the doctor was a famous surgeon whom Winnie Winne-gard knew very well, because every Tuesday and Friday evening he lectured on anatomy at the medical school.

ONE glance under the still warm bandages was enough for the doctor. He turned upon Winnie with swift and bitter accusation.

"Your work, Winnegard? You know what this means, of course—expulsion from your medical course, and barred from every school in the country—Bungling a case like this instead of waiting for a qualified surgeon!"

"I didn't know it was possible to get a doctor out here," said Winnie. "And this man needed attention. The tendons were shrinking already."

"You knew it was possible to get a doctor. Mr. Johnson's car was here."

Frankie himself butted in, instantly sizing up the situation.

"Why, this fresh kid himself told me to go after a doctor! And then he goes and does the job himself, and him only an amachoor! Well, a guy like that oughta go to jail!"

"Is that true, Winnegard? Did you send Mr. Johnson after a doctor—you can't answer, then? I see it's true. It's the end of your career!"

But they had to get Dino Atzolini to a hospital now, and Winnie held the talking end of the ape-man as they loaded him into the car.

"You're in a spot, hey, kid?" muttered Dino.

Winnie could only nod.

"The sawbones business ain't so hot, anyway. You was made to be a rassler. Any rassler that ever tangled with you would know that right away."

Winnie saw uniformed hospital orderlies place Dino carefully on a four-wheeled stretcher and roll him onto the receiving elevator. The surgeon went up with him. Frankie Johnson stepped to his car to drive off.

"Just a minute!" said Winnie, stopping him. "You and I have business."

"You lay a hand on me, and I'll have you pinched for assault," said Frankie, alarmed at a certain look in Winnie's eye.

"Not that kind of business—wrestling business. I believe you promised me a chance at professional wrestling, if I could handle this thug of yours—this cave man who's been barred from legitimate wrestling. Well, I handled him. When do I start the wrestling?"

Frankie must've been upset by other things, such as seeing what had happened to his one-man riot squad. Winnie took him unawares, before he had time to figure out an angle.

"O. K., kid. You're washed up with your medical study. You need a job. Come to my Broad Street office in the morning and I'll see what I can do."

Winnie said he'd be there, and Frankie drove off again feeling better. By morning, he'd have this thing all figured out again, and figured right. He was still sure that he didn't want any part of this Winnie person on his wrestling card.

Yeah, he'd have it all doped out right by to-morrow morning.

CHAPTER V. THE PRO GAME

EXT morning, Frankie Johnson walked into his office with the springy step of renewed confidence. Winnie Winnegard was there already, waiting for him; but Frankie was all set.

"Come right in, and we'll talk it over," Frankie invited him.

"You see, it's like this," said Frankie. "I give you a place among the preliminary grapplers on my rassling card, and I have to pay you for your work, and I have to pay the rent for the Coliseum, hire ushers, special cops, a referee and an announcer. And to pay for all this I have to sell tickets. Now a young fella like you, new to the game, hasn't got any following among the fans. No one's gonna come to see you rassle, are they?"

"They will, as soon as they've seen me a couple of times," said Winnie.

"Maybe yes, and maybe no. But I got a better idea."

Frankie ruffled a bunch of tickets and thrust them at Winnie.

"Here's a block of one hundred tickets, worth two bucks apiece. Now you go out and sell these hundred tickets, and that'll be a hundred fans that you've brought into the house, which entitles you to wages for your work."

"And what are those wages?"

"Twenty-five per cent of the cash you bring back for the tickets."

"Fifty dollars, huh? Say, what do you pay your regular ticket sellers?"

"Same price—twenty-five per cent."

"Oh, you do, huh? I get the same pay as the ticket sellers, and I rassle besides. I could make just as much by hiring out as a ticket seller then?"

"Bright boy," commented Frankie coldly. "I'll take you on as a ticket seller, if you want. How would that suit you?"

"I'll rassle, and sell the tickets, too. Gimme the tickets."

Winnie went out of there with his heart full of cold fury; but Frankie was laughing to himself. "I guess I got him tamed now," he muttered.

Winnie's first stop was at the hospital, to see how Dino was getting along. Dino interested him curiously. He seemed to have led a hard life, under the management and orders of men like Frankie Johnson. Yet underneath, Dino seemed to be a little spark of something different.

Dino was doing fine, and was very glad to see him.

"Funny thing, fella," said Dino. "Believe or not, they left in me all that old woman's sewing silk you embroidered me with. They didn't rip out a stitch. Not only that, but they came and took pictures of it, too."

Winnie wasn't greatly interested

now. He had those tickets on his mind, and he explained Frankie's idea of paying for his rassling services.

"Yeah, that's about what he'd do. But it ain't such a bad idea, at that, see! He's right; you gotta have a following, and selling tickets is a good way to get one. Say, I s'pose Frankie expects you to sell 'em to your college friends and the silk-stockings crowd?"

"Who else would I sell them to? I don't know any other crowd, Dino."

"I'll tell you how to sell tickets, kid. Listen to me a while."

Dino gave him long and earnest directions, and when Winnie left him, both of them were grinning widely.

"We'll show Frankie Johnson a coupla things yet," said Dino.

SHORTLY after this, there was a little excitement down at the front gate of the Empire City Rolling Mills. The bloom haulers and the soaking-pit men were drifting back from lunch, when they saw a strange spectacle.

One of these college boys, dressed in ice-cream pants, a colored shirt and a nifty straw hat with a wide and gay band around it, was trying to sell the gang tickets to a wrestling match in the Coliseum.

The wrestling match was probably all right; but the idea of sending out a fat softy in ice-cream pants to sell 'em was all wet. This guy should have been selling flower seeds or gum drops, not wrestling tickets.

"What do ya know about rassling?" they asked him. "What is rassling?"

"Not *rassling*, *wrestling*," said Winnie, carefully correcting them. "Wrestling, I understand, is where two men get in the middle of the ring, and try to see which can make the other man's shoulders touch the mat first. It's a very spirited and lively exhibition. I'm told, and I'm sure you men would enjoy it."

"Oh, hell, he's sure us men would enjoy it," they mimicked him. "Say, who's gonna rassle? Betcha you don't even know the names of the rasslers."

"Oh, yes, I know their names. The first match on the program is with a wrestler called Dynamite Flynn, if I read his name right."

"Dynamite Flynn, huh?" asked one of the bloom haulers. "I've heard of him. And who is Mr. Dynamite Flynn gonna tangle with?"

"He wrestles with a man named Winnegard. His other name is Winnie."

"Oh, Dynamite rassles a guy named Winnie, and who the hell is this Winnie, anyway? It'll be a lousy show, all right."

And then Winnie told him: "I'm Winnie, and I wish to state without fear of successful contradiction that I can slam any pot-bellied bloom hauler of soaking-pit man that ever crawled, slid or rid!"

He flung the challenge at his questioner with almost a shout, and it was taken up instantly, because the guys that haul the white-hot blooms of steel through the rollers don't like to be called pot-bellied.

Then Winnie dropped off his ice-cream pants and the colored shirt and the fancy straw hat, and hung 'em carefully on an iron railing. And no cop came to arrest him, either, because Winnie wasn't standing in his BVD's. He was wearing a pair of wrestling tights and a jersey.

Winnie and the bloom hauler chose a small grass plot for their battle, and the ring around them was fifteen deep when it started.

As Winnie expected, the big bloom hauler—as big as Winnie himself—came at him for a waist hold. These haulers thought they could wrestle a she-bear for her cubs and win, they had so much girth and meat an their own ribs, and such powerful arms.

But Winnie ducked, grabbed a choke

hold on the hauler's left wrist, and gave him the old flying mare, with the professional heave instead of the amateur one. The hauler went through the crowd feet-first.

BACK he came at Winnie, arms wide apart this time, to guard against being heaved again. This time, Winnie let him get his waist hold. But just as the bloomer began to put on the pressure, Winnie cupped both hands and drove the other's head back so hard that he gave up the waist-hold idea at once.

Now Winnie took the offensive. He crouched suddenly, grabbed his man's forward leg, pushed with his shoulder strongly, and went over forward. The bloom hauler went over backward, with Winnie on top of him. It was a clean fall, and, not too hard. No extra measure of meanness to get a man sore over it. The steel mill gang cheered Winnie loudly, and the bloom hauler looked mightily surprised.

Winnie donned his ice-cream pants and colored shirt again, and dragged out his tickets. He had the crowd where they couldn't get away.

"Right here, boys," Winnie shouted. "Get your tickets for the mammoth colossal and stupendous wrestling match, for the championship of the universe and Empire City, Saturday night in the Coliseum. Here you are, gents. Get 'em while they're hot. Walk up, roll up or tumble up—any way to get up. Tickets! Tickets! Only two bucks apiece! How many, gents?"

The ticket sale was very good, considering that steel workers don't make as much as bank presidents. Winnie was busy stuffing one and five-dollar bills into his pants and making change. When it was over, he started to leave, but the man he had just tossed stopped him.

"Don't go yet, kid," he ordered. "The soaking-pit gang'll be along in a minute,

and we wanna see some more fun. We'll help ya get 'em going, too."

When noon hour at the steel mills was over, Winnie was slightly tired, because these huskies didn't take time out for grand-standing, and he had wrestled three of them in an hour, and slammed 'em all.

But they had given him a little punishment, too, and his old tights were marked with streaks of grass green, which is very seldom seen on wrestling trunks, and his stomach was still quivering from a leg scissors that a soaking-pit man had treated him to.

But he had sold one hundred tickets, and collected the money. He went back to the hospital and reported to Dino.

"I wish I'd been there to see it," said Dino. "Giving away a hundred dollars worth of rassling with every hundred tickets, that's what you did. Now don't hand Frankie that money until an hour before the show begins Saturday night. He figures you'll back out."

CHAPTER VI.

SAWBONES WINNEGARD

AN hour before Frankie's wrestling show opened in the Coliseum, the promoter was feeling at peace with the world. He had a cardful of talented hippodromers ready to go on, and this fresh college "amachoör," Winnie Winnegard, hadn't shown up with any ticket stubs or any money. Winnie was evidently out of the picture.

Then Winnie appeared, and there was a look on his face that Frankie didn't like. Not that it was an unpleasant look, either. But the better this kid looked, the less Frankie Johnson could stand him.

"Couldn't sell tickets, huh?" demanded Frankie. "Well, I knew you were a weak sister, right from the start. Good enough to handle a busted-down old man like Hans Berger, or a sap like Dino Atzolini, but not good enough to

sell tickets. Well, gimme the tickets back. They cost money to print."

Instead of the tickets, Winnie handed him a roll of money. As it was all in ones and fives, it looked big enough to buy the Coliseum.

"Count it," said Winnie briefly. "I sold one hundred tickets."

Frankie counted it, and his face turned red. "Why, you short-changer, there's only a hundred and a half here!"

"I took out my percentage. I get twenty-five per cent, I believe."

"That isn't percentage. That's wages for rassling, if you rassle. You're not in training. You haven't been near a gym for a week."

"I'm in training, and I'm going to wrestle Dynamite Flynn to-night."

The fans were beginning to fill the hall. It looked like a good house. Frankie wondered where Winnie's "following" was. Maybe they hadn't come yet. There was nothing but a big gang from the steel mills, so far.

"I s'pose you sold those tickets to the college guys, and the uptown crowd, friends of yours, huh?"

"Never mind whom I sold them to. They were friends enough to buy the tickets, anyway. You tell your Dynamite Flynn that I'm going to light his fuse for him to-night."

Most of the seats in the Coliseum were "rush seats." Rush in and get the good seats first. That's why the steel-mill gang was there. Even Winnie was astonished to see how many they were, and hundreds of 'em were buying tickets at the box office as they came in. These were men who had missed the free show Winnie had put on, but who had heard about it through their friends.

They rushed for the front seats in the mezzanine, and hauled out their programs. Then they began yelling their displeasure. Winnie Winnegard's name wasn't on the card anywhere.

Frankie heard an uproar in the mezzanine, and stuck his head out of the

box office to see what it was all about before sending his special cops to break it up. It was quite an uproar.

It sounded like a strike riot in the steel mills.

"We want Doc Take-apart!" they were yelling. "Gyp! Gyp! Why ain't Doc Take-apart on the card?"

They continued yelling. Frankie had to step out onto the platform. He lifted up his megaphone, and waved for silence.

"What's the matter with this card?" he yelled. "All these rasslers on the card to-night are in the best of condition, and ready to go."

They told him what was the matter with the card. A bloom hauler and a soaking-pit man tried to outyell each other from opposite sides of the mezzanine. They'd bought tickets on the understanding they were going to see a guy named Winnegard, "Doc Take-apart," they called him, wrestle to-night.

FRANKIE hurried back to the box office and grabbed Winnie.

"Hey, is that the gang you sold those tickets to?" he wanted to know.

"About a hundred of 'em are," said Winnie. "The rest must be their friends. How do you like my personal following?"

Frankie rushed back to the arena and announced that Winnegard would wrestle "Dynamite" Flynn in the first preliminary. Then he rushed down-stairs to the dressing room. He had to work fast and think fast. Even so, he was barely fast enough, because Dynamite Flynn was disappearing down a back alley. Frankie grabbed him.

"Come back here, you louse's uncle. What's the idea of lamming?"

"Plenty, boss," said Dynamite. "You told me I was going on with Eagle Feather, the Cherokee Indian from County Clare. Eagle Feather maybe ain't no full-blooded Cherokee, but he

ain't no Doc Take-apart, either. I'll rassle Eagle Feather or nobody."

"Then I'll get Eagle Feather to rassle this dam' amachoor," said Frankie, and added an oath that's too hard to spell.

"You'll have to hustle, then," said Dynamite, "because Eagle Feathers is way ahead of you—in a taxi. He was afraid of something like this when he heard those steel workers yelling."

"There's something screwy goes on here," muttered Frankie. "You come back to the dressing room with me, and we'll find out what it is."

In the dressing room was a small group of grapplers, all scheduled to appear on the card to-night. Even Dan Hippopolemus was there, matched with some kind of "Russian Bear," because Frankie wanted a good show.

They were all talking at once. Dino had asked them to come and visit him at the hospital, and they had done so. Lucky they did, too.

"I don't want any part of this Winnie fella," said a German grappler. "Dino said the guy dam' near killed him, just for the fun of it."

"Yeah, he practices breaking bones with a skeleton. He got in a scrap over at the steel mills, and crippled three men before he was pulled off," added another hippo. "I don't climb into the ring with any guy that done what he done to Dino Atzolini."

"We all know Dino," said another. "And we know why he can't rassle in public no more. But look what happened to him! Dino told me himself, personally, that this guy—Doc Take-apart they call him at the steel mills—dam' near killed him, and done it on purpose."

"That's what he told me," said the Russian Bear, with no trace of a Russian accent. "Dino said this guy's as savage as a tiger. He takes a man apart with his bare hands, just for the fun of seeing him suffer."

Frankie came in in time to hear the last couple remarks.

"You dumb hippos gimme a pain," he stated. "Are you rasslers, or a gang of lingerie salesmen? One of you is gonna rassle this amachoor to-night."

"And get what Dino got, hey? Not for mine!" said the Russian Bear.

"Yeah, and where's Hans Berger?" demanded another grappler. "Last time I saw Hans, he was going up the aisle feet-first? I ain't seen him around since, either. That ain't no way to make a living, boss."

"I said that one of you hippos rassles this amachoor to-night. Who's it gonna be?"

He designated man after man with his finger, to be met with violent side-waggings of the head and muttered protests. They'd seen Hans and Dino, and evidently Dino had laid it on with a steam shovel.

EVERY man except one had refused, in spite of threats from Frankie. Even the Russian Bear's reputation for taking punishment wasn't enough to make him stick out his neck for this job.

Finally, there was no one but Dan Hippopolemus himself, Dan the Greek—Dan the Champ. He was wearing the championship belt he always wore into the ring before he started the evening's work. Just now, he wished it was a ticket to Chicago, or even New York.

Frankie's finger finally stopped swinging around the crowd and came to rest, pointing straight at Dan the Greek. Dan's heart felt very heavy, because he wasn't trained for what was probably going to be a very tough bout. And he'd have to win. No matter what he took doing it, he'd have to win.

"I guess it's up to you, Dan," said Frankie, and it was more than a guess. It was an order, one that would have to be obeyed.

Dan puffed up his mighty chest, hairy

as a buffalo robe, and his lips went into a snarl.

"Sure, I'll take him, boss. Why, this amachoor ain't gotta thing! Hans musta been crippled up with rheumatism when he went into the ring. And Dino—he's so dumb he couldn't get out of his own hammer locks. I'll rassle your amachoor, but I can't promise to string him along for the regulation fifty-five minutes without stalling. He ain't a real rassler, you know."

Frankie hurried back to the arena, and grabbed a megaphone.

"We have an important announcement!" he yelled. "Winnegard, known to the mat world as Doc Take-apart, will appear in the main bout, matched against the Greek champion, Dan Hippopolemus!"

The applause reached all the way down to the box office, and far-sighted guys who were buying two-dollar seats in the mezzanine, suddenly changed their minds and bought four-dollar seats, near-ring-side.

Winnie was feeling the old glow around his cardiac region, as he used to feel in his amateur bouts, when some championship was at stake. It was a swell feeling, too.

A messenger boy brought him a letter from Dino Atzolini. Golly, this fella Dino could even write letters!

How do you like your new moniker I gave you, Doc Take-apart? I've told all of Frankie's rasslers about you, and got them all scared stiff. They think you'd tear out a man's throat, just to see what made him sing.

Some nurse must've taken down Dino's words, thought Winnie. Dino couldn't write a letter the same way he talked. But it was swell stuff, anyway.

And here's a list of what each of those guys has got, and what he hasn't got. I've rassled 'em all, and all you gotta do is to grab 'em where I found they were weak. You'll rassle one of these guys to-night.

"Golly, this fella's a pal!" thought Winnie, and he studied the list. He read that Eagle Feather was a sucker for a head lock. Dynamite Flynn couldn't stand a good body scissors, if you held it long enough. The Russian Bear usually softened up after being slammed five times.

But Winnie's elation dropped an eighth of a notch when he read what Dino had to say about Dan Hippopolenius.

Dan the Greek ain't got any weak spots I ever caught on to. But you won't be rassling him yet. Anyway, you ain't ready. When I get well, I'll train you special for Dan.

Said Winnie to himself, "Dan the Greek, and I, we both start from scratch, then. Well, I hope the boys from the steel mill like the rassling show we put on!"

CHAPTER VII.

AMATEUR INTO PRO

DAN THE GREEK came to the ring with an unusual kind of ticking in his heart, too. This was going to be just like the old days, the days when his picture was being considered for the wrestling book, when he was younger and never knew what he was going to be up against next, and he had to plan every bout, and wrestle with everything he had.

All through the preliminaries, Dan tried to figure out the best way to handle this Doc Take-apart, and he came to the following wise conclusion:

"Hans and Dino," Dan told himself, "have had plenty to say about the kind of stuff this amachoor can pass out. But they haven't said a word about how much he can take. Maybe he never hadda take very much. Maybe he can't take it. So I'm gonna make him take all I can give him, as quick as I can give

it to him. And I'll keep him so busy taking it, he won't have time to pass it out."

And that was mighty sound advice for any wrestler to hand himself.

The referee's instructions were short and sweet. It was the same ref who had worked at the first match, too.

"Get in there and rassle, and don't try any stalling," he said.

"Are you speaking to me?" asked Winnie, under his breath.

"You'd better look out you don't get an amateur rassler heaved into your breadbasket," Dan the Greek advised the official. Then they started, like a couple of young bulls in the springtime, like they say.

Dan sought a battle at close quarters at once. There was no attempt to slam his man. Nothing but crushing and twisting and choking will tire a tough opponent; and that can be done only at close quarters.

"These amachoors don't understand the head lock," thought Dan, and at great risk of being tied up himself, he dragged Winnie's head close to his own furry wishbone. Then he got his hold, and squeezed.

The beauty of the head lock is that it doesn't feel as bad as it is. Many a wrestler has been head-locked by guys like "Strangler" Lewis, and has thought he was in an easy position for rest and meditation and maybe a chance to plan his fight.

And then, after a few minutes, things begin to go black around his eyes, and the lights make circular flights in front of him, and he's half ruined already. But none of those things happened to Winnie.

The hold took him by surprise, but as soon as he felt the pressure on his temples, he knew what was up. The motor centers of his brain would soon be cut off from their natural blood

supply. He knew he'd have to break this hold as soon as possible, or a bit sooner.

Question was, what hold would the Greek consider a reasonable exchange, because Winnie would have to buy his way out with something?

Not much time to argue with himself. He jerked up one knee and tried to brace it against the Greek's hip bone. He felt the muscles in the Greek's forearm getting ready for a shift. Maybe he could bust the hold before the shift came.

But the Greek's left arm flashed down like a snake after a bird, and the Greek's left hand slipped under Winnie's knee. Winnie kicked, hard, but not hard enough to hurl the Greek apart from him.

They went to the mat together, and the Greek had a leg lock on him, the hold that Winnie had used to finish Hans Berger. Well, this was better than a head lock, but not much better.

THE pain in his leg was getting serious now. He made the Greek work for all he got, because it takes real muscular power to keep a leg lock clamped on. The Greek had the work, and Winnie had the pain.

There wasn't much yelling from the gallery, so far. There had been no slamming. The head lock had lasted a full minute, which is a long time for anything to last in a wrestling bout. The leg lock was going into its second minute already.

Winnie wasn't doing any of the loud groaning and mugging that the under dog was accustomed to doing, either. And Dan wasn't wasting any effort in making ferocious scowls. Time enough for mugging after he'd taken this amateur. If the fans didn't like a wrestling bout without any hippodroming, they could go to the dog races. Dan the Greek was fighting for his title to-night.

But the fans were getting wise al-

ready. They could see that Winnie was in a spot. The ringside seats could see the sweat pour off his face.

The steel-mill gang began yelling Winnie's new moniker. "Take him apart, doc!" they yelled. "Get going, Doc Take-apart!"

They were all with him, but they didn't know what he was doing. The ringing sound of his new ring-moniker thrilled him.

"I don't look much like a Doc Take-apart while I'm in this hold," considered Winnie, "but I'll bet that Dan's right arm hasn't got the pep it had before it started working on me. Now if I could get to work on that arm, maybe I could—"

He tried to twist the locked leg, and found that it gave an inch farther than the last time he tried it. He tried to decide quickly what hold he could offer in exchange for this one. Would Dan the Greek fall for a chance at one of the slam holds? Nope, Dan was playing the wear-'em-down game.

Over in the hospital, Dino was rapidly going cuckoo over the news he was getting by telephone. The Russian Bear was feeding it to him, and the first shock Dino got was when he heard Winnie was matched with Dan Hippo-polemus.

"He ain't ready for Dan yet!" cried Dino. "Has Frankie Johnson gone nuts? Or is it the blond kid himself? Some one's crazy!"

The Russian Bear explained, with a heavy South Boston accent, just how it came about that Winnie was wrestling with the champ.

"No one else would take him on to-night," said the Russian Bear, "after what you told us about him. Thanks for the warning."

"You say Dan's got a leg lock on him now? Get down there and tell him to bust that hold, and then get a good one

himself and wear Dan out. Tell him I said so? Get close to the ring and yell it in his ears."

"That's what Dan's trying to do to your Doc Take-apart, Dino," said the Russian Bear. "Trying to wear him out. I can hear them steel-mill fellas yelling way down here."

"Get back up there, and tell him to get an arm lock, on the arm that the Greek's been working with. Get up there, you yellow-so-and-so, or I'll break your—"

It was a tribute, or something, to Dino Atzolini that the Russian Bear ran upstairs to the arena four steps at a time. But when he got there, the steel workers were yelling more encouragingly to Doc Take-apart, because Winnie had just busted the leg lock and was working on Dan the Greek with an arm lock. The Russian Bear dashed back to the phone.

"It's O. K., so far, Dino," he announced. "He's busted the hold and he's working on Dan's arm, like you said."

"What a rassler!" breathed Dino from a full heart. "Call me up again as soon as it looks like more trouble for either of 'em."

DAN fought the arm lock, sighing heavily to himself. "He can take it. I was afraid of that. Should I try a leg scissors? Or what can I sell him to lemme outa that arm lock?" Dan wondered, because a wrestler isn't going to drop a good thing like an arm lock, unless he sees a chance at something he thinks is better.

"Guess it'll have to be the old slam game. He might fall for that one."

Dan loosened up one leg, so that Winnie could reach it, if he wanted to. Dan acted thoroughly tired out, maybe tired enough to pick up and slam.

The referee, who had seen a thousand bouts close-to, helped Dan. "Quit

the stallin', and rassle," he ordered them, and Winnie saw Dan's knee within reach temptingly. He could grab that knee, lift Dan up into the air by leg and arm, shift to a crotch hold on the way down, and the evening's labors would be over.

Downstairs, a telephone was ringing insistently, but no one heard it now. The Russian Bear was watching the bout intently, wondering what a tricky old fighter like Dan would pull next. He spotted the leg bait as a phony and wondered if the blond kid would spot it as a phony, too.

But Winnie was bothered by the referee's warning about stalling, and the cries of the steel-mill boys demanding more action bothered him, too. He swept out one arm like a steel hook and gathered in the bait.

But even as he lifted Dan the Greek up off the mat with both arms, he sensed that something was wrong. Dan fitted into his grasp entirely too easily, as if he knew exactly what he wanted. Winnie tried to shift, but he did it too late.

Dan did the shifting, like a cat turning in mid-air, and they hit the mat together, but Winnie was underneath. His wind was knocked out by Dan's elbow in the ribs.

Dan had him where he wanted him. He picked him up and slammed him, hard. He picked him up again.

Downstairs, a telephone was ringing, ever more insistently. The Russian Bear heard it, even above the roar of the crowd. He shrugged his shoulders, and left the ringside. Anyway, he knew what the finish would be.

"Yeah, Dan's slammed him twice, hard," he told Dino. "The kid fell for the leg bait, and leggo his arm lock. Yeah, Dan is still slamming him, I can hear the crowd yellin' at every slam. It's about over, Dino."

"You go back up there and tell the

kid to wait till Dan's tired slamming him, and then go in and pick up Dan and drop on him. Dan can't slam us around like that and get away with it. Go on, lemme hear you pounding those stairs!"

The Russian Bear went upstairs again, still four steps at a time. If Dino got back into circulation, he might start cleaning up old grudges. The Bear wanted his personal slate to stay clean.

He got back to the ring just in time to see Winnie stagger to his feet and face Dan Hippopolemus. You couldn't tell from the blond kid's face whether he was groggy or not. He should 'a' been groggy. But there was no chance to tell him anything. Too much noise.

Dan was desperately hoping for a break. "He can take a slamming, too," thought the Greek. "I haven't gotta 'nother heave left in me. And he's coming for me!"

Winnie was coming for him. The gallery was shouting for Doc Take-apart to nail him. That helped some. If all

those guys thought Winnie could nail him, maybe there was some chance of it

Winnie dropped on one knee, like setting the spring of a big trap. His hands were the jaws of that trap, and they clamped onto the Greek's forward leg. It looked as if Winnie was going over backward with him.

Instead, Winnie lifted with both arms; lifted the Greek up above his head, and Dan Hippopolemus felt like a little child who is afraid of being dropped.

Dan was afraid of being dropped. He was afraid of being dropped backbone first, from a height of about six feet, with the added force of all that a two-hundred pounder could give, and maybe Dan wouldn't be able to walk to his dressing room!

THE crowd was yelling for a kill, as crowds have yelled ever since cavemen invented killing in man-fights. They wanted Doc Take-apart to slam Dan the Greek, as Dan had been slamming him.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

BASKET HERITAGE

(basket-ball novelette)

by JACKSON V. SCHOLZ

When a star becomes a public idol, he is no
longer free to do as he pleases.



Dan wasn't vigorous any more. He was tired. He was all relaxed. Winnie knew what a hard slamming would do to him. It might smash one of his vertebrae. Why do it? It wasn't necessary.

Winnie was still holding Dan aloft, and turning on his feet to get his balance. Fans in the ringside seats were dodging, lest Dan be thrown in their laps. Winnie remembered something in the wrestling book; something about Frank Gotch. Gotch had a stunt that was hard to duplicate.

Gotch could get his man up in the air and change to a crotch hold coming down. And with a crotch hold, he didn't have to slam his man—just flatten him out.

Winnie gave Dan a slight swing in the air to keep him loosened up, and then started him down. Halfway down he shifted. He got the crotch hold, one hand under Dan, getting complete control, but breaking the fall. He went down with him, but on top of him, still in complete control.

He almost laid him on the mat, like a crate of eggs, but Dan's hips and shoulders made a four-point landing. The whole Coliseum saw what Doc Take-apart had done. He could have tossed his man over the ropes and onto the concrete. But he didn't do it. Old Frank Gotch wouldn't have done it,

either. Something new had happened in the mat world, or was it something old being brought back to mind again?

Not till then, did the Russian Bear recollect that he had a duty to perform, in connection with a telephone. He sounded excited this time.

"Dino, he did it!" cried the Bear. "He let Dan slam him until Dan couldn't lift him any more, and then the Kid picked the Greek up and went down with him, like you said. You should 'a' seen it!"

"Put the kid on the phone!" ordered Dino.

"Hello, Doc Take-apart," Dino greeted him a few minutes later. "Just wanted to tell you that I fixed it up for you about your medical course. You can keep right on being a sawbones. I told 'em how it happened, first day I got here. They think you're swell. . . . Why didn't I tell you before? I was afraid you'd quit rassling."

"I'll never quit wrestling," said Winnie. "An interne gets one night off a week. And we got a gym at the hospital. Say, Dino, they're going to put me in the wrestling book as a second Frank Gotch. How's that?"

"Not half good enough, Kid," Dino told him. "Frank could only take 'em apart. But you can take 'em apart, and then you can put 'em together again!"

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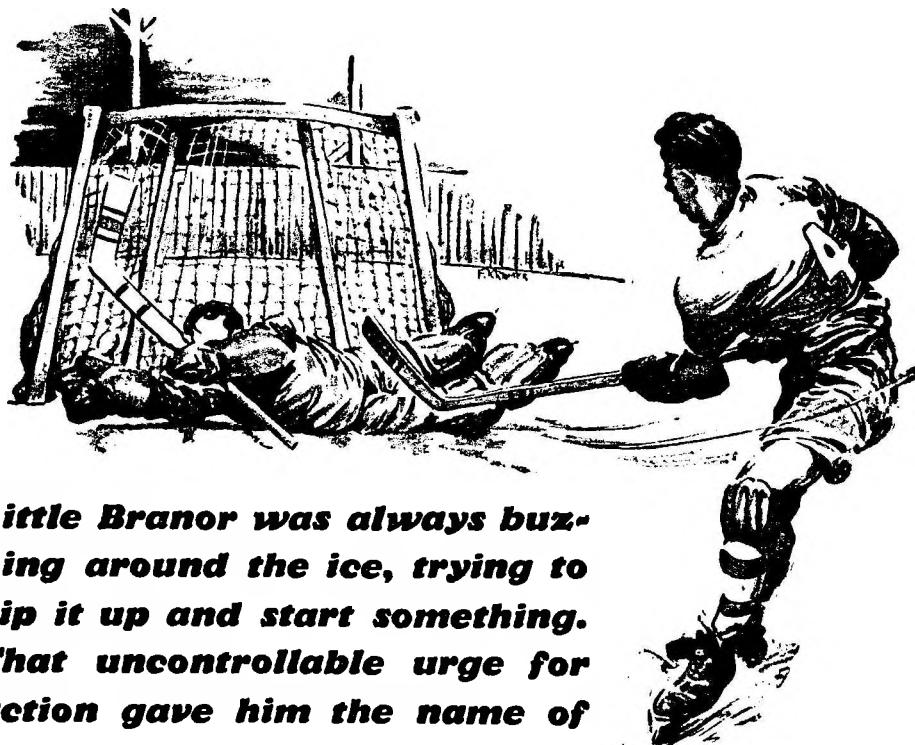
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PROBAK JUNIOR



Little Branor was always buzzing around the ice, trying to yip it up and start something. That uncontrollable urge for action gave him the name of

RINK MOSQUITO

by T. W. FORD

Author of: "Big 10," etc.

WHEN you think of a mosquito, you don't picture a hundred-and-sixty-pound chunk of sawed-off, shock-proof bone and muscle. And "Little" Branor, second-string center for the Maskatean Moose Hockey Club, was all of that.

Not that he stung opposing goal tenders with blistering, scoring shots that he whipped into the cage. He didn't. But he was always buzzing around, trying to yip it up and start something, darting in when a jam occurred.

Off the ice, he was the same way, breaking in with his ideas, sounding off to Ade, the Moose manager-coach, relentlessly demanding to see more action. He possessed an undying itch to be into things.

That was the story that night in the locker room between the second and third periods of the game with the hated Redskins. The Moose were one goal down, trailing 3-2, thanks to Branor. He'd been put on in the final minute of the session with orders to back-check closely and not to press.

But that uncontrollable urge to be in action had sent him down after the rival center, who was clearing deep in his own territory. Before anybody knew it, the Redskins had swarmed through the gap left by Little Branor and sunk the rubber to break the deadlock.

The mosquito had got into things all right. He had got the club into a mess right when they were fighting for third place. Nobody remembered that it had been a two-man break, minus the enemy center, that had effected that score.

The point was how to get that goal back. Mich Coul, captain, finally fig-



ured the best thing was to toss down long shots and rush in on top of them. Ade nodded.

A man called from the door. Players began to relace their skate shoes. Ade agreed that was the way to play it, proceeded to warn the goalie about that drift-shot pass. Little Branor clumped forward on his skates to butt in characteristically.

"Listen, gang. That goalie of theirs is ready to fold. He had horseshoes tied to half his stops last period. If we pepper him with a flood of the ol' rubber, he'll crack wide—"

Ade threw out his pigeon chest. "And if you'll pipe down, Branor, I'll run this club until the boss gives me the gate. You try and play—until you get it!"

Back on the bench the kid's sad face

got longer as the minutes passed with no scoring and no action for him. With pleading eyes, he looked down the bench to the manager.

But Ade paid no attention, merely gritted his teeth as he watched the monotonous, scoreless period.

And then the Redskins were penalized for hooking. They were one man short now. Immediately, Ade sent in his first line. Shortly afterward, Calson, swishing around the cage, took a pass, feinted the Redskin goalie out of position, and tied up the score with a cord-zinging shot. After that, it was slam-bang stuff.

With seventy seconds to go, one of the Moose men was sent to the penalty box. The Moose were now one man short themselves. Little Branor jumped to his feet.

"Lemme in there, chief," he begged Ade.

The manager spat disgustedly. "O. K.," he growled. "Only watch that—"

But Branor was already on the ice. "Let's all go down and take a look at their cage," he cried to his teammates.

In less than ten seconds, he did exactly that thing himself. Roughing it out on the boards with a rival, he snagged the rubber and sliced across the rink. A daring double fake carried him between the defense. But a back-checking Redskin wing forced him to the corner.

Like a little, dynamic terrier, he threw his check, came out diagonally before the cage, stopped dead. Then he wheeled in a complete turn in his tracks and whipped toward the goalie who was pulled off balance by his fake.

It would have taken a Boucher to maintain balance coming at that speed in a twisting curve the way he was. Little Branor was no Boucher. Starting to fall, he fired. But it was right into the pads of the goalie falling into the

corner, an out-of-control shot. The kid didn't have the ability to match his fiery eagerness to star.

The long-drawn groan of the crowd was still sounding as the game ended. They played two overtimes to try to break the tie. Both were scoreless. Little Branor cooled his heels through both of them. Down in the locker room, Ade was half crazed at coming out with a tie where he should have won. He looked around with a stony glare, aware it was half his fault. Then he saw somebody else who was equally to blame. It was all he needed.

"Branor, you're finished. There's going to be some stiff trading done around here soon and—"

He headed for his cubbyhole of an office bluing the air.

The kid didn't fight that time. His cheek hollows deepened and got paler. When a battler's counted out—even a buzzing mosquito of a battler—he's finished.

LATER that night, down at the chop house around the corner from where they boarded, Lan Calson wagged his handsome but slightly dumb head and made plans for Little Branor. The latter sat silent as he worked his molars on a steak.

"Don't let 'em trade you, Branor. It'd be down to one of those rinky-dink backwoods outfits. The fans half murder you—specially if it's in a mining district. You're lucky if you get paid off."

"Maybe I ought to phone Conny Smythe of the Toronto Leafs and tell him I'll sign for a five-thousand bonus, huh?" Branor glared.

"Aw, don't fool," Lan said.

The dour-faced kid's smile was funereal. "Sure, that's me—life of the party. Life's just a load of horse-laughs."

Gravely Lan Calson, who believed it was his one-man master-minding and

not simply natural ability that made him a hot wing man, laid down his knife and fork.

"Brany, that's just it. You get too excited out there on the rink. You want to be everywhere at once. You always want to be riding your opponent!"

Little Branor was still plenty keyed up after what he'd gone through that night. High-strung anyway, he'd been straining himself to star for a long time.

Taking a wad of bread, he jammed it in Lan's loose-jawed mouth.

"You ought to turn it into correspondence-course lessons and sell 'em!" he snapped.

Calson gulped the bread and pushed back his curly hair. "Say, when I get to be a big N. H. L. star, damned if it won't be a great idea."

Branor slid off the stool and headed for the desk. "Send me a sample lesson when you do."

He liked Lan, knew his simple, confident dumbness. But the alternative of going back to the home-town mill to bump around in semipro circles wasn't conducive to a sweet temper.

WEDNESDAY night, Little Branor was in uniform and on the Moose bench. But not because he had any childish die-hard hope of Ade changing his mind. It was simply because he had not yet received official notice of his discharge from the club. The pending trades had not been consummated. He was living up to his contract.

It was bitter gall for a boy who'd made the jump to the semipro ranks, who'd advanced up the ladder because managers had been interested in his belligerent, busybody bustling around the ice and figured he'd develop. And now, the fates had hung up his number as one who would never be a first-class player.

Grim-eyed, he watched the Spears as they swung around the ice of the packed

little arena in their warm-up drill. They had that peculiar, intangible stamp about them that spelled class. Maybe it was the way they wore their white jerseys with the red-and-gold arrows slicing vertically down them. Maybe it was the calm poise in their manner of stick-handling, the unhurried confidence as they fired at the nets.

Little Branor's eyes dimmed. The Can-Am circuit was only a step from the magic circle of the N. H. L. If a young, promising player made the jump to the Can-Am's, he might go onto the big league. But that wasn't for him, Little Branor reflected.

The Spears gathered around their bench before the opening gong. An exhibition fitted into a lull in their schedule. Designed to test the younger crop of players, they weren't taking it seriously. A short, boyish-faced man talked to them. Branor knew him from his picture in the papers.

It was Dick Manharr, dubbed "the boy manager" somewhat sneeringly. A former minor-leaguer himself, his selection for the big-time job last spring had elicited guffaws around the circuit. The home-city papers already had him on the griddle for not doing more with what was termed a "team of ready-made champions." They were demanding that he be ousted. But you'd never know it by looking at him.

Little Branor found himself half fascinated by the man. Manharr had a steady, somewhat mysterious smile as if he always knew something nobody else did.

"Skate your damned heads off against 'em," Ade spat as he sent out his first team.

Lan Calson was grinning back at Branor and winking. He was out to show these big shots a thing or two. But it seemed as if Lan and the Moose were going to be skated under. The Spears, after half a minute of jockeying

at mid-ice, came through and made the nets sing twice inside of sixty seconds.

They would have had three more in the next five minutes if it had not been for some spectacular playing by Georges, the Moose goal guardian. Everybody thought that the lucky rabbit's foot he carried in his left glove, was working overtime. But as the period wore on, and he made save after save on unbeatable shots, performed gravity-defying acrobatics, and kicked out everything even when the Spears powered, they began to realize that Georges was having one of those nights a goalie dreams of—



the kind he may have once in a lifetime. He was stone-walling them.

Then, as the period closed, long, lean Lan Calson whisked through the enemy and dented the twine of their cage.

The second period got away slowly. The Spears weren't out to bust any necks, particularly their own, in a small-town exhibition. But a long, rolling shot, deflected from a defense man's stick, hopped by the Spear net tender for the tying score. And the Can-Am big-timers bore down.

Soon, they were giving all they had, led by their star center, the rapierlike "Silk" Starl. They camped in front of the beleaguered Moose net. And still Georges beat everything they fired. Twice Lan Calson was in and missed by a hair before the period ended.

THE crowd was in a fever when the third began. And old Ade, for once seeing his name in headlines if he pulled the trick, set out to hold the big-league club. Calson was his ace, going like mad. Ade juggled men frantically, yanked and replaced players as they wilted under the terrific pace. Then Little Branor heard his name barked.

He went over those boards like a hound dog on the scent, jerked snug his gauntlets as he lined up for the face-off against the great Silk Starl, who had almost sunk three in the last two minutes.

Starl got the rubber, wheeled. The Spears bored with their precision-smooth pass attack. Then it misfired. When he waited for the pass on the defense's flank, Starl found himself cramped against the boards and completely covered by a buzzing, mosquito-like player.

The washed-up kid with the sad face intercepted a pass a few moments later, flipped to Lan. The later tried to go around the Spear backline, but thought he'd rammed a double dreadnaught. The back-checking Spear forwards wheeled for another surge as Starl cleared in the corner.

Then, as he prepared to come out, the slim Spear star ran head-on into a buzzing, side-wheeling busybody who seemed all over him and everywhere at once. It was Little Branor again!

Starl spun and shaved up ice in ripping about-faces and feinted and pulled stick work that would have amazed a magician.

When it was all over, Starl was still covered and cornered by that same buzzing mosquito. A defenseman had to come in and take over. Silk Starl in his exasperation got in some mean work on Branor with the butt of his stick. His boss, Manharr, immediately pulled him off. And Branor came out, too.

The big-timers' pressure finally did its work. Georges came apart at the seams. The Spears scored three times. Silk Starl, credited with assisting two of them, was hot to get his first score of the night. He led another raid, seemed unstoppable then. And Little Branor, shot into the lost game, bobbed up and blocked him off with his jerky, side-wheel-action skating.

Starl went back to gain speed for another swoop. When he wheeled, Little Branor had the check on him, forced him to feed it to a defense in the rear. He kept on top of the star, harrying him, pestering, always around, always eager to be busy in the thick of it.

A penalty for cross checking against a Moose gave the Spears another chance for a jam. And Starl, camping beside the open cage, took a pass for a sure score. Then the rubber was hooked off his stick. The mosquito kid, Branor, had hooked it. Starl slung his stick toward the side boards and he went off.

The Moose added another to their total as Lan Calson tallied on a three-man pass in spectacular fashion. Dick Manharr edged over to the Moose bench in the final minute.

"Like to have another look at one of your men," he told Ade.

"You want Calson back, huh?"

"No, that third line. Those two blind kids. And work that little fella if your center's hurt. Branor is his name. Anybody'll do just to fit with the blind kids."

Unknowing, Little Branor went back on. A deliberate off-side by the Spears, and the puck-fencing wizard, Silk Starl, came over the boards. A couple of moments later, just as the final gong rang, Starl was about to draw a penalty for tripping and hacking committed when Branor had trapped him behind his own cage.

The crowd went out talking about how hot their goalie and the Calson boy

had been. Later, in the arena box-office, Dick Manharr concluded a session with "Old Man" Carptou and Ade.

"All right. That's the price you want. It's agreed. But if you want that defense man from our farm, you've got to throw in some other player. Anybody but—" The secretive, knowing smile deepened on Manharr's youthful face.

"I can't tear my team apart," Ade protested. "My veterans are carrying the burden now."

"Make it some rookie—say that Branor kid."

"It's a deal!" bellowed Ade. By golly, he'd outsmarted a big-time manager!

PROPED in a seat beside Calson in the cinder-ridden day coach of the train en route to Gulsa City, Branor knew little exultation. Ade of the Moose hadn't been able to keep his mouth shut. And word gets around fast in a little town like Maskatean. Little Branor knew he'd simply been an extra player, a piece of ballast thrown in to clinch the deal involving Lan Calson.

"Yeah," Lan said for the umpty-umph time, in the murk of the swaying coach, "if them Spears'll only get in the chameenship play-offs now! 'Course, with me with 'em— Well, I don't want to talk; I'm modest."

Branor nodded dully. He knew *he* was going to see no play-offs unless he plunked the admission price down at the box office. It'd be shipment in short order to one of the Spears' farms.

Face sadder and hollower than ever, he got no thrill as he pulled on one of the well-known spear-cleft shirts in their dressing room the next night. But he couldn't help noticing the difference in the big time right then and there.

The men, though not necessarily older, were more mature, and they discussed the style of their play in the coming game, rather than whooped it

up about what they were going to do to the opposition.

It was the same way about the actual play when they went into the game. A pass would be varied to meet the defense thrown against it. The backline would be advanced or dropped back against certain player combinations. And although they didn't go down with the rubber so often in that league, when they did thrust, it was intelligently, and with a planned goal in view.

Branor watched tall Lan swerve loose a couple of times and get in close for sharp drives. He drew the fans' plaudits even though he failed to flash the red light. Some galleryites gave him a cheer when he brought the rival goalie to his knees with a shovel shot. That was a pretty sure sign a man was going to click.

With the final period well over, the Spears had a comfortable two-goal lead. And Little Branor, usually clawing at the boards as he waited for the cue, sat stunned when he heard his name.

Manharr put his wise eyes on him a moment, the peculiar smile rising. "Don't want 'em to score," he said.

The kid glided out to face the husky, second-string opposing center who'd been leading a couple of forays. With the whistle, he turned on his always pressing, nuisance style of play, staying on top of his man, harrying him, always busy, with stick and elbows jabbing and chopping.

It seemed he'd scarcely been on thirty seconds. The rival pivot got the thumb to the hoosegow of the penalty box for slashing a Spear wing. And Little Branor got the signal to the bench.

A THIN hope began to mount inside him in the form of a prayer. A day passed. Nothing was said about shipping him to a farm outfit. But in the next game, he saw no action what-

soever. Nor in the next. Nor in the third one. He got used to becoming a fixture on the bench while Lan Calson often got a great hand as he arrowed through the enemy sextets, even though his scoring fell off after a brief flurry in the beginning.

Manharr seemed to have little interest in the dour-faced kid. In the afternoon practice sessions, he'd sometimes jerk his thumb, tell Branor to do some skating up and down the rink backward. That was all. The Kid always sat on the bench in team drills.

The cast-off of the Moose team began to fret. His high-strung disposition

when a poke check or a threatened one would put the squelcher on an attempted pass.

In the next practice drill, the bumbling, belligerent kid held himself in and tried to adapt himself to that style of play. It ran against his nature. Abruptly there was a bark from Starl, the captain, helping Manharr superintend the drill from the side boards.

"Get in there, Branor! Don't act like a cream-puff! Crowd in, push 'em around, slap with that club. What do you think you're in there for?"

Calson explained it that night with modest credit to his own smartness.



couldn't stand the inactivity. Win or lose, succeed or fail, he itched to be out there on that ice, buzzing around the rubber.

"Watch me, pal," Lan Calson would tell him again and again. "You wear yourself out buzzin' around like mad! Don't always be trying to hop in a guy's eye like a flea. You oughta copy my style."

Little Branor began to wonder. He took to watching the cool, poised Silk Starl. Starl—dubbed "Silk" because of his smooth play and his even disposition as well—was noted for the few penalties he ever drew. He always seemed back in position when the enemy sailed down. You never caught him hopping around some puck carrier's neck in rival territory for no purpose. And he never roughed along with his man or crowded

"Yuh know, it isn't hard for me to figure out, kid. Now that I remember, you stopped Silk from scorin' in that exhibition game with the old Moose. Why, more'n likely, he don't want to see you learn! You keep watchin' me and you'll learn something!"

The team came down to the wire, crossed clubs with the Scarlet Broncos who'd already clinched the title in their division of the league. Two minutes after play started, Little Branor blinked at being put on.

"Black" Bertry, the Bronco defense ace, was on a rampage and Branor tied up with him in mid-ice almost immediately. There was a lot of scuffling, some wild stick work and plenty of the elbow stuff. Bertry finally had the puck poked off his stick. He brought his club high in a glancing blow at Branor's head, and

promptly got the old heavo to the penalty coop.

The kid was in on the three-man raid, passed out wildly from a corner when one of his wing mates was camped at the edge of the cage for a sure bell ringer on the red light. Manharr took him off without comment.

Five nights later, as a jubilant club turned on some horseplay in the locker room after clinching the title and putting themselves in the Border Cup play-offs against the Broncos, Branor was ready to hang up his skates. Here, by some miracle, he'd been given his chance in big-league circles, and he was still just a guy buzzing around.

He had it figured out why he'd been kept on: Injuries had kept the club short-handed.

Over in a corner, Dick Manharr winked confidently at a group of hockey scribes. They'd been talking about the chances in the play-offs against that smooth, powerful bunch of seasoned veterans, those Broncos, with their "Bad-news" front line.

Manharr nodded. "If I can show you that Bad-news line can be stopped in the first game, you'll admit we got that cup as good as in the trophy case? Here." He handed a sealed envelope to the veteran of the sports-writing fraternity.

"There, my friends," the boy manager explained, "on a slip inside, is the name of the player who'll throw the monkey wrench into that Bad-news trio! Come down here after the game and we'll open it."

Branor looked at Manharr's knowing smile. The kid wondered if he meant Silk Starl or possibly Calson.

IT WAS a gala affair. There were two bands playing in the big, glass-roofed Galsa City Palace as the Spears took on the favored Broncos at home in the first contest. Each player

came on the ice individually, a spotlight singling him out of the darkness, the band giving him a flourish of triumphs. Case-hardened warriors with years of experience had a high flush to their cheeks. Teeth flashed over gum. The rubber drummed into the cords with a new twang during the warm-up sessions.

Then the whistle sounded for the opening face-off. Silk Starl of the Spears battled for the rubber with Couchere of the Broncos. Right off, the Bad-news line of the latter, Vincent, and "Lazy" Miller, backed by Black Bertry thundering behind them like a slave-driver, came down. They missed. Play eddied back and forth, the thrusts sharp and quick, the back checking hard and savage. Lines were changed. Changed again. Then the Bronco first front-line unit hopped back into the picture.

"Branor!" The kid heard Manharr's clear voice snap his name; there could be no mistake. He was going on with Calson and the other second-string winger.

Then he was in there as the fans sat bewildered. The Bad-news line, Couchere at the spearhead, ripped down. And Little Branor, bobbing and side-wheeling, got in front of the great Couchere, fastened to him leechlike, harried and picked and annoyed. Couchere finally got off a wild pass and retreated with an annoyed scowl in Branor's direction.

Who in hell was this awkward-looking nobody that couldn't do much himself, but hung around like a plague?

The Spears bored. One of their defense got through on a solo that gave his mates some surcease from the power plunges of the Broncos. Branor led a two-man drive that was turned off.

Then the Bad-news threesome started. But somehow Little Branor got in there, forced Couchere over to the

boards, roughed it with him as Lazy Miller joined the fracas. Couchere went down on his pants. And the digging, busybody, buzzing mosquito player almost went limp under a savage board check as Miller flared up, irate at being unable to get away.

The whistle. Two minutes in the hoosegow for Miller!

Now came the sign from the bench. Branor was off. The first stringers were going on, a fourth forward replacing a defense man. It was the break Manharr had been playing for. And he got it as a dazzling pass by Silk Starl resulted in a score. 1—0!

AFTER that, the Broncos pulled the whistle wide open. A Spear backliner was penalized for over-officious hoisting.

Again Branor got the call to go over the boards. He did, clambered right into that Bad-news trio as they poured down. He had another set-to with Miller, followed Vincent into his own territory as they tried to reform, snagged him up. The hefty Bertry came down, only to find that darned little buzzing nuisance around his neck. Bertry circled back, made a second bid to shake Branor off.

He couldn't get rid of the Branor guy; he tried to trip him. Little Branor nimbly hopped the club, rolled with a mean board check, then kicked the rubber loose to a mate.

Bertry, face crimson, bit off an oath and gave Branor a shove. The kid never had been afraid to mix it with anybody. He shoved back. The next instant, both had their mitts off and were tossing knuckles.

Boy-manager Manharr, purred, and for a good reason. The Spears drilled in another during the star defense man's absence. After all, the Spears had plenty of men better than Little Branor.

The period ended. The second twenty

minutes was the same story. Silk Starl got through on a beautiful solo to drill one into the enemy cords and make it 3—0.

The Bad-news trio, arrogant, certain of their ability to even it up, smashed on. And there was that pesky mosquito, that damned little plague of the ice, Branor, to harry them. And he did, working more than twelve minutes of that second period.

The Spears locker room was quiet, tense. The players' spirits weren't down. But they knew the seasoned power of those veterans who outweighed them. And they themselves were overcome by the responsibility of their lead. There was also a little matter of a defense bulwark who was beginning to sag in the seams as the result of the roistering he'd done last night.

They opened the third period. Rather, the Broncos, on the bust, their local backers down from home cheering them on in unison, tried to open it with mayhem and assorted murder of the less mild forms.

Two penalties to both sides were immediately meted out. Then Silk came out with a deep cut in the head. Manharr knew his boys couldn't stand up long under that whacking they were getting.

Couchere found the weak side of the defense, rifled a scoring shot past the goal tender so fast he scarcely saw it.

"Branor," Dick Manharr said in a cool voice as his critics in the press gallery already warmed up the tin-pan chorus.

That time, the kid made a mistake, was drawn on a faked pass. Lazy Miller weaved onto the cage and made the cords sing to make it 3—2. It looked black for the Spears.

Then the mosquito-menace went into his rôle. He buzzed into everybody's business. He attached himself like an

income-tax collector to Couchere, sometimes to some other puck carrier. He bored like a boll weevil, spent half his time harrying them in their own defense zone. Twice in a row the angered Broncos, tempers as red as their scarlet shirts, passed off-side in their wild efforts to get by this ice pest.

The lantern-jawed Vincent was trapped on the boards by the sad-faced kid, gave him a cross check. Vincent was sent to the box. And immediately the Spears sank one against the short-handed team. There was a conference on the Bronco bench. Branor knew. They were going to fix him. But he was ready for it.

And it came suddenly as Couchere and he hacked and hewed it out for the rubber in a Bronco corner. Black Bertry cruised in crushingly. But he missed his objective, a crippling board check. You can't mash a mosquito with a steam roller. Couchere turned and pushed. Then both Broncos had pitched into the hollow-cheeked player.

And for the first time, the rough-and-tough Little Branor, who loved a row, backed off, mouth bleeding from a sock. The crowd almost lifted the roof. It was a five-minute sentence apiece in the penalty coop for Couchere and Bertry.

The Spears went to town then and

sank two more to sew it up as the game ended.

DOWN in the roaring locker room, the sports-writer contingent tore open the envelope containing the name of the man Manharr had picked to clinch it.

"Branor," read the city hockey expert. "Why—say—that's luck!"

Dick Manharr came over and linked his arm through that of the panting kid, who wondered if he was in dreamland. "We saw his possibilities when we played the Moose in that exhibition game. Silk here has won the clean-play trophy so many times it's not news any more. But Branor with his pest style of play had him crazy, tied-up, and fouling frequently. Right then, we saw what he could do to boys like the Broncos. Maybe there are worse managers than me, gents!"

Calson stumbled over and pounded Little Branor's heaving back. "The ol' mosquito, huh? Didn't I always say so! Didn't I know all the time he'd make the grade?"

With that knowing smile, Dick Manharr merely nodded, wondering if the smart Mr. Calson really knew that he himself, after a year of seasoning with the farm outfit next season, would really be ready for big-league play.



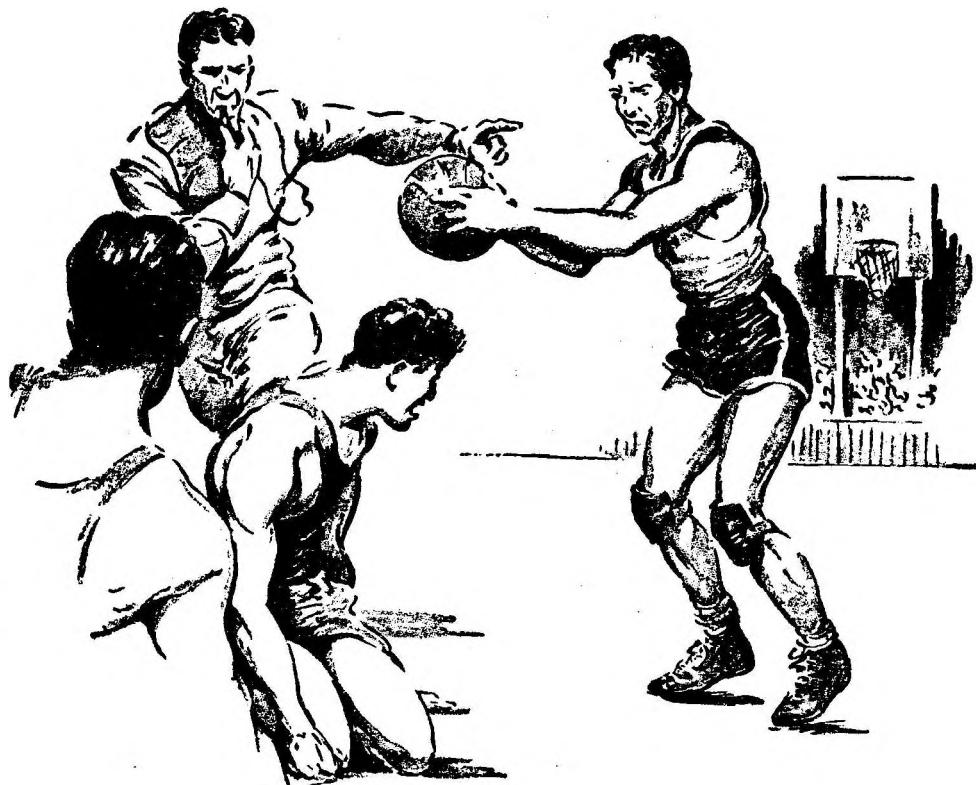
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Bill Leonard was placed on probation. But the game was at stake, so he decided to save it by risking some

Slippery Stuff

by ROYAL HALL

Author of: "Aunt Penny Scores A Fall," etc.

WHEN the message came, Bill Leonard was right in the act of dribbling through the B-team defense; and by the time Coach Tilson had finished reading the message, Bill had socked the ball through the net for a clean-cut basket. The Fairmount varsity, or A team, was drilling with

the scrubs, and as usual, Sophomore Leonard was here, there and everywhere.

Even after he'd read and digested that message, Coach Tilson did not immediately toot on his whistle. He let the scrubs throw in from the end of the court, and he watched Bill Leonard, the chunky but active young guard, go into the air and ruin a cross-court pass that

the scrubs were attempting. He watched Bill Leonard recover the ball, then rifle a short, hard pass to one of his teammates.

Tilson looked sorrowful. Tilson *was* sorrowful. Tilson believed he was about to lose something very precious to him. A Grade-A hoopster was always precious to Tilson. And Leonard was not only Grade-A, but Leonard was also a soph, with two more seasons to go.

In the normal course of events, there would have been two more seasons. But, as things stood now, Bill Leonard would be lucky to stay at the college for two more *days*.

Coach Tilson blew on his whistle. The scrimmaging ceased. He called to Bill Leonard.

"The dean sent this message. I'm rather surprised that he held off as long as he did. He asks that you pay him a visit some time in the next few minutes!"

"Well," Bill sighed, a hint of concern in his wide, blue eyes, "I reckon I've tempted fate too far this time. Maybe I wasn't cut out for a college career!"

"They broke the mold when they finished with *you*," the coach said bitterly. "You oughta be writin' up gags for the pie-throwin' comedies. But," he added silently, "when the factory turned you out, why'd they have to make you the sweetest basket-ball player I've handled in years?"

He said the last words under his breath. He had a legitimate grudge, he believed. All last year, when Bill had been star of the freshman quintet, the coach had gloated when Bill had reported for varsity work in his sophomore term. But now, Bill Leonard was leaving him. Tilson was sure of it.

It's tough, when Santa Claus hands you a star, and then, at the height of the season, the star goes plummeting out of your basket-ball firmament. Sure. When you lose him, it's worse than if you had never possessed him at all.

With an air of resignation, Bill Leonard came out of the scrimmage. He fancied he knew why the dean was after his scalp. To be sure, they hadn't pinned anything on him. But, to the folks who knew Bill Leonard, it probably wasn't essential. When anything happened like last night's scene at the dance, Bill Leonard was guilty.

He'd always been known as a practical joker, and certainly, most of the exploits charged in his name had a solid foundation. They weren't mere rumor.

FOR instance, the time that the "Liberty Bell" had been silenced. The Liberty Bell was a noisy contraption that hung in the tower of Wilkinson Hall, where the freshmen were quartered. At seven, each morning, it poured out its nerve-racking message to the sleepy-eyed freshmen, warning them that chapel was due to convene in another half hour.

Compulsory chapel was one of the rules for the down-trodden freshmen. The pea-greens disliked it. The hour, they said, was utterly heathenish and brutal. Most of them went under protest. And so, when the bell was dismantled one night in the dark of the moon, and when chapel was therefore quite empty the following morning, the class was prepared to accept as a hero the man who had silenced the Liberty Bell.

The dastardly deed was traced to the door of a younker named Leonard. The college at large was not in accord with his viewpoint; that is, the part of the college that sat in the seats of the mighty. The culprit was sentenced to campus probation for over a week.

Later, there was the siren affair. Old Prof Cummings was known to the studes as a born "time-chiseler." Frequently, by design or otherwise, the professor failed to "hear" the chimes in Roosevelt Quad, which signaled the end of each hour.

The prof had a habit of wangling a few minutes extra, provided he hadn't quite finished the text of his lecture. Then, with a show of amazement, he'd look at his watch and "discover"—heh, heh—that he'd forced his class to stay overtime.

The prof would apologize, point to his ears. "The chimes," he would simper. "It rather appears that I failed to hear them this morning."

One night, somebody went to his classroom and rigged up a siren. The thing was electric, and worked through a timing device that was carefully hidden. The siren—also hidden and screened by the prof's big desk—was wired to the clocking device. At exactly the end of the hour on the following morning, the siren went off with a screech that lifted the worthy instructor clean out of his chair.

It lifted a few of the students along with the prof. The thing was so shrill, so utterly savage, so utterly weird, that it shattered the calm of the room like a dynamite bomb.

It ended the lecture on time. It cured Prof. Cummings of padding his hours with minutes that didn't belong to him. But, when the crime was linked to the jokester, Leonard, the faculty got real uppity. Somehow, the faculty couldn't quite share in the feeling that Bill was a hero. At least, they pretended they couldn't. The dean gave Bill one month of probation, this time.

They thought, when Bill concluded his freshman year without getting sacked, that he'd taken his lessons to heart. They really believed they'd cured him; that Bill had embraced the straight and narrow, and would, in time, develop into a good, solid, run-of-the-mine citizen.

They thought, after watching him shun the temptations of practical jokes through the opening months of his sophomore year, that Bill was no longer a menace to Fairmount society; that, in

a word, he'd been thoroughly "broken." The college breathed easier.

But, at the upper-class "formal" last evening, they'd found they were wrong. They hadn't been able to *prove* that Bill Leonard was guilty, since no one had actually caught him. And yet, a dollar would get you five, with very few takers, that Leonard had been at the bottom of things. It had the marks of his craftsmanship.

The town was laughing. The papers were laughing, this morning. The freshman and sophomore classes were laughing. The two upper classes were *not*.

AFTER Bill Leonard sat down, Dean Gregory studied him. "Well," said the dean, "are you guilty? You know what I mean. That thing at the annual dance of the juniors and seniors."

The dean was prepared to get tough if Bill should deny it. But Bill came clean.

"Leonard," the dean persisted angrily, "do you know that you almost started a panic last night at that dance?"

"I guess it was thoughtless," Bill Leonard agreed. "You see, I was lookin' for laughs, not panics. That skunk I dropped through the window is harmless. He's trained. He used to appear in a vaudeville act, on the stage. I bought him downtown at a pet store."

Bill went on to explain that a skunk, if taken quite young and properly handled, grows into a very nice pet; in fact, a pet that is of no more menace to the peace and happiness of the community than an ordinary house cat.

True, the folks at the upper-class dance last night were wholly uninformed. None of them knew that the beautiful, striped animal that suddenly appeared in the middle of the floor was a docile, mannerly creature; so suave, so nicely brought up, that he wouldn't think of violating the social amenities.

No sir, the upper-classmen hadn't

known this, and neither had their gals. When the vivid little beast picked its way through the crowd, its plume curling proudly as it *clop-clop-clopped* across the floor, the startled upper-classmen and their girls made a dash for the exits.

Later, the dance was resumed, but the dancers were openly jittery. Over the hall there hung a certain reluctance, a spirit of tension, nervousness. The party went on, as scheduled, but somehow, things were different. Of course, had they but known it, those dancers were safe.

The dean had been presented with the facts—or suspicions—on the following morning. After duly checking up, he had sent for Bill Leonard.

The dean had waited until he had managed to assemble all the damning evidence. That was why he hadn't sent for Leonard till this afternoon. The dean had been prepared to fire young Bill if he should lie. But Bill had not.

As the truth unfolded from Bill's own lips, supplementing the facts already at hand, Dean Gregory fought like mad to keep an insistent twinkle out of his eyes. But, with a deanly jerk to his head, he finally cleared his throat and turned to the serious side of the matter.

"Leonard," he grunted, "I'm not going to punish you for this, beyond the usual campus probation. While not condoning your escapade, I rather admire your forthright attitude." Gregory's tone was deceptively silken. "But Leonard, I'm warning you. One more practical joke—*one more*—and out you go!"

The eyes of the dean were glittering, now. He meant what he said, and the student in front of him knew it.

"I do not care," the dean went on, "whether the 'one more' joke be large or small. The extent of the prank will cut no figure. If you so much as display a *tendency*, mind you; if you even show a *leaning* toward this sort of thing in the future, I will immediately act to have you expelled from the college!"

The dean wasn't fooling. This was a real ultimatum.

"Yes, sir," said Bill very meekly.

SO far as the basket-ball team was concerned, the next few weeks blew hot and cold. The boys won half of their games, and were probably lucky, at that. If Bill had been canned, they wouldn't have won even half.

But the mid-season games didn't matter, so much. The season's objective, the one that would make 'em or break 'em, was Fairmount's annual tangle with Bristol College.

The game, this year, had special significance. Fairmount and Bristol were breaking relations, effective next season. The break would affect all sports, both major and minor; but both of the schools had agreed to go through with the games that they still had scheduled between them.

Like every one else on the Fairmount quintet, Bill Leonard was eager to ring down the curtain by walloping Bristol. In no small measure, the rift could be traced to the Bristol basket-ball set-up.

Bristol was coached by a sly, shrewd gent named Felix McArdle, or "Mac," as they called him. Mac's hobby was winning, and ethics were something that bothered him not one particle. Foxy and subtle, he got a big kick out of beating the rules whenever he could.

McArdle was smart, in an underhand way, and it showed in his "players. One of his aptest pupils was "Slippery" Galt, a first-string forward. Slippery had a knack, to the *nth* degree, of getting away with murder, or so it was claimed.

Bill Leonard had watched Galt work in the varsity game last winter. Of course, since Bill was a frosh at the time, he hadn't been playing. He'd sat in the crowd and studied this Galt. He'd watched pretty close, and he hadn't seen anything wrong. But later, the varsity players had told him that Slippery had fouled them aplenty, without getting

caught by either official. What's more, the bird was so smooth that he'd managed to make the ref believe that he himself had been fouled in a number of cases.

That is an old, old gag—as old as the game itself. But a clever, convincing actor can still get away with it.

Galt, as a player, and Felix McArdle, as coach, were two of a kind. They had many tricks up their sleeve, of the shadier sort, and Fairmount was fully convinced of it.

Many folks thought that as long as a break was imminent, Fairmount should call off its scheduled encounter with Bristol. But Fairmount had taken a crushing defeat in the basket-ball fracas last winter, and Fairmount was keen for revenge. With Sophomore Leonard at guard, the college believed that it had a good chance to atone for that licking.

And so, in spite of the strained relations, no move had been made to cancel the contest.

They wouldn't be playing next winter. But *this year*—

THE day of the game, Bill Leonard's attention was caught by a Bristol item in one of the papers. Bristol news was practically local news, since the rival college lay only forty miles away. The story, therefore, was given a fairly prominent play by papers of neighboring towns.

The one Bill read was headed:

FIRE IN BRISTOL FRATERNITY HOUSE ROUTS OCCUPANTS

Kappa Gamma Phi Men Driven From
Beds By Early-morning Blaze

Shortly after midnight, a fire of unknown origin broke out in the basement of the Kappa Gamma Phi house, a Bristol campus fraternity. Sleepers were routed from their beds and driven out of doors.

The fire was soon brought under control. No one was hurt, the damage was slight, and the only serious loss reported was loss of sleep.

Among those fleeing the scene of the blaze was Raymond Galt, well-known Bristol basket-ball player.

"Raymond Galt," mused Bill. "That must be Slippery. Glad he wasn't hurt. We've got some business with that big punk to-night!"

The game was scheduled for Fairmount's gym, and later that day, when the Bristol gang had arrived, Bill heard some more about that blaze. The Fairmount center, Dick Crane, knew two or three fellows at Bristol. Dick had been talking to one of these friends, who had come for the game with the rival rooting contingent.

Dick was chuckling when Bill ran into him, down in the locker room. "Slippery got the scare of his life last night," the center chuckled. "A friend of mine at Bristol told me about it. I wish I'd been there!"

"Yeah? How come?"

"Oh, I'd like to have seen this Slippery runnin' out of the house in his pajamas. I bet he tried to make a hero out of himself when he found there wasn't any danger. He's that kind."

"Good he wasn't hurt," said Bill. "We want him in the line-up when we lick those guys."

"Naw, he wasn't hurt. Neither was any one else. But I bet you a buck he develops a limp or somethin' during the game, to catch the ref's sympathy. Then, if somebody happens to bump him a little too hard—*tweet*—the whistle—for overguardin' the 'cripple,' we get a personal foul plastered against us!"

"The only thing to do," said Bill, "is not to make any personal contact."

Dick Crane sniffed. "That's all right in theory. But contact's bound to occur if we're guardin' him close. We might as well hand 'em the game on a tray. Galt's a slicker, but also, he's one sweet basket-ball player! And don't you forget it!"

"I won't," Bill promised.

A few minutes later, the squad went out on the court, where Bristol was already limbering up. The gym was practically filled already.

As Bill approached the Fairmount side, he happened to glance at the ring-side chairs directly back of the players' bench. In the very first row, in the seats reserved for the faculty, Bill saw His Honor, Dean Gregory—boss of the college. Gregory nodded, and Bill self-consciously smiled in return.

But the player's attention was soon diverted from Gregory; and, as a matter of fact, from every one else in the crowd. Out on the floor, the visiting hoopsters were getting the feel of the court, while up at one end, a tall, lean guy in a Bristol jersey was tossing free throws. Bill watched him a while, and the fellow sank twelve in succession.

Bill Leonard knew who it was. The name of the shooter was "Ownie" O'Dea, and Ownie was famed for his skill at the foul line. In practice, he'd once spun twenty-nine straight through the netting, or so it was claimed. He bobbed so rarely that most people figured he did it with mirrors.

But Ownie O'Dea was not very good at anything else—and that was the fly in the soup, from a Bristol angle. Ownie could stand at the free-throw line till the cows came home, and drop in those tosses. But Ownie, aside from his specialty, wasn't much use to the visiting basket-ball forces.

He went to the bench right now, as the Fairmount team came out on the court, and Bill forgot him. Bill was saving his thoughts and his eyes for Slippery Galt, for Galt was his man. Or would be, as soon as the game was started.

AT 8 p. m., the court floor was cleared, and the two teams went to their places. Bill, at guard, shook hands with Galt, the star of the enemy forwards. But somehow, that

shake was merely perfunctory. Neither one meant it, and neither pretended to. Nor, for that matter, did any one else on the court that night. This was a grudge-fest.

Galt, a bushy-haired youth with muscular arms and the reach of an ape, went in for the opening tap and stole it from Bill. He passed cross-court, attempted to circle Bill Leonard, and found himself boxed by his chunkier, younger opponent. But one of the other Bristol men was loose in the slot, and a pass found him waiting. A dribble, a lay-up shot; the swish of the netting. Bristol had scored!

With Bill throwing in, the home team got under way from the end of the court. But Galt intercepted a pass and shot for the hoop so quickly that Bill couldn't cover him. Neither could any one else, and the shot, though made from an angle, had eyes for the basket. It pounded the backboard, dropped through the metal. Another for Bristol.

Fairmount rooters were silent, and Bill was grim. So grim that he sprinted away from Galt on a throw-in play and scored on a lay-up, almost unaided. One minute later, the big gymnasium rocked with cheers when Bill pulled a cross-over, shuttled to Crane, and then screened Crane as the latter went in for a basket.

The score was a tie, at 4—all.

If the opening plays were a hint of what was to come, this battle was going to be close. And Bill had a hunch that the closer the score, the more he would have to watch out for a fast one by Galt, or even some dirty work.

Bill had been told by his mates, who had played against Slippery in previous years, that the guy was a master at that sort of stuff. He did it so slyly, he had such finesse, that he rarely got called for it—even by keen-eyed officials.

Bill soon found that the hunch was right, for Slippery started his tricks in

the first five minutes of play. With the score still tied, Bill got hold of the ball in the Fairmount back court. Loose, he started a dribble. Galt was blocking his way, and Bill attempted to dribble on past him.

Now, in a case like this, where contact is likely, the greater responsibility rests on the dribbler. Bill knew that, and he aimed to avoid such contact. The only thing was, he shaved it a little too fine, and Galt, who was facing him, hunched out a shoulder—ever so slightly. As Bill breezed past, a sideswipe resulted, and Galt went down.

The visitor sank to his knees as the whistle *tweet-tweeted*. He sprang to his feet with a glare on his face, and the glare was directed at Bill.

"Nice acting," thought Bill, "but he's got me. He did it so slick, the ref believes that *I* was to blame!"

The ref believed just that. He awarded Galt a throw, and he charged Bill up with a personal foul. Bill was muttering under his breath, but he didn't protest. You aren't supposed to beef at officials in this man's game.

Slippery Galt stepped up to the free throw line. He studied his shot, then tried for the hoop. The throw went wide, and the point was missed.

Fairmount recovered and shuttled the ball downcourt, where Crane made a goal with the aid of a pass from Bill Leonard. But Slippery got loose in the next few seconds, and banged in a lay-up shot as Bill chased him futilely. So, once more, the score was a deadlock.

But that was the last time Slippery rang the bell in the opening half. From that point on, Bill dogged his man so closely that Galt was unable to do much, at least in a scoring capacity. Bill proceeded to make life wretched for Galt; but he stuck by the rule book. His guarding was clean, he was fast and alert, and his noodle was working in high.

IT came to the point where Galt forgot his tricks, for the moment at least, and decided to concentrate on basket ball. A wise decision; but still, he couldn't get loose, and all the points that Bristol made as the game went on were scored by his mates.

Finally, Galt pulled a cutie, just as the opening half was nearing conclusion. While neither official was looking, he gave Bill Leonard the elbow, right in the pit of the stomach.

Bill's face contorted with pain, and he took two steps toward his rival. His left fist knotted; he drew back his arm. Which was just what Galt wanted.

But right at the critical moment, Bill made himself grin, and he halted that swing. The grin came hard, and so did his self-control. He wanted to fight, to batter this mug to the floor. But he knew that a punch would earn him disqualification; would get him thrown out.

He choked back his anger. "Thanks for the little memento," he whispered to Galt. "That poke in the pantry. Nice goin'!"

"You must 'a' been drinkin'," sneered Galt. "Are you tryin' to claim——"

A play came swirling their way, and the verbal exchange was ended. Galt took a pass, got rid of the ball, and sprinted downcourt. With a feint and reverse, he managed to shake himself free and get loose for a set-up. Bill had been napping on that one.

"I'll take him!" yelled Crane, as somebody singled out Slippery and passed him the melon.

Crane made a lunge for the Bristol star as Slippery was shooting. A tangle of arms, the thump of two bodies. The shot went wild. Galt had been bumped in the act of attempting a goal.

The blast of the whistle. Bill shook his head. He'd witnessed the play, and he knew that his teammate had really committed a foul while Slippery was trying for goal. No argument, there.

Galt was entitled to two free throws, since the shot had been missed.

The score, at this point, was Fairmount 12, Bristol 10. Less than a minute remained in the half. Galt could tie up the score by sinking both of those two free throws.

The teams lined up. Galt took aim; took plenty of time. He missed on the first one. Drying his hands on his jersey, he tried it again. But the second one also failed to connect, and the ball was in play.

Galt had missed both of them. And, in addition, he'd missed on the one that the ref had awarded some minutes ago, near the start of the game. His foul-shooting record, to-night, showed nothing but goose eggs.

Neither team scored for the rest of the half, and the count was 12 to 10 when the gun went off a few seconds later.

THE second half of that game made basket-ball history. Fairmount was still in the lead, of course, when play was resumed. The margin was only one goal, and it looked pretty thin. Bill Leonard, along with the rest, expected a pretty big score when the fireworks commenced in the half coming up. A one-goal lead, he figured, was next to nothing.

But Bill was due for a big surprise, and so was the crowd. Every so often, you hear of those freak defensive games where the scoring is incredibly low; where very few shots are made at the hoop, and where few of the shots attempted succeed in their mission; where guarding is close, where every man covers his rival on practically every advance; where even those low, sharp passes can find no openings. Just such struggles as this one became, as the battle wore on.

Excitement rose to a boil as eight full minutes went past, and still no score. The guarding was fierce and effective;

but clean, for the most part. Galt was awarded one throw when Bill ran into him; but, like the other free trials, Slippery looked bad on it, missed by plenty. His shooting from the free-throw line was sour, and he couldn't get in for a try at a field goal.

Finally, after the scoring drought had extended into the ninth minute of play, a Bristol man got loose on the old sleeper gag and dropped one into the netting.

That evened the count, at 12-12, and the deadlock held for another four minutes. Then Bill scored from the field, and Crane came through pretty soon with a good free throw. The way things were going, right now, a three-point lead was colossal, no less. It looked very safe.

And it was—until the last few minutes. But Bristol, desperate, shot for the moon and sank two goals in the waning moments of play, and now the Bristol side of the gym was roaring triumphantly. Up on the big, blackboard, the figures said Bristol 16, Fairmount 15.

Not for long, however. Galt got caught for a change, in the act of roughing Bill up, and Bill cashed in from the free throw line. Awarded one toss, he netted it cleanly. Only a minute remained when the throw was awarded, and Bill's good eye was a life saver. 16-16.

Bristol threw in, and carefully worked the ball across the center stripe. A goal, or even a single point, might clinch things now for either team. A shot at the hoop went wide, and Fairmount recovered.

The big red hand of the clock was ticking away that final minute. The sphere changed hands once more when Crane, of Fairmount, fumbled a pass with the gate wide open. Fairmount groaned.

Bill saw Slippery Galt get hold of that ball in the Bristol back court. In-

stantly, Slippery was off on a dribble, with Bill coming in from the side. Only five seconds were left, and if Bill could force held ball, or drive his man out of bounds, the game would probably go into overtime. Slippery had to be stopped before he could shoot, for he might be able to luck one in, and that would be fatal.

So Bill went after him; and, in his ardor, he failed to step on the brakes in time. Just as he paralleled Galt, his forward momentum carried him into the Bristol player. A crash and a thud as body met body. Bill had come in pretty hard, and was guilty of charging.

Slippery had plunged to the floor. What's more, he didn't get up. He looked to be cold as a mackerel.

BOTH the officials had sounded their whistles as Galt went down. Bill felt his heart go plummeting into his shoe tops. He knew he had fouled; no question about it. Of course, he hadn't intended to; Bill had been coming so fast that he couldn't quite stop. But a foul is a foul, regardless of intent, and fouls mean a penalty.

Slippery hadn't been shooting for goal, and would probably only get one free throw. Yet, *one* might well be enough, at this stage of the game.

Galt had been missing those tries from the free throw line. He hadn't made good on a single attempt. If he'd only blow *this* one!

Then, once more, Bill's heart went down with a bang. Slippery was still on the floor, apparently badly injured. And, on the Bristol side of the court, a tall, lean figure was hustling out of his jumper; the figure of Ownie O'Dea, the free-throw expert!

Now, the rules require that whenever a team is awarded a throw on a personal foul, the man who is fouled must try for the point himself. But they also clearly state that "if the player designated is so injured that he must

leave the game, his substitute must attempt the free throw or throws."

Plainly, that clause would apply right here. If Galt was so dazed that he couldn't attempt the throw, his substitute would have to. And, beyond any question, that sub was going to be Ownie O'Dea. He'd take Galt's place and try for the point, and probably make it. With only a couple of seconds to go, that point would provide the pay-off!

Galt, on the floor, appeared to be out like a light. But the desperate Bill was willing to take any chance. He drew a long breath, then glanced at the Fairmount side of the gym. In the very first row, he noted Dean Gregory eying him, and, for a moment, he wavered.

The dean had given him warning. "No more practical jokes." And the dean would probably figure that *this* was a practical joke. If the thing didn't work, if the scheme blew up in the sophomore's face, it would probably end in his being expelled from the college.

But Bill took a chance. He felt that he had to. Filling his lungs, he let out a bellow—a bellow that shook the gymnasium.

"*Fire!*" he thundered. "Get out of here, fellows! Run for the locker room! *Fire!*"

And then, on the floor, where Slippery was lying, a strange thing happened. At Bill's first cry, Slippery had bounced to his knees, staring about him wildly. Now he was up on his feet with the speed of a startled animal. Slippery looked around, and his eyes were bulging.

"F-fire?" he gasped. "W-where?"

The crowd was suddenly laughing. Sure, they were laughing. Why not? Galt had just shown them the quickest recovery on record.

"I thought so!" Bill muttered, a grim little smile on his lips. "But how could I ever 'a' proved it?"

Slippery saw that the jig was up, and he glared at Bill. Across on the bench,

McArdle, his coach, was also glaring. Ownie O'Dea returned to his seat.

OF COURSE, they couldn't have known, in advance, that a thing like this would occur in the last few seconds of play. But without any doubt, they *had* been prepared to take full *advantage* of such an occurrence, if things worked around to it.

Seeing that Galt was missing his tries from the free-throw line, they'd probably huddled at half time; probably figured to gamble this stunt if the score was a tie in the last few moments. Should Galt be fouled near the end of the game, he would merely play possum and fake being hurt. O'Dea would come in, and shatter the deadlock with one of his tosses.

Sure, there were "ifs", but the "ifs" had worked out, as frequently happens. The only thing was, they hadn't foreseen that a guy named Leonard might throw that stunt for a loss.

Naturally, Galt still had that free toss coming. But Slippery had to make the attempt *himself*, since even a dummy could see, by now, that he wasn't the least bit injured.

The ref had been dumb, in this game. He suddenly came to his senses and made the decision he should have made

in the first place. Besides giving Bristol its throw, he also gave *Fairmount* a throw on a *technical* foul. He based this verdict on Rule 15, Sec 3, which forbids "unsportsmanlike tactics." Certainly Galt's little ruse could be classed as unsportsmanlike tactics, even though it was foiled!

Slippery stepped to the line and missed his try, as he had all evening. Bill took the throw for the home team; and, as he walked to the mark, Bill Leonard was grinning. He'd just shot a glance at the dean, and the dean was suppressing a chuckle. Which seemed to make the world all right for one Bill Leonard.

He studied the hoop, took plenty of time. The melon came up in a beautiful arc, then dropped through the netting. *Fairmount* was leading, 17—16. And there was your ball game!

Even a miracle team, or a slippery team like Bristol, couldn't have tallied again in the time remaining. And speaking of miracles, even a miracle couldn't have interested Bill in a practical joke, any more. He didn't know why, but he kinda believed that the dean had something to do with his feeling.

Yeah, that dean was a pretty good guy, Bill reasoned. A pretty good guy!

90 PROOF

MINT SPRINGS

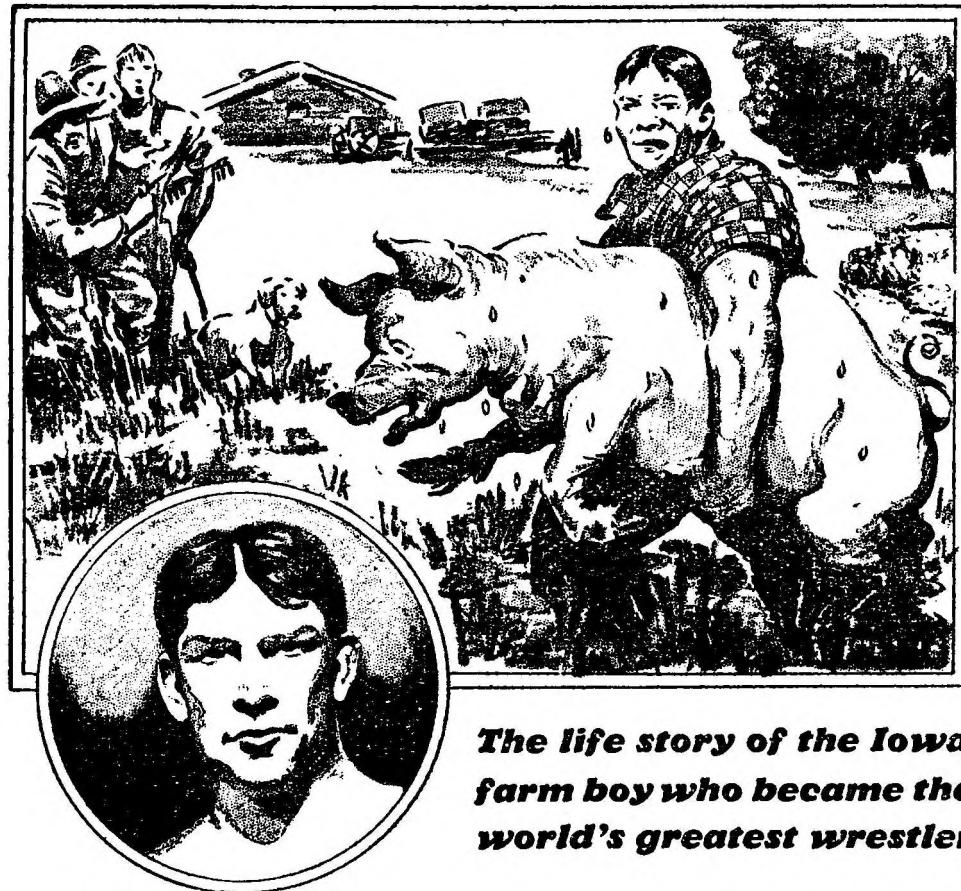
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***The life story of the Iowa
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world's greatest wrestler***

The Great Gotch

PART I

by ARTHUR MANN

Author of: "Loser Wins," etc.

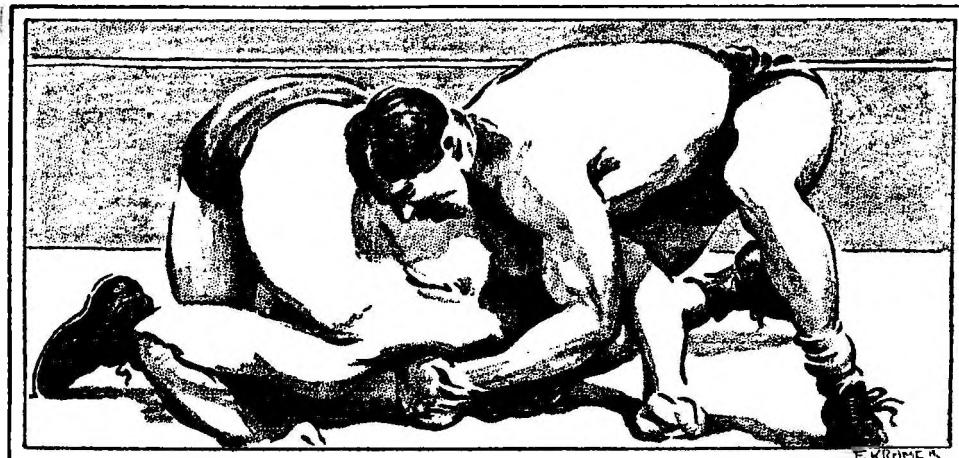
FORTY-ODD years ago, the people of the nation fretted about the same things which bother us to-day. Those who weren't concerned with the value of silver, worried about the price of hogs.

On a small Iowa farm, tucked in a bend of the Des Moines River, three miles south of Humboldt, the Gotch family paid little or no attention to

William Jennings Bryan's plea for free silver.

They were deep in the task of getting the year's crop of hogs slaughtered, dressed, and to market for coin of the realm. They didn't care whether the money came in the form of gold, silver, or even some paper currency from a left-over wildcat bank.

Like the eternal farmer, the Gotch



family had little other than the land, buildings and stock which comprised the farm. The sale of plentiful crops, if and when, and extra hogs, brought in the money for clothes and other necessities which the farm land couldn't produce.

In two husky sons, Father Gotch had a couple of able assistants. One was Fred and the other was Frank, almost twenty, and as powerful as a Kansas twister.

A shade under six feet, scaling a little over 200 pounds and bulging between every wrinkle of his overalls, Frank Albert Gotch not only could handle the toughest assignment that farm work could offer, but did.

The tough assignment of the moment was Bessie, a well-rounded Essex sow, and the prize of a good hog crop. As she waddled out of her pigsty to her doom, everybody looking on began to speculate as to which side of 500 pounds Bessie was on.

Frank was guiding Bessie along the fenced-in path to the pit, and doing a little speculation of his own. Suddenly, the sow spied a small opening in the boards. She shoved her snoot through the path of daylight, and her massive weight did the rest. The boards spread open, and Bessie rushed clumsily across a field.

A shout of warning went up from the slaughter pit.

"She's headin' for the stream!"

Frank was hemmed in by the fence. It would collapse under his weight if he climbed. But he forgot the hazard of jagged edges when he looked over and saw Bessie streaking in the direction of the water. His own weight went against the fence and he fell among the splintered boards.

Through his mind flashed only one thought—the loss of the fifteen dollars or more Bessie would fetch at the Humboldt market. Bessie had been brought along through the summer with all the care of a prize blue blood. Now she was heading for destruction.

If she tumbled down the bank and into the stream that flowed out to the Des Moines River, she would swim, yes; but her sharp cloven hoofs would soon slash her heavy jowls. She would destroy herself as swimming pigs always do. And what chance has anybody of fishing a 500-pound sow from deep water?

That was why Frank Gotch half stumbled across the field with all the speed he could muster into his strides. The plea for haste that came from the slaughter pit acted like spurs in his side. Even though slow and cumbersome,

Bessie had a big start for such a short journey.

With less than twenty feet between the runaway sow and the stream, the men, who had climbed out of the pit, yelled:

"Grab a hind quarter, Frank!"

FRANK could have dived easily and made the grab as directed, or even around her massive body; but the momentum of their combined weight probably would have hurled them into the stream.

Frank's brain developed a different plan. With a flying leap, he cleared the sow, and landed in her path. Bessie let out an ear-splitting squeal and bumped her barrier to the ground.

As the farmer boy grabbed at the sow's ear, the animal was frightened into a rage. The squeal became a snarl, and Frank saw the threatening, fang-like teeth.

Every farm boy knows the danger of blood poisoning that lies in the bite of a pig. But, to Frank Gotch, the fifteen dollars was worth a greater risk than mere blood poisoning. He dived past the threatening teeth, and threw his arms around Bessie's middle.

The sow thrashed, snarled, and tried to bite. She filled the eastern part of Iowa with her squeals. But Frank Gotch held on to the fifteen dollars' worth of pork, floundering in the swampy footing, as Bessie wriggled to free herself.

"Hold her just a second longer!"

The father, Fred and the spectators had rushed over with a rope. While Frank clutched the massive porker, they tied each thrashing leg and then trussed her in such a way that she could no longer move on her own power.

Frank relaxed his hold, heaved a great sigh and got up to face a barrage of congratulations and thanks and slaps on his broad back. His overalls were torn and covered with mud.

Had he leaped a second later, or had the hold been broken once, fifteen dollars' worth of pork would have been carried to destruction in the river!

"That was a close call, son," his father said, slapping Frank's back. "Guess you've done your work for the day. Fred and I will finish this last one. Go ahead in the house and clean up for supper."

It was a welcome order to Frank. He helped get Bessie back to her correct destination, and then he returned to the house. The big news came at supper time, but it wasn't Bessie's weight, which turned out to be 519 pounds.

"I knew you were strong, son," the elder Gotch said, "but not as powerful as what we just learned."

"Why, what happened?" Frank asked, puzzled.

"In rasslin' with Bessie," the father chuckled, "you squeezed her so hard you busted two of her ribs!"

THE news of Frank Gotch's strength traveled like a circle of ripples from the center of a mill pond. Anybody who could crush a 500-pound sow possessed far more than average power. People not only talked about him; they wanted to see the muscles that did it. The seed of wrestling was sown.

Frank had always liked rough-and-tumble sports, or any kind of contest that called for power. But his boyhood provided precious little time for games, other than that of making a farm pay.

The little school in Humboldt was three miles from the Gotch farm. And so the Gotch boys had to journey three miles for their education in the morning, and the same distance back at night for supper.

The six-mile daily stroll had much to do with the development of Frank's tireless legs, the best that the sport of wrestling ever saw. He could outlast

an opponent by the strength of his underpinning.

During the summer vacation, the time for games was reduced to almost nothing at all from the day Frank was able to lift a hoe or harness a horse. Any wrestling had to be done with brother Fred.

When he reached manhood, Frank saw more clearly the limitations of a small farm. It gave you health and an appetite, but barely enough to satisfy that appetite. Now, a large farm—

Only one thing lay between Frank Gotch and a large farm, and that was money. Lack of money would chain him to the few acres of ground which had been the grave of his father's high hopes, and which had been very meager with its bounty ever since Frank could remember.

He had thought about wrestling and talked about it ever since the hog incident. He had gone to near-by towns just to discuss such names as Joe Acton, Billy Muldoon, Edwin Bibby, Clarence Whistler, "Strangler" Evan Lewis, Jack Carkeek, "Farmer" Burns, Dan McLeod, and the then champion, Tom Jenkins.

Of course, they were just names, because newspaper photography and reproduction of photos by half-tone plate was in its infancy and very expensive. Frank could study the records of the wrestlers in the papers, but he knew what very few looked like.

Gotch was twenty-three when he finally made up his mind to do something definite about getting more of the rich land around Humboldt. He had only two weapons—ambition and a tireless body. Wrestling, everybody said, would be easy for him. The strength that could damage a 500-pound sow, would wreck twice as much havoc upon a man who weighed half that, and very few wrestlers scaled 250.

Gotch had his secret doubts. Nothing could be as simple as that. He

knew a lot of holds, but he knew also that he was green. And so he waited until a small-time wrestler—one whom he'd never heard of before—came to a near-by town, Fort Dodge, for an exhibition match.

It was much better than Frank expected. The small-timer was a "shrimp" of less than 170 pounds. He wore a mustache and talked Scotch. Nobody had ever heard of him.

Why, Frank was inches taller and weighed all of thirty-five pounds more. This difference in weight would more than offset the difference in skill. Brother Fred, who had come down from Humboldt, agreed that it probably would. Strangers said the same thing. Frank decided to grab the exhibition chance at ten dollars for fifteen minutes.

AND so, Frank Gotch began his wrestling career just as they write it in the fiction stories. The raw Iowa farmer boy went into the ring with the bad bruiser from the city.

You have probably laughed at those fictionized farmer wrestlers; but don't laugh at this one, because it actually happened in a small Iowa city during the summer of 1899 when Frank Gotch had just passed his twenty-third birthday.

Gotch went to work in a hurry on this little guy, but he went to the floor in a hurry from an arm lock. This was a little surprising to the farmer boy. However, he yanked the arm free after they landed upon the poorly-padded ring floor, and then Gotch got up by sheer strength.

The small guy was quick as a rabbit. He was shifty and deceptive. Gotch had trouble getting hold of him, and more trouble trying to avoid his swift hands. Sometimes, the referee was in the way.

As the seconds flew by, and the exhibition crowd yelled for the yokel boy

to make good, Gotch tried to gather a few fragments of his homemade wrestling technique. Nothing came to his rescue.

The difference in weight, though, was a help. Frank couldn't be spilled easily. And his powerful legs carried him swiftly from one spot to another.

One thing went deep into Gotch's brain. If this fellow was an unknown, the stars must be unbeatable, even to one another. You could scarcely lay a hand on this little guy.

After five minutes of playing tag, the little guy realized that something had to be done in a hurry. He quickened his actions. He tried to feint Gotch into a defensive move, but the farmer boy didn't recognize the feint. He simply countered, grabbed the little guy around the waist with his left arm, and took a crotch hold with the right. He lifted the mustached grappler into the air.

The place rocked with expectant roars. Gotch slammed the other man's body to the floor of the ring. He tried to fall upon the victim; but the victim wasn't there. He had got away, but he wasn't as peppy after that collision with the ring floor. Frank Gotch never forgot that first body slam from a crotch hold.

Within another five minutes, the farmer boy had exhausted his meager supply of wrestling tricks. He simply couldn't hold on to this little guy long enough to do any damage.

But he could make life miserable for the man who promised to throw anybody within fifteen minutes or forfeit ten dollars. Gotch remained on the defensive for another five minutes. Then, with the cash safely earned, he began to rough it up with the little guy.

They put on a great show, and for a time, it looked as though the 200-pounder would wear out the lighter man. At the half-hour mark, the mustached grappler appeared all in. They

yelled for the Humboldt kid to finish it.

Instead, the Humboldt farmer was finished—pinned by a sudden double-arm lock and leg hold. The referee lost no time in declaring the match over.

The little guy got up. He smiled wearily and shook Gotch's hand. The once-bristling mustache was drooping.

"You're a gude, strong buy," the victor said. "If y'keep up your practice, ye'll be somebody. My *real* name is Dan McLeod!"

Gotch's scowling brown eyes widened. He pushed back the strands of dark hair, so as to see this little guy disappearing through the ropes.

Only recently, Dan McLeod had lost the title to Tom Jenkins!

THROUGH the journey back to Humboldt, two thoughts kept churning in Frank Gotch's brain. One was that he had earned ten dollars in a half hour. The other was that he had held his own with a recent heavyweight champion for the same period.

By the time they reached the Gotch farm, Frank had made up his mind completely. There wasn't a shred of doubt about the future now.

With experience, he could beat anybody in the world. His speed, his weight, and the fact that he wanted to be somebody would offset any possible advantage that an opponent could bring into the ring.

Starting with the same two weapons—ambition and a tireless body—Gotch went gunning, but not for the small fry. He wanted to get at the top-notchers in a hurry. To do so well against Dan McLeod was proof that he could throw all the second-raters. Besides, the purses for meeting the big boys would be greater.

Gotch didn't have to search long, partly because they came after him. McLeod had passed on high praise about the Iowa kid who had both power

and courage, the basic necessities of a great wrestler.

Into Gotch's life came another former champion, Farmer Burns, also a mid-Westerner. He, too, wore a mustache; but he weighed 200 pounds and knew how to use the weight.

Knowing that he had everything to gain and nothing to lose, Gotch cut loose with all the power in his massive make-up. He carried the fight to Burns, took punishment, grinned and handed it back.

Burns saw a rare combination of speed, raw power and indomitable courage. Moreover, the former champion couldn't pin the farm boy's broad shoulders in fifteen minutes—nor even a half hour. The roughhouse struggle continued past the three-quarter-hour mark before Burns finally clamped on a hold that would keep Gotch on the canvas long enough for a fall.

Instead of offering unstinted praise, Farmer Burns offered Gotch a job as partner. Gotch accepted and opened his wrestling career in earnest. Master and pupil started for the East.

For two years, Farmer Burns taught, and Frank Gotch learned every trick there was to the wrestling trade. And, unlike many similar partnerships, Gotch later was as proud of learning from Burns as the Farmer was of having taught the Iowa boy.

Bear in mind that mid-Western cities were much smaller at the turn of the century than they are to-day. Opportunities for matches were fewer, and purses correspondingly less.

During the year 1900, Burns sent Gotch against six opponents, and the Iowa boy won every match. The following year, Gotch wrestled five times without coming anywhere near a defeat.

Moreover, he developed the celebrated toe hold and, by wrestling in the bigger cities, he was able to gain a wealth of publicity for this pain-producing weapon.

But, when it came to throwing opponents, the Iowa kid resorted to the hold which had taken the starch out of Dan McLeod—the crotch hold, supplemented by a secondary grip for balance as well as finality.

From the crotch and body hold came the slam, which has been the most effective and dangerous weapon in wrestling—far more dangerous than the strangle hold, toe hold, headlock or hammerlock. For each of the above-mentioned punishers, there is a defense. But there is no defense, once a body slam is started.

WHEN Gotch completed the year 1902 without a defeat, he showed the first signs of impatience. He had done everything Burns advised him, adding his own ideas and knowledge to the instructions. He was almost twenty-six years old, unmarked and stronger than ever.

One of the important factors in his rapid rise was the fact that he had gained full growth and maturity before tackling the tough sport of professional wrestling. His weight at twenty-six was a few pounds shy of an even 210. And he was a scant half inch under six feet in height.

It seemed to Gotch that he had a good chance of beating Tom Jenkins, the American champion, a former rolling-mill worker of Cleveland, Ohio.

Jenkins had held the title for several years, and had failed to defeat George Hackenschmidt, the "Russian Lion," and European titleholder, in a match at London, England.

Gold-rush towns of the Klondike and the Yukon were clamoring for a sight of the new American strong boy, just as they had clamored for a sight of the sensational Jim Jeffries, heavyweight boxing champion. Dawson City, Juneau, Skagway, and even inland Fairbanks sent down requests and assurance of plenty of newly-mined gold.

Gotch figured that, as a champion, he would be a bigger figure in Alaska and the Yukon. It would be better than being just a plain Iowa farm boy. And so he signed for a match with Tom Jenkins in the latter's back yard, Cleveland. The former rolling-mill worker was popular and the match sold out within a few days after it was announced.

Jenkins was one of the heaviest grapplers that Gotch had met thus far. The champion came into the ring carrying all of 225 pounds and a handle-bar mustache. Gotch carried, in addition to his two original weapons, a wealth of skill and experience.

The crowd, of course, was partisan, and began to howl for a quick finish as soon as Jenkins tried to bring Gotch to the floor with an arm lock. But Gotch didn't go down; he roughed the champion around and moved so fast that Jenkins was forced on the defensive.

Part of his defense was a throw-back to the old school whose students took a closed fist against the nose or eye without a whimper and came back with a couple of elbows in the groin. Within a few minutes the Cleveland fans saw one of the fastest wrestling bouts on record.

But both refused to go to the floor. After a half hour of stand-up struggling, Jenkins knew for sure that this highly-praised kid from the Iowa farm lands had learned plenty in a short time.

After that discovery, it became a fight to keep from going to the mat. Neither wanted to go down without the definite advantage of a hold.

AT the hour mark, the two grapplers were still pushing each other back and forth across the ring, yanking necks, arms and missing desperate tries for surprise holds.

Gotch risked sure defeat every few

minutes by plunging for a crotch hold that would enable him to slam Jenkins to the floor. Well-padded or not, the floor would jar. Frank's matchless legs carried him away by inches from Jenkins's quick counters, and staved off a throw to the canvas.

After an hour and a half, the speed of the bout had lessened only slightly. Each massive body, drenched with sweat, slippery but still defiant, had withstood the other's desperate attempts to get to the floor with a punishing hold. Gotch refused to give up his struggle for the crotch hold, risking flying mares, chanceries, and arm drags every time he tried.

As they approached the two-hour mark, and with the crowd hoarse from demanding a fall, Gotch put on a lightninglike fight for a slam. He rushed Jenkins to all corners of the ring, doing everything, except beating the champion to the canvas.

He made one lunge too many, and Jenkins clamped on a reverse chancery—or headlock as it is now called—and dragged the ambitious farm boy to the mat. It was a hold that couldn't be broken easily. But Gotch could break it; he could break any hold.

But he couldn't break two holds. For Jenkins had reached around and snapped on a grapevine. This prevented Gotch from using his legs for balance or leverage.

From that point, Jenkins worked fast. Still clutching with the grapevine, he converted the reverse chancery into a half nelson, brought Gotch over on his back, rearranged the leg hold, and then put on the pressure.

The fall came after two full hours of struggle, and it was Frank Gotch's first defeat since Farmer Burns had tossed him in the exhibition bout at Fort Dodge four years earlier!

Lacking the title which he had hoped to carry to the Yukon and the Klondike, Gotch went to the Pacific coast and on

up to the North Country from the State of Washington.

He waded into the toughest of all countries at the time, for the lure of gold brought all manner of characters, good and bad, to the Klondike. Rough-and-tumble fighters called themselves wrestlers, and straightway Frank Gotch was besieged with challenges.

The battles at Juneau, Skagway and even inland at Fairbanks were billed as wrestling bouts, but they soon became modified versions of lumber-camp brawls, with little or nothing barred except the exits.

IT was the toughest way to get money. But Gotch had no fear of any man who used his own weapons —two hands and one head. He was paid in yellow gold, and there was plenty of it, because values had been rocketed by the abundance of the metal.

He defeated roustabouts, eye-gougers, knee-workers, and plain strong men, while the miners looked on with amazement. They saw their toughest bullies beaten to the punch or elbow, and then subdued with complicated locks, scissors, flying mares and other wrestling holds, which they didn't know existed.

They rallied to the banner of Frank Gotch, for here was a man who was not only tough, but cold, sober, and scientific. It was a glimpse of the old civilization which they had long since forgotten in their brawny battle with the placer gold of the Klondike.

It was at Dawson that the climax of the amazing tour developed. The miners produced one of the strongest men that the Northwest had ever seen. His name was Olsen and he looked it. He was not only a good rough-and-tumble fighter, but he had been down to Juneau to see Gotch in an earlier bout.

This blond, blue-eyed king of the Yukon bruisers was more than just a strong man. He was a hero, and, as

such, he drew the backing of every miner in the place. Gotch took a portion of his earnings and backed himself. The purse was put up beforehand in gleaming gold.

The American farm boy met the Viking strong man before every miner within miles who could get to the fight on time. And they met in a big, shed-like structure which threatened to burst from the capacity crowd.

Gotch knew what to expect when miners back a man to the extent of a side bet of \$10,000. Olsen was bigger, probably stronger in his fashion; but Frank Gotch knew how to apply strength.

He watched the Swede nod away the referee's instructions, put out a calloused hand the size of a snowshoe, and then come in with both arms flying. Gotch ducked and took the force of Olsen's 240 pounds against a hunched right shoulder.

As the Swede bounced back a step, Gotch followed in, grabbed the crotch and body hold. The Swede beat him about the head and kicked with his long hairy legs. But Gotch succeeded in getting his man high into the air.

While his head was still buzzing from that walloping, Gotch let the huge Swede fall to the floor of the ring. A thunderous roar of protest drowned out the creaking of the poorly-constructed platform.

Olsen got up. His blue eyes narrowed. Gotch started in again, and stepped back as a powerful right swished past his jaw. He grabbed the powerful right, pivoted, and yanked Olsen over his head with a flying mare.

It was a tough, but even struggle after that. Those two journeys to the floor took much of the ferocity out of the Yukon bruiser. At the end of fifteen minutes, Gotch tumbled him to the canvas, clamped on a half nelson and crotch hold and won the bout.

He pocketed the miners' money and left the Klondike richer by \$20,000!

FRANK GOTCH not only learned quickly, but he remembered what he learned. One of the many things which he never forgot was his boyhood, and his precarious life as the son of a small farmer. He was always reminded of that insecurity, almost privation.

He not only cherished a respect for money, but he made good his boast to buy up farm land in Iowa. He began with a substantial part of the small fortune obtained in Alaska.

Upon reaching the States, he wired money home with instructions to his family about buying. Then he set out to fulfill another ambition.

The Alaska trip had toughened his body, toughened his soul. He had watched men of the Klondike try to do everything but end his life in the wrestling ring. Sportsmanship meant little up in the rough mining country. They liked to see men whimper. It was a good time to go after that American championship.

Tom Jenkins was out on the Pacific coast. Gotch challenged for a chance at the title, and Jenkins accepted. They met in Bellingham, Washington, just below the Canadian border, on January 27, 1904. The battle called for two out of three falls.

It was something of a lumber camp setting, because the ring was pitched in a drafty shed, little better than the Dawson arena. The spectators packed the place, of course, but it didn't hold more than a few thousand. They were tough, those spectators, and they liked their combats the same way.

They got what they wanted as soon as the starting bell sounded. The grapplers' hands had barely touched when the roughest wrestling match of modern times began. From the start, it was hair-raising for the spectators and lump-raising for the bruisers inside the ropes.

Jenkins remembered only too well the

battle in Cleveland a few months before. He had no desire to stand up for two hours against those tireless legs and the equally tireless body.

The champion took the aggressive and carried the punishment to Gotch. They rolled to the floor and bounded up again like rubber dolls. They smashed against the ropes and off, swinging arms, fists and butting heads at each other.

The crowd loved it, and demanded even more. Jenkins had hoped to beat Gotch down before the farm boy could gain any punishing holds; but the champion failed.

Gotch clamped on his crotch hold early in the bruising and slammed the 225-pound Jenkins to the mat. This happened not once, but several times. The champion retaliated with a succession of punishing chanceries, but Gotch shook loose like a massive bull. He could smash those single holds as long as an opponent had the power to clamp them on.

But Gotch slammed the titleholder enough times to keep him there, and scored the first fall as the crowd roared approval.

AFTER a short rest, they returned, and the bruising began anew. The referee had permitted just about anything, so long as both parties offended. In other words, he refused to halt the rough stuff when it wasn't one-sided.

But Jenkins wasn't satisfied with plain bruising, although he might have been satisfied, had Gotch been something of a sissy. As it was, Gotch shook off the punishment and retaliated with his own, and a few tricks brought down from the Klondike.

That was when Jenkins resorted to strangle holds.

Now, a strangle hold is nothing but a reverse chancery, adjusted so that

the wrist presses against the opponent's windpipe. Smothering a wrestler was illegal always, and the strangle hold was never welcome.

Jenkins, a skilled opponent of the chancery, front and reverse, sought to gain an advantage by converting the reverse grip into a strangle hold. He did it not only once, but several times.

Gotch retaliated with more roughness, but Jenkins slipped on a few more stranglers, and Gotch didn't have so much fight in him. He claimed foul for the first time in his life. The referee ordered the champion to stop using the strangle hold.

But Jenkins continued to convert each chancery into a strangle hold. Finally the referee stepped in, and awarded the second fall to Frank Gotch. With that fall went the American title!

Here was progress of a sensational kind. Frank Gotch had journeyed from obscurity to fame, championship and riches in less than five years. Ambition and courage, and those powerful muscles, formed a combination that couldn't be denied in any kind of battle.

Before leaving the Pacific coast, Gotch officially challenged Jim Jeffries,

the heavyweight boxing champion, to a match. Jeff had something of a reputation as a rough-and-tumble fighter; but Gotch agreed to fight straight, and left the challenge to be considered.

It wasn't accepted, and the farmer boy continued on toward the East. He stopped at his home, and his eyes glowed at the sight of newly-purchased Iowa farm land.

The dream had come true, but only part of it. He drew a great line across the country map, showing his dad, and mother Amelia, brother Fred, and his sister, who was now Mrs. Charles Kurth, where the property boundary of their land would be eventually.

STILL smarting under the defeat, Jenkins challenged for a return match for the title. Gotch not only accepted, but agreed to meet the old rolling-mill man in his Cleveland back yard again.

Buttressed by confidence, and the knowledge that Jenkins had deliberately resorted to palpable fouls, Gotch couldn't even see any risk in putting up his newly-won laurels. Besides, the gate was big, and he loved big gates.

CLEAN THROUGH THE NET!



HANK LUISETTI

Stanford's Shooting Star

by STANLEY FRANK

An intimate view of the game's stand-out player in action in the 2nd March issue of Sport Story Magazine, published February 18th.

His expectations were realized. Jenkins was a poor match. Gotch carried the fight to the veteran once more and chased him around the ring. He knew enough about Tom's style now to recognize an approaching chancery, or arm lock. In fact, he had a perfect reading on everything that Jenkins planned to do.

It was an easy fall, and Gotch gained wide publicity by his quick and successful defense of the crown. The big cities clamored for his services. He took on all comers in handicap bouts, agreeing to throw them so many times in an hour, or once within a specified time. This was done to make the bout a fighting match.

He remained undefeated in 1904, working Eastward where the bigger purses called. He saved systematically, and bought more of that Iowa farm land. His record for 1904 shows nine victories and no defeats.

New York wanted to see this new champion and challenger of the invincible Jim Jeffries. The great George Hackenschmidt was on his way over from Australia with the world's championship. Promoters were planning a match with Gotch, a big-time affair.

The celebrated mat "battle of the century," between Frank Gotch and the "Russian Lion," George Hackenschmidt, will be described in the second part of this article, published in the 2nd March issue of Sport Story.

The farm boy took New York by storm as the year 1905 began. Every wrestler, good and mediocre, challenged, hoping to get a slice of the gate that Gotch was certain to pull.

Out of the West came old Tom Jenkins, asking for another chance. Gotch accepted cheerfully, in spite of protests.

"They beat me and made me like it in the old days," he said. "now the more I beat them, the less they like it, and ask for more. It will be a good warm-up for that Russian Lion!"

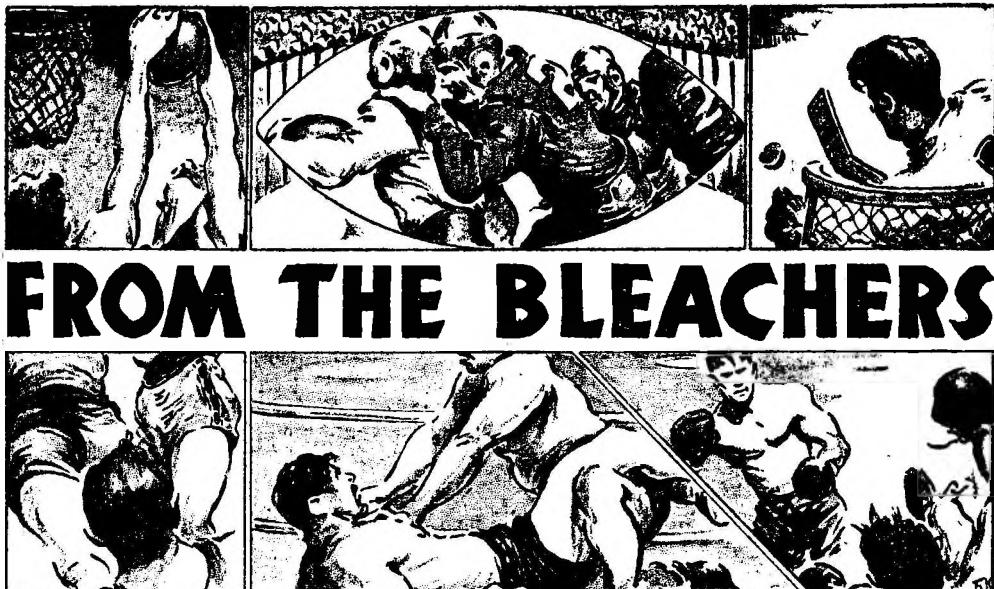
Things happened fast. Gotch went into the old Madison Square Garden, early in 1905, to meet the veteran Jenkins.

Not only was Gotch in poor physical shape—he claimed illness—but Jenkins put on the battle of his life.

Jenkins won back his title, and earned the big match with George Hackenschmidt. He lost to the Russian, who became undisputed champion of the wrestling world.

Gotch challenged, but Hackenschmidt turned a deaf ear, and went on the road for exhibitions, leaving Frank Gotch at the bottom of things, where only a few days before he had been at the top!

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FROM THE BLEACHERS

by HANDLEY CROSS

SPEEDING UP THE GAME!

LIKE it or not—and most of us like it—this is the day of the spectator in sport. To be popular, a game must be more than just good fun to play. It also must be good fun to watch.

The men back of professional sports quite frankly and openly want to give them as much crowd appeal as they can. The men back of amateur sports want to do the same thing, although usually they aren't quite so frank and open about it.

Hockey is principally a professional sport. Basket ball is principally an amateur sport. And the men back of both of them spend a lot of their time thinking of ways to speed them up so that they will have a stronger appeal to the cash customers.

Silver-thatched Lester Patrick, of the New York Rangers, who has been in hockey as player, coach and manager for thirty-five years, thinks that the popular ice game would be even more popular

if there were less whistle tooting and more scoring. He wants to see the red light flash oftener—provided, of course, that it doesn't flash too often back of the Rangers' net.

Patrick has asked the moguls of the National Hockey League to devote some serious thinking to a little scheme that he has devised to bring about the result he desires. He wants them to erase the two blue lines forty feet out from the goals and substitute one blue line across the middle of the rink. The change, he thinks, would result in less whistle blowing and more goals scored.

The moguls are thinking about his suggestion. Maybe some day they'll get around to doing something about it.

In basket ball, the coaches are wrangling loudly. They're wrangling about the zone defense. Fellows such as Nat Holman, of the College of the City of New York; George Keogan, of Notre Dame; Lon Jourdet, of Pennsylvania, and Clair Bee, of Long Island Uni-

versity say that when teams use the man-for-man defense, the fans get a full share of action and thrills; but that when they use the zone defense, all the spectators get is bored.

Defenders of the zone defense—led by John Bunn, whose fine Stanford teams have won the Pacific Coast Conference championship two years running—insist that it doesn't slow down the game a bit. It's not the type of defense that a team uses that matters, they say. It's the amount of fight that the players put into their defense.

While the basket-ball coaches are wrangling, the basket-ball players are playing. Last winter, something like eighty million spectators put their hard-earned coin on the line for the privilege of watching them. There's no indication of decreasing attendance this season. The fans seem to like basket ball pretty well just the way it is!

SIX-DAY-RACE DIZZINESS

ONE sport which has been speeded up so much that old-timers scarcely recognize it is six-day bicycle racing. Back in the days when New York's Madison Square Garden was on Madison Square and the six-day race was held there every winter, the grind was a sleepy affair.

Along about Wednesday, the riders ran out of pep, and the watchers stayed around with the dim hope rather than the expectation that something exciting might happen. I've been in the old Garden on mid-week nights when most of the fans and several of the robots slowly circling the track were slumbering peacefully.

That's all changed now. It was the daily sprints that changed it. Now you can go to the six-day race any afternoon or any evening and feel confident that you're going to get your money's worth of breakneck riding, thrills and spills.

As a matter of fact, the six-day race

has become too fast for some of the old-timers. At this year's race, I ran into a friend—a fellow who used to be about the best writer on cycle racing in the business. He has been doing more profitable things since those old days, and he hadn't seen a bicycle race for years when something induced him to take a look at this one.

On his way to the Garden he stopped for dinner across the street in Jack Dempsey's, and met some of his old cycling pals. As a result of this happy reunion, he walked with a slight list to starboard, and had a glassy look in his eyes.

We got in just in time for the nine-o'clock sprints. Riders in red shirts, green shirts, orange shirts and shirts of more other colors than I can remember were tearing around the track as the crowd cheered and howled.

My friend watched for a while. Then he reached for his overcoat. "I'm going home," he said. "All those colored stripes they've painted on the track hurt my eyes."

ARE WE SLOWING DOWN?

WHILE we are busy speeding up our games, it looks as if some of our real speed kings are slowing down. American automobile race drivers seem to have given up all idea of ever regaining the world speed crown.

Britain's Sir Malcolm Campbell held it for six years, and in that time raised the record for the one-mile course from 245 to 301 miles per hour.

Now, another Britisher, Captain George E. T. Eyston, has sent his gigantic *Thunderbolt* hurtling over Utah's Bonneville Salt Flats course at the death-defying speed of 311.42 miles per hour. And he isn't satisfied. He's coming back next winter to try to raise the world speed mark another notch! Campbell wasn't idle while Eyston was

preparing to crack his record. Sir Malcolm has turned to a sport that is every bit as thrilling and almost as dangerous as automobile racing—speed boating. And he has reached the top in a remarkably short time. Early last September, he drove his *Bluebird*—a craft named after his famous racing car—to a new world record of $129\frac{1}{2}$ miles an hour.

While no American automobile driver seems at all anxious to challenge Eyston supremacy on land, there's a white-haired gentleman named Gar Wood who hasn't the slightest intention of allowing the speed-boat record to remain abroad. It was his world mark of 125 miles an hour, established with his *Miss America X* in 1932, that Campbell shattered.

The only reason that Wood ever laid up *Miss America* was that there was no worthy competition in sight. Now he's getting her out again, and tuning her up. Maybe he'll make his attempt to get back his lost honors before you read these paragraphs. If not, it won't be long afterward.

FAVORITE SPORTS

MOST Yale undergraduates are all wet. That isn't the opinion of their Princeton and Harvard contemporaries. It is a fact proved by figures. There are slightly over three thousand Yale students. The favorite winter sport of slightly less than two thousand of them is swimming!

Next in indoor popularity is squash racquets. Fifteen hundred Yale undergrads play that lively game.

Golf is the favorite outdoor sport of the Blue boys. Over six hundred of them play it over the university course. Then comes rowing, with over five hundred undergrads working out in the tanks during the winter and sweating in crews or singles in the spring.

Almost as many play football with

various degrees of seriousness. Tennis is a good fourth. Less than three hundred play baseball, and about as many go in for track. Hockey is increasing rapidly in popularity—less than a hundred undergrads were playing it in 1932, and almost three hundred are playing it this winter.

A SKIING ROW

WHILE most Yale undergraduates prefer to take their cold-weather exercise in a steam-heated gym, there are a good many thousands of hardy citizens of both sexes scattered about the northern part of America who like to wallow in the snow, brave chillblains and frostbits, and risk their necks plunging down precipitous mountain slides on skis.

Skiing started as a sport, turned into a fad, and now seems likely to turn into a national habit. Of course, you can't ski when there isn't any snow; but it is quite possible that in the near future, as many Southerners will come north to find winter each year as Northerners will go south to get away from it.

Don't forget that Dick Dorrance, the best of our college skiers, is from Florida.

A certain indication of any sport's popularity is provided by the number of rows it stirs up among its followers. What would baseball or football be without arguments? Now skiing has an argument of its own.

Most of the professionals who are teaching skiing in America are Austrians. If you insist on me being technical, they teach the Arlberg technique. It that doesn't happen to mean anything in particular to you, they teach the beginner the comparatively simple "snow plow" and "stem" turns, and then go on to the fancier stuff that either finishes you or makes you a finished skier.

Now a French teacher named Emile Allais, who is the world's champion

professional skier, has tossed a bombshell at the Austrians. The only turns worth learning, he says, are the Christians.

Personally, I'm profoundly disinterested in this particular row. It doesn't make the slightest difference to me which technique I use to fall on the seat of my ski pants.

HOW TO BECOME A BIG LEAGUER

FOR the young fellow who is determined to become a professional ball player, baseball has no off season. For twelve months a year, he wishes that some big-league scout would come along and give him a chance to prove that he has what it takes.

And if he is a wise kid, he does considerably more than just wish. He tries hard to get a try-out. He makes a real effort to attract the attention of some manager or scout—any time and anyhow.

Consider the case of Johnny Allen, who did so well pitching for the Cleveland Indians last season. He used to be a hotel clerk in a small town down in North Carolina. He played semipro ball on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, and spent the rest of his time wishing that he could get a chance to become a professional.

One spring evening, a guest came in and registered. Allen recognized his name; he knew that the man was a scout for the Indians. After dinner, he went up to the guest's room. "My name is Allen, and I'm a good pitcher," he said. "I wish that you'd let me prove it to you."

Most baseball scouts are open-minded. They have to be. This one wasn't an exception. But he had to move on, the following afternoon.

"Tell you what to do," he said. "Get hold of a ball and a catcher's mitt, and we'll go down in the alley to-morrow morning. I'll see if you have anything."

They went down in the alley in the morning, and the scout soon saw that Allen had plenty. Then he telegraphed ahead to postpone his engagements. He stayed over until Saturday, watched Allen pitch a semipro game, and after the game, signed him up.

That's how Johnny Allen broke into professional ball. Of course, he had what it takes; but until he *made* his chance to show that he had it, having it didn't do him much good.

No other ambitious would-be big-leaguer is going to get exactly the same chance as Allen got. But the fellow who is smart enough to play pro ball should be smart enough to find a way of proving that he is good enough to play it.

There never was a time when the major-league clubs hunted more eagerly for good prospects than they are hunting right now. Their scouts pretty well cover the country, and if you keep your eyes and ears open, one of them is almost certain to come within your reach sooner or later.

The St. Louis Cardinals are especially active in the player search; they need rookies for the clubs of their extensive farm system, and those rookies all have a chance of some day becoming members of the Gas House Gang.

Last summer, one of their scouts lined up over a hundred youngsters from Missouri and neighboring States for a one-day try-out in Sportsman's Park. Most of the boys went home disappointed, of course; but a few who showed outstanding ability went home with contracts in their pockets.

Keep your eyes and ears open for scouts, or write a letter, telling all about yourself and mentioning some one connected with baseball who knows you, to the manager of any big-league club. A letter of this sort may seem like a long chance, but remember that long chances sometimes win. And all you need to gamble is a three-cent stamp!



RUNNING GAME

By ARTHUR L. RAFTER

"Tip" Willis came to Kearney U.
As a quarter-miler, and looked the part.
But before the season was half way through,
He'd almost broken "Pop" Casey's heart.

He had speed and form and all the rest,
As fast as a whippet around a curve,
And out in front he would run his best,
But when any one pressed him, he lost his nerve.

In sophomore year, he made the team,
And broke the mark in a dual meet.
In the College Champs, he was out of steam,
And finished fourth in a trial heat.

When the indoor season came once more,
Pop said to Tip: "You're a running freak,
But I need you bad on the relay four,
So try to get rid of that yellow streak.

"We lost a great anchor in Harry Hughes,
You must take his place in the Hill-rose Games.
There's no other runner that I can use,
That will give us a chance to beat St. James."

This relay match had won the spot.
The St. James four had never been licked.
And Kearney U. was going so hot
That the indoor record might be nicked.

Tip, as the anchor, was starting last,
But the other three runners must bear the brunt.
They figured that Tip would travel fast,
If they got him started away in front.

Jones ran first, and gained a yard,
Then Lenny stretched it to eleven.
But Miller hit the last turn too hard,
And, limping slowly, trailed by seven.

Tip grabbed the baton in a flash,
As Miller fell forward on his face,
And then cut loose, with a sprinter's dash,
For the last three laps—and won the race.

"I had to win," Tip said to Pop.
"It was up to me to go to town
When Miller ran till he had to drop.
I just couldn't let that game guy down!"



HOMELY HEELS

by ERIC ROBER

Author of: "Ripper of the Ruiners," etc.

BURKON UNIVERSITY decided to put itself on the map, so it went out and hired a press agent. That's why you saw "Three-jay" Joplin's picture in the papers. His name was splashed across the



*Three-jay Joplin had
neither the looks nor
form of his opponents*

sport pages, and he was dubbed the "Mauckville Meteor." For Mr. Lanny Creight, the said press agent, got desperate, cooked up a dizzy idea, and went to town with a publicity stunt. Said stunt virtually yanked, dragged and derricked John Jones Joplin out of the veil of obscurity.

It started one drear winter afternoon. Mr. Lanny Creight plodded over the brown mud of the campus, entered the big gym, eased over to the knot of men beside the indoor track.

Coach Bart Calvin was directing the work-out of his squad.

Creight liked him about as much as a dose of arsenic. But he was desperate for a yarn. In his pocket was a curt note from the board of directors suggesting that he do something to earn his salary or start consulting railroad timetables.

Creight framed his trap mouth with the sweetest smile he could conjure. "Howdy, coach. What's new? How about the Tozar meet?"

Bartholomew Calvin looked away from a hurdler, adjusted his horn-rimmed glasses, then replied in his precise, ever-cool voice:

"Ah—er—Creight, there can't have been anything new, or you'd have been making up lies about it before it happened."

Mr. Lanny Creight squelched a

ups and run like a pack of lame dogs?

He glanced around wearily. Two figures pounded across the finish line and hit out on another lap. One of them was Zeke Tonport, veteran two-miler. The other man was just kept plodding along on the pole.

Creight's eyes narrowed. He saw that Tonport was trying to get by the other man. The latter seemed unaware of Tonport, pistoned away with his head bowed and his clenched hands jerking stiffly over his chest.

"Hey, who's that bird out there with Tonport?" demanded the press agent, eager for a fresh yarn.

Bart Calvin glanced out at the track, turned a glassy eye on the college publicity manager. "Tonport, our two-miler; the other is some student."

Creight watched the two men swing



powerful impulse to ram his knuckles down the aristocratic Calvin throat, and passed off the insult with a good-natured chuckle. Calvin was still sore because he'd touted the cross-country team to the skies in the papers. Then it had failed to place a man in the conference championships.

Hell, how could he know they'd get swelled heads from reading his write-

down the back stretch; saw the track man try to get by twice. Each time, the student shoved—and shoved was the only word to describe it—himself on a little faster and kept the pole. There was one brief spurt, almost sprinting, before they hit the turn. The unknown went into it in the lead, held it, as Tonport dropped back.

The pair approached the finish line, but the bird running with his head bent on the inside of the track didn't stop. He kept on grinding.

"Hell's bells," snapped Creight, "there's a student running one of your regulars clean into the ground."

Coach Calvin turned impassively, fussed with his spectacles, eyed the track. "Sluggish knee action; doesn't know how to pump his arms, running flat-footed." Thus he described the running form of the unknown student. Calvin had a rep as a stickler for form.

"But Tonport can't just seem to get by him," Creight sneered. "Of course, maybe he isn't trying."

Calvin turned away. "Just a case of a dope interfering with the training of a good man." He turned his attention to Boyce, another crack varsity runner.

BOYCE swung onto the track as the other two came down the home stretch again. He moved out with his high-kicking knee action, a symphony in ground-striding, effortless, easy-working—a picture runner. He was hot at anything from the quarter to the mile.

Boyce's first lap was merely a warm-up turn and he slackened his pace. The student runner came up on him, had to turn out if he were to maintain his pace. The lank Zeke Tonport hung right on his elbow, on the outside, preventing him. Zeke and Boyce had boxed the student beautifully.

After a few moments, as they came out of the turn, Tonport kicked out, went by Boyce and into the lead, took

the pole himself. The student runner followed him, saw he'd lost his advantage, apparently got discouraged as he strained vainly. Creight was watching him, hoping, in the gray light. But the man wavered, then turned off the board track toward the locker room, squinting down at his wrist watch.

Creight went away. Nothing was breaking for him. Now if that damned student dummy had only legged it a little more and beaten out Tonport, Creight would have had a first-class yarn. He could have implied that it happened in a time trial.

He hoofed it along a road into the country, recalling the various stunts he'd pulled: The contest to pick a coed for queen of the Harvest Ball.

Now, maybe he could spring a contest to pick the handsomest male. Nope! This bunch of pants-wearing huskies at Burkon would never stand for it. Then he had it as he gazed reflectively at a paint-peeling barn. A contest to select the homeliest male on the campus!

That had never been done before. The papers would go for the pictures of the mug. It would be a great laugh.

He plunged in at the back door of his cubby-hole in the A. A. offices, bawled for his secretary. She was already on her way in. There was a fellow waiting to see Mr. Creight. A very determined caller. Name of Joplin or something. He'd already made some pointed remarks about kicking in a certain door if it wasn't opened to him soon.

"Joplin? Never heard of him." Creight shook his head that whirled with plans for this new publicity stunt. "Tell those two birds from the wrestling team waiting to see me to give him the bum's rush!"

ONE week later, the usually dapper Mr. Lanny Creight lay tossing in rumpled pajamas, a victim of insomnia. What shreds of sleep he'd managed to garner had been

soured with visions of working as front man for a Bloomer Girls' ball club or, worse, as barker for a bankrupt flea circus. For Lanny Creight did not expect to be exposing his sartorial splendor around the Burkon campus much longer.

His "homeliest-man" contest was not catching on! And how!

The doorbell of his apartment rang insistently. He couldn't believe his ears as he squinted out at the snow-blown dawn. When he fumbled the door open, a vague, slightly undersized figure stood in the gray light of the corridor. Creight asked him what in blazes he wanted.

"The two bucks and twenty-three cents you owe the Burkon City *Daily Mail* for delivery of the paper," the other came back flatly.

Creight blued the air as he shivered. "This is one hell of an hour to come!"

The shorter chap shrugged. "First morning train out of town leaves in ten minutes."

"Are you going on it?" Creight asked, still dumfounded.

"No. But I didn't know whether you were or not."

Creight went purple. "Say, you lippy yap, do you know who—?"

"Yeah," the bill collector for the newspaper finished for him. "You're the fellow I can never catch to collect from. I cooled my heels an hour while you hid in your office last week."

Creight went back, got his check book, filled out a blank. "O. K. There you are. Now"—he'd already switched on the foyer light—"you great, big ray of sunshine, haul that carcass of yours outa here before I give—"

The bill collector nodded and backed. "That'd be news up on the campus, you giving up anything but hot air."

The publicity agent had some hunch. "You a student?"

The stocky chap halted with hands thrust in the pockets of his baggy suit. He wore no overcoat despite the weather. His eyes flickered dully un-

der the battered, slouch hat that shadowed his face.

"Yeah. Any objections?"

Lanny Creight had taken plenty, but definitely. And particularly for a press agent who's used to dishing out the wise, tough ones. Creight had fingered some of the seamier sizes of life; knew how to swing a short inside right and plenty of tricks in the bargain. He walked out into the hall.

"This is going to hurt you more than it does me." His right hand swished over. He felt knuckles contact bone, heard the dull click of flesh meeting. But the other didn't go down. Creight started to follow up the sneak punch with his left.

THEN that hallway got crowded in a hurry. Fists flew wildly as the newspaper collector sailed in, head down. Lanny Creight saw that he'd have to get rough. He grabbed a lunging arm to haul his man into one aimed for the "kisser." Instead, he got a savage kick in the shin that momentarily crippled him.

Swearing in a hiss, Creight wrestled his man backward, shot out his foot to trip him. The other was thrown all right. But going down, he grabbed Creight and took him with him.

They both scrambled up and the publicity director stepped back, dropping his hands, put on rueful smile. This guy knew how to fight as dirtily as he did himself. Creight stuck out an aching hand.

"Let's not be dopey kids! Putting on a rough-and-tumble brawl like this! Shake and let's forget about it!"

The other said, "Sure," put out his hand. Lanny Creight gripped, yanked with all his strength, and fired an uppercut. Things went wrong. Creight discovered that he was being yanked himself, saw stars as an uppercut bounced off his chin.

He sagged back against the wall,

peered out of blurred eyes. The bill collector had staggered to the other wall, hat gone, red running from his mouth. And he was trying to focus his glassy eyes on his wrist watch.

"Hey, wait," the publicity shark began, as he got his first good look at the other in the growing light. "Say, you wait—"

But the tough-talking collector snorted something to himself, grabbed up his hat and a big canvas bag stuffed with newspapers, and high-balled it for the door.

Creight leaped after him. But it wasn't to fight this time. He wasn't fast enough. The student jammed it out the door and down the road without looking back once, on the dead run. He didn't go like a bird who was scared.

"Sweet mamma!" breathed Creight. "But was he homely—and how!"

The press agent watched the bill collector loop it down the street into the distance. "He sure is stepping it right along, too. Not pretty. But he must have iron legs to go up that hill there like—"

Then he blinked; he'd seen that springless stride before. It was the student runner who'd quit in that duel with Tonport up at the indoor track the other day.

Lanny Creight let the door close and peered down at the bill scrawled "Paid." The signature beneath was "J. J. Joplin." Creight put on his canary-fed-cat smile.

"Mr. Three-jay. Boy, what a moniker! Three-jay Joplin, you are going to win the homeliest-man contest!"

LANNY CREIGHT was correct. He passed the name around to some friends, gave the "office" to a half dozen of the campus key men. The name "John Jones Joplin" became a password among the student body, and a mystery as well. Nobody knew anything about him, except that he was

supposed to be the homeliest man that ever walked.

Creight marshaled his facts. There wasn't much he could learn. Joplin was a student in the agricultural college up at the north end of the campus. He had no friends, was seldom seen outside of the classrooms, lived down at the lower end of the town far from all university circles. He didn't even know what was going on. All this suited Lanny Creight perfectly, because he liked to pull surprise shots.

And the surprise came Monday afternoon when J. J. Joplin was announced as the contest winner, the homeliest male student at Burkon. He had been overwhelmingly voted the champion homely man of the campus by a student body that didn't even know him.

Lanny Creight whistled softly as he inspected the picture he'd had a photographer secretly snap of the poor devil as he came up the steps of one of the Aggie college buildings. Joplin had doffed his hat as he prepared to step through the doorway. And with those newfangled trick camera lenses, nothing was left to the imagination.

J. J. Joplin wasn't ugly; he wasn't repulsive; he wasn't deformed facially. It was simply that he was plain as mud in a flat-faced, dull-eyed, dead-panned way. He had all the come-on of a cold fried egg, as much appeal as a rainy afternoon, and as many freckles as a turkey egg.

"Only a face a mother could love—blind-folded," muttered Lanny Creight as he proceeded to mail dozens of copies with a blurb on the contest to news agencies and city desks.

The next morning, a city editor wired him: "Is the photo a fake or can you produce original in the flesh without robbing a grave?"

Creight flashed back his answer. Within twenty-four hours, several out-of-town reporters with a flock of correspondents arrived on the scene. They

wanted to interview this student who'd become famous because he looked like something hired to haunt a house.

There was where the hitch came in. Because Creight's find, Three-jay Joplin, had no intention of being interviewed. He slipped out side doors, cut up alleys, faded into crowds, resorting to sheer leg work when almost run to earth.

The press men began to get disgusted as the afternoon wore on. Then Creight remembered. It was just a week ago he'd seen Joplin working on that indoor track when he'd failed to note his homely mug in the gray light and with his bent-head style of running.

Creight led the way to the gym. Sure enough, there was the homeliest man on the campus trudging off after his work-out. Creight grabbed him. Flash-light bulbs flickered. Reporters fired questions as he stood in his gym suit.

"Hell, no wonder we couldn't catch him," cried one of the correspondents. "The kid's a runner, huh?"

Creight didn't let the chance slip. "Uh-huh. Track team!"

JOPLIN'S dead-pan look started to change as he tried to form a protest. Bart Calvin, the track coach, hove on the scene. And the reporters wanted to know if Joplin was going to compete in the meet against Tozar at the end of the week, what distance he ran in. Creight had to work fast.

"Yeah, yeah. Sure," he told them. "Three-jay's a little bashful. I'll answer for him." He turned to the coach. "Calvin! Give a guy a break. Let 'em think this kid's on the squad. Here, get a snap of Coach Calvin with him, boys! You all know the man who turns out those crack teams for the ol' Black and Silver! Yeah. The best-loved man on the campus."

"If Joplin's running Saturday night, I'll be on the spot to get pics of him in

action," one of the cameramen promised. "They'll be hot!"

Bart Calvin turned on the glib Creight to protest. "Damn you, Creight, you blabber-mouthed ass! I won't make a liar out of myself! I won't say he's running, then have these gentlemen of the press turn up Saturday night and discover—"

Creight jabbered some more at the news men, got his mouth close to Calvin's ear. "Got a hot idea for the next issue of the alumni bulletin, Bart. Little career story of each of our coaches. Want a special photo of you, you know—'Calvin, champion character molder of the sons of Burkon.' Now just—"

Calvin unconsciously lifted his jaw to conceal his double chin as if the photo was being posed for then. "But, Creight, if this guy doesn't run Saturday night—"

"Sure thing, boys. Three-jay is just modest. He's an outstanding student, popular man of the campus. Uh-huh. Calvin, I'll be a joke if this thing slips now. Say, why not let him run? Look. Salway of Tozar is the champ miler in the conference. He's got that event sewed up. Put this chump in the mile. No harm done."

"Suppose he doesn't even finish?" Calvin whispered back.

"We can come up with some kind of alibi, Barty. Leave that to me. Gentlemen, Coach Calvin has just informed me he *will* enter Three-jay Joplin in the mile as a surprise starter against Salway of Tozar! And Coach Calvin is saying here and now that it may be a *surprise* finish as well."

The homely Joplin put his mouth near the press agent's ear. "Who in hell said I was running?"

Creight thought fast; he was getting used to it. He remembered how this chump had walked off the track after Tonport had jumped him in that little duel they'd staged a week before; how

he'd taken a powder from that little roughhouse with him.

"Are you afraid to run?" he asked.

CHAPTER II.

THREE-JAY RUNS

CREIGHT personally escorted Three-jay Joplin from the Aggie campus to the gym for his training the next afternoon. The champion homely man was taking it with the attitude of a guy who's been trapped in the henhouse and might as well go through with it.

"You can't back down now after all this publicity," Creight warned him. "People'll say you're a four-flusher and a false alarm if you do! I sure put you on the road to fame."

"You don't know how to mind your own damned business," snapped Joplin sullenly.

"Aw, forget it, brother! Maybe Hollywood'll sign you to play with Mickey Mouse. After Saturday night, you can drop off the track squad, Three-jay."

The suggestion of a smile curved Joplin's usually tight-clamped mouth and creased his dead-panned face. "You thought up that Three-jay name, huh?"

"Yep. What do your friends call you?"

"Haven't got any friends. I don't know folks here very well. Back home, they called me—uh—Dopey Three-jay! Not bad."

When Bartholomew Calvin got the new addition to his squad onto the boards, he was ready to do some hair tearing. Three-jay Joplin's form wasn't all wrong; he didn't have any at all.

"Up on your toes more, man! Up on your toes," Calvin kept commanding. "Let those arms swing free, forearms parallel to the track! You aren't trying to hold your shirt from falling off!"

That was just the start. Joplin's knee

action was sluggish. He dragged on the kick-back, legs barely clearing the track as they flew out behind. On the turns—and that was an important factor on that small, indoor oval—he went into a side skid that carried him up to the outside rim of the saucer. And when the coach sent on a couple of men to pace him at a stiff, testing gait, Three-jay Joplin's head simply went down, eyes groundward, and he bulled it along.

"Good heavens!" Calvin wailed. "Will my colleagues give me the horse-laugh when they see an entrant going along like a sick duck hunting for food on the bottom?"

"Will they?" came back the lean-faced Creight.

"Yes, yes. But—uh—anyway, those photos in the papers were terrible. You might have got them to touch them up. I looked like a bullfrog standing next to that—that—"

"You sure did," Creight calmly agreed.

Bartholomew Calvin went quite pale, elevated his eagle nose another inch, and jerked at the new, dark green Tyrolean hat he sported. "Furthermore, Mr. Creight, that alumni bulletin is already made up and on the presses. You told me—"

Creight shrugged. "Never believe everything you hear."

LANNY CREIGHT sauntered over and met the sweating Three-jay as he came off the track, tossed him one of the big, silver-colored sweaters that only varsity performers usually rated. Strangely, for a bird taking his first work-out, and a stiff one in the bargain, Three-jay Joplin didn't appear fagged.

Boyce skipped his final quarter mile of work in the coach's perturbation, trailed downstairs with spikes rattling, along with Three-jay Joplin and his press-agent mentor.

"Listen, put out your hand and signal which way you're going to stray on those curves," Boyce warned Joplin. "You'll give a good runner a skinful of splinters yet."

Joplin seemed to have his answer prepared in advance. "Fall on your head and you won't do a thing but scratch the track," he came back with the same unhumorous manner he'd used in collecting that bill from Lanny Creight.

There were fireworks right away. Ted Boyce was well-known for his quick temper. Handsome, popular, he had the makings of a great runner; but he was too easy-going, except when angered, to take training seriously. He was used to getting his own way. He dropped the towel he'd picked up.

"Why, you dumb fugitive from a monkey farm, one more crack like—"

"What'd you call me?"

They cocked rights. Lanny Creight ran in where angels fear to tread and smart referees never do. Both those rights landed as neither man bothered with a defense. Both reeled, let fly with the other paw. Burkon U.'s demon press agent blocked those punches, both of them, with either side of his head. He started to sink, clutched at the shirts of the runners on either side of him like a drowning man.

Coach Calvin came hustling in. Somebody doused Creight's head with a wet towel and the cobwebs began to clear.

"Holy saints!" Calvin's voice rang with fury. "You palm off the worst runner I ever saw on me, then start ruining my squad with internal dissension!"

The blasé, somewhat hard-boiled, never-to-be-surprised Lanny Creight goggled. Three-jay Joplin and Ted Boyce were walking off grinning at each other and calling names in a kidding way.

"Maybe I started more than I knew," mused the press agent.

THE big gym was jammed the Saturday night of the Tozar dual meet. The Black and Silver of Burkon was doped to win. But there was Salway, Tozar's mile flyer, to watch. He'd come within a second of the conference record the week before in the district A. A. U.'s.

And there was Three-jay Joplin, Burkon's homeliness champ, in that mile event, too. The campus was already saying he was plainer than the college mascot, the burro.

The call finally came for the mile.

Calvin gathered his six entrants in the event around him. "Remember. Salway likes to set a burning pace in the second quarter. Permit him to do it alone." He blinked frostily behind his glasses at the feeble humor. "Corman is the man to watch. We should be able to beat him for second place."

Three-jay Joplin, his mud-colored skin drawn and pasty, looked around. An uncontrollable trembling gripped him inside. Yet his legs felt like sodden lead, heavy and snapless. When he trotted out onto those boards and the galleries spotted him—well, it would soon be over, and he could quit.

Coach Calvin was tapping his arm, a thinly disguised expression of disgust on his features. He could have booted himself clean across the campus for getting drawn in on this. It was typical of the cheap ballyhoo tricks of that bounder, Creight.

"Er—uh—Joplin. If the pace is too much, drop out after a few laps. Nobody will mind."

"Why don't any of us try to run with this Salway?" Three-jay asked Boyce with a peculiar grimness, as they moved over to the track.

Boyce shrugged and pointed out the slim, wide-shouldered figure with the corded thighs and long forelegs prancing along the straightaway with the "T" of Tozar on his green shirt. That was the great Salway.

"He just happens to be the best man in the conference, a hot bet for the 1940 Olympics, and a bird who trains faithfully! Calvin doesn't think any of us'd have a chance."

Three-jay's homely face remained unchanged, but his dull brown eyes narrowed slightly as he saw the ace, with false modesty, feign surprise as he looked up when the Tozar cheering section gave him a tremendous hand. Three-jay heard an official near by say that Salway had a come-home sprint like that of Lovelock, the Australian star.

"Well, Ted, if a fella went out and fought him stride for stride——" Three-jay suggested, as they started to stretch their legs down the track.

A roar of sound rolled under the big roof, swelled up over the girders, moved down the stands as people rocked with laughter and beat their neighbors across the back. They'd sighted Three-jay Joplin, the homeliest man on the Burkon campus.

Three-jay just kept his head bent as was his style and plodded along on his slim legs. But as they lined up for the start with the band booming out "Kick, Burro, Kick!" and the laughter broke through the singing and even a couple of officials around the starter began to grin, it was tough to take.

On the outside of the track, Three-jay Joplin bent into his crouch suddenly. Lanny Creight, standing off by Coach Calvin, could have sworn he had spotted something like a tear on the kid's cheek.

THE gun! They were dusting off for the first curve, spikes clawing the boards, arms pistonning as they fought for anchorage on the sharp tilt. The great Salway settled into his swinging leg drive almost at once, letting a teammate go into the lead and set the pace. He was too smart to try for any records on that small track.

They finished the first lap. The crowd

let out a jovial shout. Three-jay Joplin, the running example of how not to be beautiful, had come up, was trying to take out Salway.

The latter decided to put the race in his pocket and get it over with, and stepped it up. On the curve, Three-jay almost did a nose-dive into the stands, but hung on somehow. He came thundering down off the top of the track with his flat-footed, springless stride. He came abreast of Salway again, the plain-as-mud face giving no sign that he was aware of what he was doing.

Demonstrating his lack of experience, he stuck right beside the champ despite the fact that he was on the outside, was legging extra distance. The craziness of it seemed to spread along the boards, to contaminate some of the others. One hare-brained runner can often throw a carefully-planned race into turmoil that way.

"The blasted idiot," muttered Bart Calvin. "He's only been training a few days. He'll collapse in a minute."

Before anybody realized it, all but two runners were bunched together on the back stretch, having just put a slow quarter behind them on that small track. Three-jay Joplin seemed to be taking the second turn all right midway around it, then suddenly veered out.

Runners jammed up, wavered, lost stride, almost collided. They came onto the straightaway, and Three-jay cut loose with a semispurt as everybody wabbled some and tried to get straightened out. Somebody almost spiked him from behind.

Instinctively, Three-jay moved in and away from the spike touch. The crack Salway, trying to get back his easy, free-swinging style, again brushed him with an elbow to crowd him off. Joplin, head still bent, threw himself ahead and returned the favor as his chest heaved with the strain, jolting with his elbow.

The conference champ went spinning, flying across the track, arms clutching

for balance. It was like a small riot. Other men were hit, jounced, tripped.

The next instant, there was a welter of flying legs, rolling bodies, glittering, upturned spikes as runners went down around the now fallen Joplin in the heart of the mess. And the great Salway was rolling across the floor inside the track.

Excited officials rushed up and jerked Three-jay Joplin out of the crazy, now-ruined race, disqualifying him for a foul.

Salway, of Tozar, never did get back into the running as far as having a chance of winning was concerned. By the time he got back on the boards, it was a long, stern chase for him. Boyce broke the tape first, with three other Burkon runners following him to sew up the meet for the Black and Silver.

"Holy smoke!" breathed Creight. "He put Salway out of the race, the pickle-pussed little tramp!"

CHAPTER III.

WINNER LOSES

COACH CALVIN tapped his office desk with his pipe as he measured out his words. It was Monday. "I'm finished," he told Creight. "Finished with that stupid ignoramus of a runner and with you and your cheap schemes! I let him run Saturday night as I agreed."

"Yeah. And that conceited Salway thought he was such a big shot he could push the kid around, then squawked when he got his own medicine back. Three-jay never knew he was committing a foul. Look at that sport page! Your damned hoof squad hasn't had that big a write-up since Adam high-balled it out of Eden!"

"No," Calvin admitted.

"Barty," pleaded Creight. "That kid's news after Saturday. He's hot copy. Now all you got to do is encourage him. Tell him he's got promise. Why, just the other day, a friend of mine in the advertising racket was speaking about a

certain liquid massage oil that wanted famous coaches and trainers to indorse it, and I said——"

Calvin's smile was almost friendly. "Yes? You said?"

Creight smiled, too. "Encourage the kid to stay out for track. Then he won't quit, and I'll mention your name in the right places."

The coach fingered a chamois pusher, nodded. He knew the press agent referred to the coin in that advertising indorsement.

"All right. I won't cut him from the squad." Creight grabbed his hand to seal the deal. "But," Calvin continued, "I won't promise to encourage that mug."

"Did anybody ask you to?" asked Three-jay Joplin, arriving early for his work-out. The face with all the allure of a weather-beaten well bucket betrayed nothing.

Creight was all beaming grimaces. "Say, you mean you're——"

"I mean I'm going to keep on running," Three-jay said simply. "Who said I wasn't any good?"

And the one-time "forgotten man" of the campus, now doubly famous because he'd put the great Salway out of a race, moved off with a slight swing to his newly squared shoulders. He was out for track to stay out.

Coach Bart Calvin had other ideas about that. He knew ways of discouraging a man. He didn't consider himself guilty of bad sportsmanship. This man had been foisted on him by a trick. When he'd just shaken hands with Creight, he figured he'd outsmarted the crafty publicity hound for once, never believing the kid with the face of a mud fence would be around long.

RIGHT through the week, Calvin put the spurs into Three-jay Joplin. He tore his form apart, lashed him with caustic criticism, made him work on the turns until a normal

man would have been wibble-legged. He sent the kid on a long jaunt with the two-milers over the snow-packed campus paths.

And when the stories trickled back from Tozar, intimating that he, Bart Calvin, had entered the unknown Joplin in that mile event to get Salway, the coach put on more pressure. After all, he'd always prided himself on the rep he had for clean play.

The homeliness champion would quit soon.

But Three-jay Joplin didn't. Saturday afternoon, Calvin's eyes bulged at the track side. For the kid was improving. He'd got his fists out away from his chest; he actually seemed to have acquired some rhythm. And he was taking those turns a lot better.

It was a mystery to the owl-eyed coach. Three-jay had been in training less than two weeks. He was stepping off the fast three-quarters smartly, pulling it open another notch for the final-hundred-yard finish sprint Calvin had called for after a loping lap. He was right up there with the bunch.

"That wasn't bad running," Bart Calvin murmured, as Lanny Creight, hove on the scene.

"Yeah? Well, why stand around looking as if you'd put shaving-cream on your toothbrush?" Creight twitted the coach. "He fixed it for us to win that mile last week."

"Certainly," Calvin handed the publicity director a frigid smile. "Maybe he'll steal the other team's shoes next time. But if he pulls any rough stuff in the time trial Monday——"

"I'll be on hand to see that we get diagrams of it to hand to the newspapers boys," Creight promised. "I'll fix it."

But nothing happened in the mile time trial Monday afternoon. It was a test to pick the men to represent the Black and Silver against National Tech.

Ted Boyce won it going away with

Quirry, a seasoned runner, in second. And then Three-jay Joplin, with a surprise finish sprint, came from behind to beat out two men for third place. It meant he'd run against National.

Coach Calvin shrugged as he turned away. "Guess there isn't anything to worry about 'fixing.'"

"That's what you think," purred the press agent to himself. "This guy's going to be copy if I have to murder him." Then he swung in alongside Boyce as the latter headed for the locker room.

"Say, I want you to do me a little favor. How good is Three-jay?"

Boyce pursed his mouth, shrugged. "Honestly, Lanny, I don't know. The guy doesn't seem to have any pace of his own. He looks poor. But he can run the way any man wants to make it, slow, or fight for the lead, or uncork it——"

"O. K. That's enough for me. We got the meet with National sewed up, haven't we?" When Boyce nodded, the publicity man went on: "And the mile is pretty sure for us. O. K. If we're winning it, let Three-jay come home first if you can, eh?"

Boyce's handsome face started to darken as he scowled.

"Say, I thought I'd die laughing when the management protested against your leading the band out at the Grill the other night," Creight reminded him.

Boyce grinned. "You dirty black-mailer. You win. Three-jay's a good egg."

THEY took the train down out of the hills to Troyston City. National Tech was located right outside of it, and ran its winter track meets in the big State armory. It was an unseasonably warm night with a mist off the coast that made it muggy and hard to breathe.

National started to fight for every point, losing firsts to the Burkon stars, but garnering places by sheer scrap.

The mile came up. And right off, the National runners began to make a scrap of it, throwing caution to the winds. They'd been sent on there with orders to forget the finish and to battle the Burkton men every step of the way.

Boyce sensed it immediately, got into the pace-setting spot, and signed his team to hang behind him. Before the third quarter was half completed, two of the National men who'd tried to set a killing pace, in hopes that Burkton runners would follow, came floundering back.

Boyce grinned at one of them as he took him out, flicked a glance over his shoulder. Three-jay Joplin was in third place.

Then they came into the final quarter. Boyce heard Three-jay's flat, heavy stride just behind him. Boyce put on a brief sprint at the opening of the gun lap, then eased.

On the back stretch, the plugging Joplin got up close. Coming out of the turn, he swung wide, steamed abreast. But he seemed weak. Boyce eased some more, lifted his head as if fagged himself. And Three-jay Joplin, "picking grapes" with his awkward arm motion, inched into the lead, hit for the finish line.

Head bowed, Three-jay Joplin saw a black line across the track ahead of him. He staggered to it, almost fell, then slowed suddenly to a walk and turned off the track, half blind with fatigue.

There was a frantic howl from the gallery. And Ted Boyce, coming up on the outside, collided with the walking Three-jay, as the latter turned off the track. Before Boyce could recover himself and get his legs under him as he reeled backward, two National runners drove themselves past and breasted the tape ten yards beyond the black line.

That black line had *not* been the finish. It had been ten yards from the tape. The Troyston armory boasted a 220-yard straightaway. The black line

Three-jay Joplin had halted at marked the finish for the sprint men who started up in the chute.

Hopes shooting skyward at the unexpected victory, National inched out a victory in the two-mile relay to clinch the meet by one point.

Down in the locker room, Three-jay Joplin sat like a piece of stone on a bench. Some of the men gathered around him, slapped his back.

"Forget it, kid. Tough break. Accidents will happen."

"Shut out the sweet stuff, you saps!" Three-jay flung at them in his spiritless voice. "Don't try and kid me."

Lanny Creight breezed in with a big grin. "Boy, oh, boy!"

The grim-mouthed Calvin whirled on him. "Who willed you a million dollars, you tramp? The man you tricked me into letting run lost the meet for us."

"Think of the publicity!" Creight broke in in an undertone, as he sized up the bowed Three-jay on a bench. "It's headline news for the sport sheets! 'Winning, Three-jay Joplin Loses Meet!' Sweet shades of Methuselah, only that homely ham could do that!"

CHAPTER IV.

WHY JOPLIN QUIT

MONDAY afternoon, Lanny Creight was right on deck for the work-out of the track team. He button-holed Three-jay as he came off the boards after three jogging laps.

"Tough luck the other night," Creight led off. "Still, the best man in the racket might have been fooled, kid. By the way, tell the office down at the Burkton City *Daily Mail* my paper was two hours late this morning."

"Yeah," said Three-jay.

"What does your family think of this running?"

"Mom's dead," said Three-jay.

Lanny Creight swallowed uncomfortably. There was something about the

way the kid said it. "Well, your dad; is he—"

Three-jay Joplin looked around at nothing at all. "He—er—takes care of animals. Gee, I must've been dumb to stop at that black mark!"

"Animals? A veterinary?" Creight cut him off.

"Well, he travels around and—"

"O. K., brother. Don't let that break worry you. You're going to be famous before I get through with you!"

"I'll be famous in my own way, on my legs!" the kid shot back. "You'll see. I'm on the team. I'll click in the next time trial!" There was a new, harder note in his voice.

Lanny Creight just nodded and grinned and went back to his office and turned out fresh press notices about the Burkon's freak. The kid was hot news; hotter than ever after the fluke finish of that mile.

It was some story, the equal of the yarn of the football player who ran the wrong way; the baseball star who forgot to touch second. Sports desks were eager for any stuff they could get on the runner who'd done it. And Lanny Creight gave them plenty, and when he ran out of dope he called on his facile imagination.

Three-jay Joplin as good as his word, copped second place again, behind Boyce, in the time test. Creight, on hand as usual, looked over the shoulder of the assistant manager holding the stop watch when they finished. Then he ambled over to where Calvin stood with a face sour as a quince.

"Well?"

"A trial doesn't prove everything."

"Fastest time of any trial indoors this year," Creight said. "There's the quadrangular meet this week, and Salway of Tozar'll be running. Then there are conference championships. Salway again. You got to use Boyce in the quarter or the half in both of those affairs to have a chance. It'll weaken

him for that mile event. You got to have somebody to force Salway. And Three-jay—why think of the headlines! A feud race! Salway'll be out to 'ust a gut to get even."

Bart Calvin cleared his throat carefully. "The headline I'd like to see, Creight, would be about you being on the end of a very, very long bread line! Next time, perhaps, this Joplin fellow will lose us a race he isn't running in!"

THREE-JAY was taken up to Tozar for the quadrangular meet in which Middleton and Camtord were also entered. Creight went along to watch his protégé, Joplin.

Everything was all right when the squad piled onto the street car for the ride downtown to the big sports palace where the meet was to be staged.

Creight didn't drop down to the dressing room until just before the meet was due to get under way. He waded through the Middleton outfit, saw the Burkon gang in a corner of the big dressing room, couldn't find Three-jay Joplin at first. Then he spotted him hunched on a bench, a crumpled newspaper in his fist, staring sightlessly. He hadn't even begun to strip.

"Did you tell 'em this?" Sighting Creight, the kid spoke in a low, tearing voice that made every one of the nervous squad snap around with a jerk.

Creight tried to smile blandly, but it wasn't easy before the dull eyes that bored into him. He took the newspaper, scanned the write-up, came to the part that told about Joplin.

"Joplin's leg ability is no surprise to his father who is a veterinary back in the home town. Joplin, Sr., who was a runner of note himself in the old days, trained his son from boyhood with an eye to his collegiate future. The youth himself, apart from his track activities, is active on the campus, holding down a post on the business staff of one of the local dailies."

It seemed harmless enough.

Creight's smile widened. "Sure. I sent 'em that stuff. Course, it might be a little guesswork and a little exaggeration, but—"

Three-jay's lips curled back to bare his teeth. "Yeah? Guesswork? Imagination? My dad a veterinary, a former runner. Me, on the business staff of the paper!"

"Now, listen, kid. In this racket, if we don't quite hit the facts on the head, why—"

Three-jay Joplin spat his words in a flat monotone worse than a screamed tirade. "Back home in Mauckville, my pop is the dog catcher, see? And he never was a runner, never could have trained me. Why? Look!"

The kid jerked out a wallet, extracted a worn snapshot. It was his father, a wizened, bright-eyed, smiling little man with a cane. He had the cane because one leg was slightly twisted, obviously somewhat lame.

"Dad had infantile paralysis when he was a kid," Joplin said in a terribly colorless voice. "So, I guess he didn't do much running."

"But—" Creight tried to save his face.

Then Joplin let him have it. "Sure I knew it was a joke when you saw to it I won that homeliness contest and put my pan in all the papers. But, after all, I *am* homely. I know it. So that was all right. Then, when track came into it, I thought it had given me my chance. I tried like hell to run, to be good, to do something for Burkon. But now I see. I'm just a joke; a gag to be touted up for a laugh! You've made a fool of me, now of my pop, and—"

Creight got hard boiled. "Who's going to get wise about him?"

"Who? Who? He'll be the joke of the whole town! Why? Because Salway, of Tozar, his folks got a big farm outside of Mauckville. My pop does odd jobs for them sometimes."

Bart Calvin came striding in quickly. Something on his face said bad news. He broke it in his quiet, restrained voice. Word had just come down from Burkon that Cressard, No. 3 man of the two-mile relay team, was out. Bart didn't want to weaken his small squad by overworking a potential winner of another event with extra duty. His eyes rested on Three-jay Joplin.

"You'll run that third leg, a half mile," he said.

Three-jay buttoned up his lip as if nothing had happened. He nodded. "I'll do some running, too. I'll show you who's the fool," he said to Creight.

AND the homely kid did well in the relay, after he took the baton from the No. 2 man in second place ten yards behind. Running a distance new to him, Joplin plugged around the four laps and finished only a couple



yards behind. Calvin gave him a nod as he came off the track.

Then when the mile was called, the dead-panned kid was put on the spot again. Calvin gathered his men about him.

"Salway's suffering from a cold. This is the night we might take him. Then he gave Three-jay orders to go out and feed the pace to the Tozar star, to make him run himself out. Creight swore

under his breath when he heard the order. It didn't look as if the kid would be copy that night.

The coach's strategy seemed slated to succeed. For just before the gun, the Tozar ace miler looked over from the No. 2 position, and with a sneer, he measured Joplin, the man who'd knocked him off a track.

The gun! And the graceless-running Joplin went right after his man. It was a duel from the beginning.

After they'd run five laps, the frozen-faced, but scrappy Three-jay, steamed out of a turn to throw the defi to the great Salway again. He passed him. Then the foxy Tozar star blasted up abreast and took him out. Three-jay was tiring fast; was running with a jerky, unsteady motion. Salway was able to drop the pace down to normal.

On the next lap on the same turn, three men from the field closed up, Boyce among them. Joplin seemed to be running blind. He swerved out to force Salway again, unaware of Ted Boyce almost at his elbow. Boyce tried to get clear without fouling anybody. One of his spikes raked Three-jay Joplin's leg. The kid plowed on, apparently unaware of the injury.

Even as he failed to get Salway that time, Creight was exulting on the side line. Here was a new story. The homely runner spiked by one of his own team and yet—

Then Creight's jaw went slack. For Three-jay Joplin, at the upper turn, came walking off the track.

The race went on. An assistant manager brought a blanket to him as he headed for the dressing room. Salway hadn't been forced enough. He won the mile, killing Burkon's last hope of taking the quadrangular meet.

Creight and the track coach went down to the dressing room together.

After an inspection that showed the spike wound was little more than a flesh cut, Calvin said quietly:

"No real runner quits on his feet."

Three-jay simply sat there like a lump of clay.

Creight blew up. "You yellow little tramp, you quit! You did it out of spite, or—hell, I always knew you were yellow!"

Joplin stood up. But he didn't swing. "Yellow? I walked off that track because I didn't want to make a public spectacle of myself again! You've been doing it for me enough. My left leg was paralyzed!"

Calvin's eyes narrowed nastily. Creight bit off an oath and told the kid he was a liar.

"A liar? You're the liar, Creight. That newspaper stuff. On the business staff of the paper! Bah! Yeah, I collected a bill from you, and from other folks, too. That's how I'm paying my way through college. The *Mail's* never made a cent because of bad bills. I said I could collect 'em an' I get a percentage for doing it! See?"

"Well?"

Three-jay fired again. "I *deliver* those papers starting at five a. m. every day! And every evening, too! That's why I had to quit running against Tonport. That's why my legs were in such condition when I started to run! That's why to-night, when I was in an extra event, my legs went bad on me, and I didn't want to play the jackass again! I got off that track because I was afraid of going down and tripping somebody else. Now, you all can take your track team and your publicity stunts and your smart copy and go to hell! I'm *finished!*"

CHAPTER V.

A REAL CHAMPION

JOHN JONES JOPLIN went back to his quiet, hidden life. He wanted to be forgotten by that campus. He didn't want to see his name in the paper again. He didn't want to know anybody.

The next week moved along. Saturday's dawn came and Joplin was picking up his papers in the *Mail* office. He tried to tell himself there was no peculiar tugging at his heart. But he didn't look a second time at the front-page photo of the Burkon track team as it had entrained last night for the State Conference meet.

"Dad" Steiner, the boss, yelled at him. "Hustle back. We're shooting an extra onto the press now. Charlie Calvin, brother of Bart Calvin, broke out of State's prison in Illinois last night after fatally shooting a guard. Hustle it up on the route!"

Three-jay went out and turned down Grove Boulevard that led to the main State highway. He'd make his deliveries there, then swing around Faculty Crescent. He thought of Bart Calvin as he half trotted.

This jail-bird brother stuff explained lots of things, explained why Calvin the coach was always restrained and trying to be so careful. With that blot on his family record, it was terribly important for him to be accepted as a gentleman and a sportsman. Other folks had handicaps, Three-jay realized. A homely pan like his wasn't so much.

There was something wrong about the way that coupé was parked across the street. One wheel was over the snow-coated curb and a fender bore a dent from the near-by tree. Three-jay walked over and peered in. There, slumped on the seat and sleeping peacefully, was Ted Boyce. And the team had left for the meet last night!

Three-jay went into action. He ripped open the door, hauled Boyce out and rubbed his face roughly in the snow. The track star reeked of liquor fumes. Then he blinked his eyes open, recognized Three-jay Joplin.

"Howdy, Three-jay, ol' pal. Howdy. Some party, kid, some party." Boyce didn't know where he was yet.

"The team left last night," Three-jay blurted.

"The team? Ha-ha! To hell with it. Damn ol' Barty Calvin! Gee, I had some time! Some time!" He sat up, swaying. "Ol' Three-jay. Sure had tough luck, kid. I tried my best for you in that National meet. Tried to let you win that mile. Honest. Oh, gee, my head!"

He let out a squawk as Three-jay Joplin suddenly yanked him up and piled him roughly into the car. The homeliness champ slid behind the wheel. He drove down to the *Mail* office, phoned a friend who'd taken over his route when he'd had to go out of town with the team. Then he walked into Dad Steiner and asked for twenty bucks advance.

"Why, sure, Joppy. But where's you going?"

"Up to Council City for the State Conference meet!"

"But no train out of this hick burg can get you there in time."

"Driving," said Three-jay woodenly. "Thanks. I'll make it!"

THE Black and Silver track squad of Burkon sat around the partitioned-off section of the locker room in Council City. They had as much pep as a carload of overworked pallbearers. There was good reason.

The story about Bart Calvin's criminal brother had broken. Calvin himself had disappeared, not having the courage to face them. And Boyce, their star, was among the missing, too. The gang knew why; they knew about his weakness for drinking parties.

Lanny Creight stalked around like a sick wild cat, face working, mouth twitching as he verged on giving them a spiel. He thought of all the colorful, dramatic sport squibs he'd batted out. But somehow, there just didn't seem to be any words that wouldn't sound hollow now.

Then the door opened, and Ted Boyce inched in sheepishly, suddenly bolted ahead from a push in the rear. Behind him was Three-jay Joplin. He stopped stock-still himself, put his hands on his hips, shoved his homely face out boldly.

"Maybe I didn't read the papers right," he said in that dry, wooden voice. "Maybe you've all got brothers in prison!"

The very flat way he said it brought a few grins. Somebody said: "Atta boy, ol' pickle puss!"

Three-jay took a couple of strides. "So you birds have turned on Bart Calvin, too? No? Well, then, why sit around like you were at a funeral! Snap out of it! There's a meet upstairs waiting to be won!"

Phane, the pole vaulter and captain, jumped up, wiped cold sweat from his face. "Damn' right!"

"Show Calvin you're behind him," said Three-jay. "Go up there and run like blazes, not like a bunch of whipped jackals! Win that meet! Then Bart Calvin'll know—"

The rest of his words were lost in the uproar. They were all talking as if their tongues had been on springs that were just released. The bunch was on the spot; knew the finger of the gallery would be pointed at them. And up on the floor, new light came into their eyes when they got second and third places in the 220. Then the 440 came along.

"Boyce'll run it," said Three-jay.

Creight nodded as he watched this kid who'd suddenly emerged from his shell. Creight knew things were out of his hands for once.

Boyce pushed himself out of his chair back from the track, stripped off his sweat shirt and got second in that quarter. It was a place the Burkon outfit had never figured on. Then, whiter-faced than ever, he went into the half mile and copped it with a reeling, but scorching final sprint. Scrapping, hot,

Burkon was leading. They held that lead until the first call for the mile was announced.

PHANE realized it first. It was almost the last event on the card.

The five points that went with first place would insure the conference trophy for the Black and Silver. And Boyce was tired.

"I still got some stuff in my legs," he explained it himself. "But I couldn't stand a grueling pace for those twelve laps."

Salway passed on his way to the boards, waved mockingly to Three-jay Joplin. "Hello, cowboy! Sorry you won't be choking on my spike dust tonight." He knew Joplin had quit the squad.

Three-jay squinted up his dull eyes. Phane spat "cotton" from his mouth. "I saw Calvin's entry list for this meet. You were down for the mile, Three-jay."

That was all the champion homely guy needed. "Boyce, I'll take care of Salway. All you got to do is run your own race." Then he headed for the locker room.

Creight came down as the kid stripped quickly. "What's the game?" he demanded suspiciously.

Three-jay grinned at him. "I'm not sore any more. You can let your paper bill run three months."

"Wh-what?"

"I got thinking. Because of my homely face, I've always gone around with a chip on my shoulder; never gave folks a chance to be decent to me. When I lost that National meet, the team was mighty white about it. And after that quadrangular affair, the papers blamed Boyce for spiking me. He never corrected them, nor did Bart Calvin, who thought I'd quit. And that news about Calvin's brother. Other folks got troubles, too—maybe worse than a mug like mine."

"Yeah?" Creight gasped. This was better than any story he'd ever made up.

"Then Boyce told me how he'd tried to let me win the mile against National."

Instinctively, Lanny Creight ducked. But no knuckles came. The homely kid merely looked sheepish.

"I thought that was pretty swell. Folks liked me, whenever I let them. What you did, gave me the chance to find that out."

Creight grabbed the kid's sloping shoulders. This was a success yarn plus. "You'll win that mile?"

"No, Ted Boyce will if I have to carry him over!"

WHEN Three-jay got upstairs, there was barely time for him to take a couple of short muscle-stretching lopes. Then they were at the starting line. He looked over at Salway who had drawn No. 2 position.

"I don't choke easy; but hot air makes me mad, Mister Big," he said in a challenging manner.

They got the gun. A Middleton man jumped into the lead, with a Lasanner A. & M. runner tagging him around the turn. They piled into the back stretch, and the field tailed out. Salway moved up to third. Right with him was Three-jay Joplin, and the battle was on.

Three-jay challenged, found Salway stepping it up to fight him off. Salway rated him merely a freak, after the way he'd apparently quit in that last test. Three-jay knew. He kicked it open another notch after they made the second turn, breezed by Salway and the first two men, and slid into first place.

The stands howled. The guy certainly was a funny-looking specimen. And his style—that flat-footed way he hit the boards, those stooped shoulders—was a laugh. Then, the grins of derision began to fade as they went through the first quarter mile.

"Sixty and three fifths seconds!" blared the loud-speakers.

The joke runner with the face like the aftermath of an accident was setting a terrific pace. But he didn't seem to



be wilting. They suddenly realized he'd always looked a little tired; that he still looked the same way, exactly.

Salway moved up to take over control; then the real race began. Salway with his lean legs clicking off the ground with perfect, flawless form, and the stocky Three-jay Joplin grinding along with his lack of grace, his jerky arm action. Salway went by on the turn.

The crowd roared. For Three-jay Joplin veered way out on the banked surface and came spiking off it down onto the back stretch. They saw he'd let the champion forge ahead there lest he foul him, aware he'd have to swing wide himself.

They finished the half with Joplin in the lead and Salway right on his heels, turned off another lap that way. Then Three-jay faded, and the great star of Tozar moved into the lead on the tenth lap. He had control. He eased up, went into the eleventh circuit. Then there was the gun lap.

And out of the ruck, coming up with a driving sprint was Ted Boyce with the black-and-silver stripe of Burkon across his shirt. Then the crowd suddenly discovered the great Salway had nothing left.

On the beginning of the back stretch, Boyce took him easily, opened a ten-yard gap that widened. Boyce was finishing on sheer heart.

There was a fresh scream from the mob. From behind, *not* coming like a house afire, *not* turning on a brilliant sprint with flashing form, came Three-jay Joplin. He was catching the great Salway. They hit into the final turn. Joplin seemed to waver. Then a little, bespectacled man near the track edge, burst into a stream of savage oaths. Joplin looked. It was Coach Bart Calvin.

Three-jay, arms jerking up and down, knee action bad, legs almost driving, hurled himself past Salway, stumbled a moment, then drove over to the line.

He'd taken second to clinch the meet beyond all doubt for Burkon.

Afterward, walking off the floor, head high because the team had vindicated him by showing how they were behind him, Coach Bart Calvin turned to Lanny Creight.

"Say, you got your publicity. How about that advertising indorsement you were going to fix for me?"

Creight smiled catlike. "All set. Man'll be in with the contract and a check in the morning at my office."

"Swell," breathed Calvin.

"Yeah, it's a rubdown guaranteed to reduce a fat woman's weight!"

"Why, you—" Then the publicity hound was in the locker. He saw Three-jay Joplin standing in front of him.

"I'll be around to your place in the morning to collect on your paper bill," the homely kid panted.

He couldn't have stood congratulations just then.

THREE ACTION CHAMPIONS!



ICE BUSINESS

By
Burt L. Standish

Pokey had to fight his teammates as well as his opponents.



FAST COMPANY

By
Dabney Horton

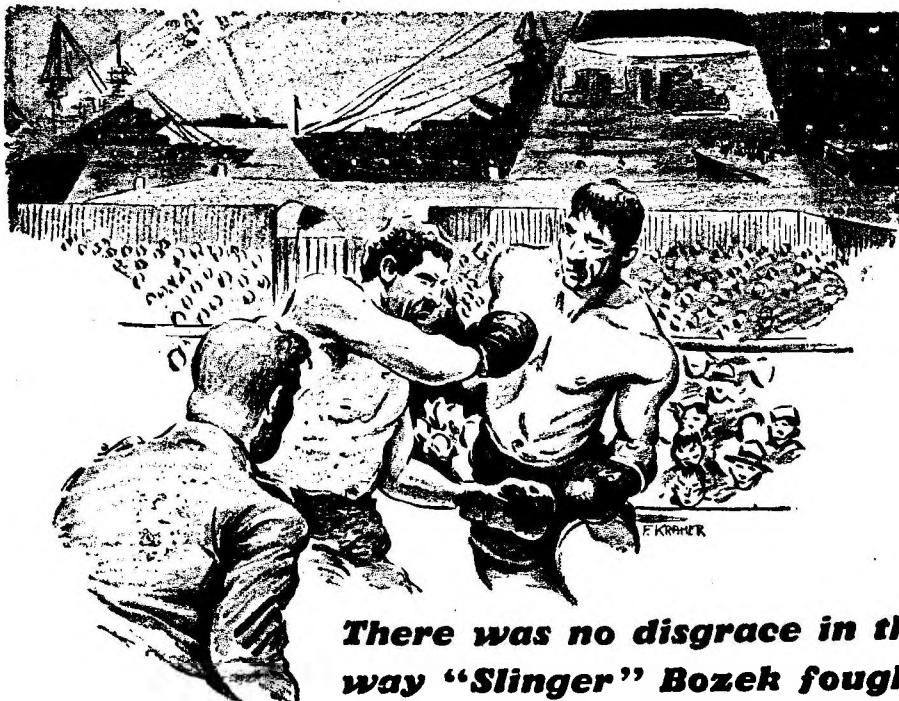
An amateur bike champ finds his first pro race a back-breaking experience.



ODDS RUNNER

By
Eric Rober

Johnny could run his best race when the going was toughest.



***There was no disgrace in the
way "Slinger" Bozek fought***

Three Rounds, Shanghai Style

by FRANKLIN P. MILLER

Author of: "Dutch Kostha, Good American," etc.

THROUGH the leather-lunged uproar of a thousand Marines, reënforced by whoops and howls in half the known tongues of the world, "Slinger" Bozek heard the faint clamor of the gong, but he paid no attention to it.

For the first time in three rounds, he had "Shifty" Brewer right where he wanted him, backed against the ropes in a neutral corner where Shifty had to stand and take the pounding which Slinger Bozek was becoming famous for dishing out. It was up to the pudgy warrant-officer referee to stop the round,

Slinger figured; until then, he intended to keep on ripping Shifty apart.

Four times he swung vicious socks to Shifty's battered ribs before the panting referee could pry him loose, and Shifty went to his knee as he finally did step clear. The man was out on his feet, Slinger knew. Next round, he would take the count as number seven on Slinger Bozek's list of straight kayos.

"Back to your corner!" the sweating warrant officer rasped in Slinger's ear. "Next time you sling a punch after the bell, I'll disqualify you."

"Sorry," Slinger apologized, a look

of injured innocence on his face. Then he extended an open mitt to Brewer, who was weaving back to his stool.

That act was to convince the mob that he had not heard the bell. He had worked a gag like that in high school plenty of times, before he enlisted in the Marine Corps.

Slinger knew all about psychology, in his own opinion, and he meant to use that knowledge to benefit Slinger Bozek most. Ever since his recruit days in Quantico, he had planned on wearing a top sergeant's stripes in the shortest possible time. But a private in the "leathernecks" has to have a reputation as a hard-driving, outstanding leader to win stripes in the Marine Corps. So Slinger Bozek had started out to make himself famous with his gloves.

So far he had been real successful. Standing six feet two inches in his socks, he did not have an ounce of fat in his one hundred and ninety-two pounds of bone and gristle, and the expert coaching of Lieutenant John Chafee had given the added deadliness of expert timing to his mule-kick punch. In the six months since he joined the Marine guard in Shanghai's International Settlement, Slinger Bozek had won every scrap; the last six by straight, ruthless K. O.'s.

Back in his corner, he glanced at Lieutenant Chafee to see how his gesture had gone across, but the eyes of the hawk-faced coach were not on him at all. The lieutenant was talking to a square-faced, heavy-shouldered staff sergeant with a double row of medal ribbons on his khaki blouse.

Slinger recognized the noncom with narrowed eyes. Every man in the Marine Corps knew big Jock Hargrave, who had held the heavyweight title for the last three years in a row. It was queer that the coach should be holding a heads-heads with the defending champ instead of watching his own fighter, Slinger thought. He and Hargrave had never had much use for each other. It

would be a pleasure to take the title away from Hargrave some day soon.

No need to get all steamed up over that now, though. There were still thirty seconds left, and Shifty's handlers were just corking the smelling salts. To advertise his own condition, Slinger stood up, flexed his shoulder muscles, and looked over the hash of queer nationalities which made up the fight-night crowd.

All leathernecks not on duty were in the ringside seats, sandwiched between diplomats and officers from a dozen nations. Back of the Marines were the kilts of a Highland Regiment, blue-uniformed French Annamites, and the bleachers were jammed with Chinese in everything from blue denim to claw-hammer evening coats.

Mighty few Japanese were on hand, he noticed, even if the Whangpoo River was thick with the ships of the Imperial Third Squadron. The arena was roofless, and their black hulks were visible beyond the skyscraper lights of Shanghai's famous Bund.

As the ten-second whistle blew, Slinger Bozek gave his full attention to the fourth round which was coming up. Shifty was on his feet now. The seconds had whipped the stools out of the corners.

Impatiently Slinger touched mitts with his lanky opponent, let the red-faced referee pass between them, and dropped into his wide-stanced fighting crouch. There was no hurry about this, he figured. He had three full minutes to do a thorough job.

For an instant, there was a swift exchange of feints and counters. Brewer was going back slowly behind a jabbing left, trying to keep Slinger Bozek at a distance. Those jolting body blows he had absorbed had slowed down the footwork which had won him his nickname in other bouts.

Slinger knew he already had this

scrap sewed up on points, but there was no mercy in his stony eyes. With deadly concentration, he watched each shift of balance, stepping in to hook a left under Brewer's guard each time the man tried to circle, driving him relentlessly toward the ropes.

Half a minute passed before a solid blow landed. From the ringside seats, a chorus of deep voices urged them to "quit the skirt dance and mix things up."

Slinger Bozek did not heed them. Brewer might be hurt, but the man was still dangerous. He had to be good to be so near the top in this interbattalion competition.

That apparent indecision deceived Shifty Brewer. For an instant, he thought he saw a chance to retrieve those last three rounds by a fourth-round knock-out. Surging forward, he hooked a left to the head and followed it with a swift right cross.

Both blows were blocked with leather, then Slinger's own attack jumped off.

Like a suddenly released spring, his right slashed under Shifty's elbow to land on his punished belly muscles. A slicing left followed in a split second, hooking over his guard to batter his nose. Shifty grunted and rocked back, but the ropes were too close to his shoulders now.

The memory of that last round was still with him. He covered with gloves and elbows and tried to roll along the ropes. But Slinger Bozek was following each move.

Left! Right! Left! A cyclone of leather hammered Shifty's ribs, each solid impact bringing a grunt. He tried to clinch and ran into a storm of infighting that reddened his torso. Savage, short-ranged socks blasted his belly muscles, forcing him to crouch and cover up. An uppercut ripped between his wrists and dropped him for a six count. The crowd was howling for a knock-out, a steady, growling roar.

Slinger Bozek gave him no time to recover. The instant he was on his feet Slinger charged once more. All thought of footwork and deception had left Shifty now; only the instinct remained to cover his jaw and weather the storm.

Again that scorching uppercut straightened him. A left jab tilted his head back into position, exactly where Slinger Bozek wanted it, to take the full force of the right which followed.

Shifty had no guard against it. Slowly his knees buckled and he pitched forward, down for the count. Slinger had come one step nearer to that title of Jock Hargrave's.

"Eight, nine, out!" the referee counted.

Slinger waited in a neutral corner until it was completed, then he went into the rest of his act for the benefit of the crowd. In three strides he was beside Shifty, hauling him to his corner before the seconds could get through the ropes. It went over big with the crowd, as usual.

"You sure socked it to him, big boy!" "Doc" Caska, his chief handler, crowed, as he tossed a bath robe around Slinger's shoulders when he climbed through the ropes.

"Yeah, it was in the bag, after the second," Slinger agreed carelessly.

"Then why get so tough?" a cool voice inquired. "It wasn't a grudge fight, was it? You didn't need to rip him apart."

Slinger glanced over his shoulder and found that Staff Sergeant Hargrave had asked the cold question. Slinger's eyes narrowed once more. Jock Hargrave might be a big shot to some people, but that gave him no right to bawl Slinger Bozek out.

A circle of youngsters, most of them from the same replacement outfit that Slinger had dominated at Quantico, had gathered around the pair, listening to this exchange with Hargrave. Slinger

meant something to them. He'd show this old-time has-been where he got off.

"What's the matter?" Slinger inquired sarcastically. "Did you hate to see a pal of yours knocked cold?"

"Hard as nails, huh?" Hargrave commented. "Shifty is no pal of mine. I just don't like to see a scrap won on a foul."

"Tell it to the chaplain!" Slinger snarled. "Inside the ropes, I don't have any pals!"

"Yeah, so I noticed," Hargrave grunted, swinging on his heel and joining the crowd which was pouring out of the arena.

"You sure told him where to get off, fella," Doc Caska said admiringly. "He oughta be a Holy Joe. I've heard a rumor he was going to retire, now he's got that 'first stripe down' on his arm."

"Yeah, he knows he wouldn't have a chance with Slinger," "Brick" Redshaw cut in. Brick was another replacement who had been with Bozek at Quantico.

OUTSIDE the arena, Jock Hargrave found Lieutenant Chafee waiting. He fell into step on the officer's left, and the pair started back toward the long warehouse which Uncle Sam had rented as a barracks for the Shanghai Marine guard.

It was late, but there was an unusual crowd still on the streets, pouring across the Garden Bridge into the Settlement. A drove of rickshas passed them, the skivies of the coolies flapping on the pavement. They were full of women and children mostly, with a few old men among them. Here and there was a huge wheelbarrow, piled shoulder-high with bundles.

"What luck?" Lieutenant Chafee asked quietly of the sergeant.

"I spoke to him, sir, but he was as hostile as a Shensi long-sword bandit," Hargrave answered. "Probably I riled him," he added honestly. "Anyhow, he

had to wisecrack for the benefit of his pals."

"I expected that," Lieutenant Chafee observed. "It wouldn't matter, if the outfit was made up of old-timers. But right now we've got a bunch of replacements, and they think Bozek is a little tin god."

"Yeah, I know, sir." The sergeant nodded. "It makes them hard to handle. I'm a staff sergeant now, and they figure I'm getting old."

"Somebody's got to take him," the lieutenant stated flatly. "That stunt he pulled, pretending not to hear the bell, was absolutely raw. You couldn't prove he did hear it, of course, but it's a bad influence on the youngsters to see a raw deal turn out successful."

Jock Hargrave straightened his shoulders. The rumor that Caska had heard was true. He had planned to hang up his gloves. After all, he was thirty now, and a high-ranking N. C. O. He had planned on retiring undefeated, as Gene Tunney had done.

"I guess I'm good for another scrap, sir," he came to his decision.

"Thanks, Jock," the lieutenant said. "I knew I could count on you."

Lieutenant Chafee realized what that simple statement had implied. Slinger Bozek was good, no doubt about it. If he won that title from Jock Hargrave, the man would be unbearable. He already had too much influence on the youngsters for the outfit's good.

They walked on in silence, watching the dark bulk of Japanese destroyers in the Whangpoo. There was just moonlight enough to see an old cruiser, the *Idzuma*, tied up to a wharf near the N. Y. K. line headquarters.

"No Jap soldiers in the stands tonight, sir," Hargrave commented. "It looks like '32."

"I'm afraid so," the lieutenant agreed. "I wish we didn't have so many recruits. Half the outfit never heard a rifle crack in anger."

B'ACK in the eight-by-ten room with the steel bunk and single chair which was his quarters, Jock Hargrave dug an assortment of gloves, ropes, head harness, and trunks out of his locker, and looked them over carefully. Picking up the rope, he skipped a hundred in his stocking feet and whistled a little as he found that his breathing was still unhampered.

No time like the present, he decided. He stripped off his uniform, folding the breeches over the chair back and hanging the blouse on a hanger.

Five minutes later he was outside, trotting toward the race course in a sweat shirt and trunks. The ricksha crowd was still pouring into the Settlement, he noticed. None of them paid any attention to him, though. He was just another "crazy foreigner," and running wind sprints at night was what one could expect from them.

An hour later, he was back in his room once more, explaining exactly what he wanted to Lafferty, Turbull, and Cittando, three old-timers whom he knew he could rely on. All of them were three-stripers, with service in Nicaragua, Haiti, and a dozen other countries. Lafferty had even used a machine gun in the Battle of the Marne in the World War.

"I theenka you craze een tha head!" Cittando protested. "Theesa Slinger guy, he ees good!"

"Aw, stow that guff in the bilge, wop!" Mike Lafferty cut him off short. "Sure, can't yuh see 'tis ready for a wheel chair Slinger thinks Jock is! 'Tis an insult to us all!"

"It's a heavy order on short notice," Turbull interrupted. "But Jock can do it. All we've got to do is be a set of human punching bags for him to practice on."

"I theenka you craze, too." "Wop" grinned. "But me, I guess I can do eet if Mike can do."

FOUR days later, when Slinger Bozek was drumming out "All Conductors Have Big Feet" on the punching bag, Doc Caska burst into the gym still wearing the cartridge belt and toting the Springfield he had carried on his tour on guard.

"Wait till I tell yuh," Doc chortled importantly. "Boy, does this take the big apple! It'll slay yuh!"

"Get it out of your system," Slinger snapped at him. "I'm working out for that scrap with Stoll."

"Yuh just think yuh are!" Caska assured him. "I was walkin' down near the tents we've set up fer them missionary refugees, and whadda yuh think I saw?"

"A good-looking gal, I suppose," Slinger snorted.

"Naw, I'm serious. This is funny. Jock Hargrave was workin' out on Mike Lafferty and Wop Cittando! Yuh know what? I bet he's goin' to try an' hold that title."

"That," Slinger snapped, "is sure swell news! After I finish with Stoll, I'll be regimental champ—with a right to challenge Jock Hargrave pronto! I'll teach that bird not to wisecrack about fouls!"

Methodically he went into the ring on the next Saturday night, and placed Corporal Stoll, pride of the Third Battalion, out of the running for good. The first round was a long-ranged exchange, with Stoll doing his best to keep Slinger at a distance, while Bozek took no chances with that challenge to Hargrave in view.

But that second round was something else again. In the first frame Slinger had analyzed Stoll's form, tested his counters, and got ready to go to town. With the gong for the second, he came out swinging, and Stoll elected to slug it out. Corporal Stoll undoubtedly had courage—but not much discretion.

~ Slinger Bozek ducked a sizzling right,

surged inside the corporal's guard, and blasted him with a salvo of short punches which left his ribs and belly a mass of reddening welts. Stoll clinched, and the referee pried them apart.

But Slinger's rush started the instant the referee was out of the picture. A left hook caught Stoll on the neck and drove him against the ropes. He bounced off, and connected with a scorching crossed right with the impact of his own forward lunge adding power to the blow.

Stoll went down, sagging on the ropes, in an awkward, loose-jointed sprawl. He was down for ten and then some, Slinger Bozek thought, as he went back to a neutral corner. Now he had the right to challenge Hargrave for a bout—or make him forfeit the title.

The crowd was roaring as usual, he noticed. Then a faint *pop*, near the Hongkew water front, sounded, and the crowd was suddenly still. A sputter of faint cracks followed, like some one breaking a handful of sticks for fire in the mess hall. Then a dull *boom* came from the *Idzuma's* forward guns, and the bugle at Marine Barracks began to sound assembly, its silver clearness echoed by a dozen others, as the company buglers picked it up.

Slinger Bozek pulled the bath robe around his shoulders, slid through the ropes, and trotted for the dressing room. He had not taken much stock in the war talk which had been circulating through the regiment.

Even if something did break, it wouldn't affect the International Settlement, he had told himself. But something had broken, and a stray bullet could kill a man just as dead as one that was aimed at you.

He dressed in a hurry, reported to his outfit, and fell in under arms. It felt funny to have a belt full of ammunition pulling at your belly muscles. Slinger had not thought much about

that when he had joined up with the Marine Corps.

But nothing much happened that night. The guards were doubled along Soochow Creek, which was the Marine sector of the Settlement lines, and the stream of refugees turned into a flood, all seeking the comparative safety of the International Zone. The rest of the outfit was released about eleven o'clock, but they had orders to stay in their own compound.

SLINGER did not sleep much that night. There was an air of tension running through the barracks. Men talked in low tones, wondering what it was all about, their conversation punctuated by the distant regular thunder of the *Idzuma's* guns.

Reveille came, and breakfast. It was almost time for drill call when Jock Hargrave sauntered into the squad room where Slinger was policing around his bunk for morning quarters inspection. Slinger had forgotten about Jock Hargrave in his excitement.

"I hear you're the regimental heavy champ," Hargrave said in flat, disinterested tones.

Slinger nodded, startled. He wondered why Jock was bringing it up now.

"Any time you want a shot at my title, you're welcome," Hargrave said calmly. "How would a week from last night do?"

Slinger Bozek gulped. This was not the way he had planned things. He meant to do the challenging, but Hargrave had beaten him to the jump.

"Aw, you know damn well all the scraps are off," Slinger blustered. "We're under stand-by orders now."

"So what?" the sergeant questioned. "We'll carry on as usual. It's up to you. You've told plenty of lads that you meant to knock me slap-happy. I hope it was something besides talk, because I'm challenging you!"

Slinger Bozek's eyes began to burn.

The rest of the section in that squad room were listening to the sergeant. Doc Caska's mouth was open; Redshaw was running a hand through his caroty hair. They were waiting for an answer.

"A week from last night suits me!" he snarled. "I'm calling your bluff."

"Too bad, keed. I theenka you don't know theesa fellas card-een-thee-hole," Wop Cittando cut in. "Anyhow, you learn pretty soon. Now getta outside. That bugle, she's blown."

Slinger Bozek had very little time to call his own in the week that followed. Lieutenant Chafee still turned out the squad each afternoon, but practice time was cut to an hour, and the constant crashing of guns had begun to wear on Slinger's nerves.

It was not the *Idzuma* alone now. All the destroyers were throwing shells into Pootung and Chapei. The stutter of machine guns was an incessant undertone. It was '32 all over again, except that the Chinese lines were holding. In some places they even attacked, and the smoke of exploding shells was visible from the Settlement, together with the fires they caused.

All the shore of Soochow Creek was wired in by this time. Slinger Bozek helped lay the double-apron wire and dig in the machine guns which commanded every yard of front. The Settlement was jammed with refugees. It was a job to keep them in order, especially when planes from both sides began to roar overhead and drop assorted cargoes of bombs.

Slinger was on guard near the Garden Bridge when the Wing On department store was bombed, and ambulances from every hospital in the Settlement began to carry their loads. One bomb had accounted for over a thousand dead and injured. The pilot had been wounded, and his bomb racks shot loose. He had tried to reach the open space at the race course, beyond the boxing

arena, before the last shred of steel wire tore away, and failed by ten seconds.

Slinger Bozek was not able to sleep at all the night after that happened. Still, life had to go on in the Settlement in spite of war. Old "Iron-pants" Hardwick, colonel commanding the Marine guard, realized perfectly how much need there was for diversion to take the outfit's mind off its troubles. The title bout between Hargrave and Bozek stayed on the schedule.

IN the quiet dressing room, Slinger Bozek found it hard to concentrate. He was listening to the muffled roar of the thousands of fans who were watching the prelim bouts to settle runner-up and championship places in the other weights.

Doc Caska returned from a scouting trip and reported that every seat was filled, even the section reserved for the diplomatic corps. Even the guard relief off duty had permission to watch from the top of the earthen bank which had been built up around the concrete bowl.

Then it was time, and he went down the aisle in a sea of staring faces between Caska and Redshaw, waved his mitts in response to the yell which came from his Quantico pals, and looked across the ring at Jock Hargrave.

With a shock of surprise, he noticed that there was not a trace of a spare tire around Jock Hargrave's middle. The man looked bigger stripped than he did in uniform. The way his powerful shoulders sloped away from his corded neck was ominous. They promised plenty of power.

Hargrave was built like a wedge, broad at the top, tapering to a narrow waist, flat hips, and smooth-muscled legs which showed no signs of muscle-binding at all.

Still, the man was thirty, Slinger re-

minded himself, and he was barely twenty-one. Nine years make a whale of a difference.

There was a brief meeting at ring center while the referee gave his instructions. Slinger avoided Hargrave's eyes, went back to his corner, and limbered up on the slopes.

Lieutenant Chafee was not in his usual seat, Slinger noticed; then he discovered the coach between Old Ironpants and the colonel of the Scotch regiment, in the diplomatic block. All the dope Slinger would get must come from Caska and Redshaw, while Hargrave had Turnbull, Lafferty, and Wop Cittando in his corner.

It was unnaturally still, Slinger thought, as he waited for the bell. The machine guns were silent for once, though a distant drone of airplane motors came from some unknown point.

The clang of the gong was welcome. He wheeled, glided toward ring center, touched gloves with Hargrave, and led with his left as the referee signaled them to go. It was time to put the careful plans he had made for this meeting into execution.

The left jab was blocked with leather. Slinger had expected it to be, but he did not expect the slashing right counter which hooked over his shoulder and landed on his cheek bone. Instinctively he countered with a right cross, but that was blocked with leather, also, and a lightning jab tapped him on the nasal bone.

A delighted roar of appreciation came from the bleachers as Slinger covered and rolled back from this exchange which had netted him nothing while Hargrave scored two points, and that move itself scored the sergeant another for aggressive action.

Slinger Bozek realized that, almost the instant he started to circle. Even his Quantico pals had joined in the howl

of appreciation which Hargrave's expert cover and counter had drawn.

Somehow, Slinger had expected Jock Hargrave to be slow and clumsy. Instead he found himself looking like a sucker, and something had to be done about that right now.

He did not wait to act on that decision. Hargrave had pivoted to follow Slinger's circling, his face inscrutable as that of a stone Buddha. Slinger feinted a left and surged in close, smashing a volley into the sergeant's belly muscles.

But Jock Hargrave did not break back before that furious attack. Toe to toe, he stood fast and slugged. A left hook sliced past Bozek's partial block and almost jammed his Adam's apple down his throat. Then a corkscrew right lashed at his jaw. Slinger ducked, and it caught the ridge of his right eyebrow, bringing a trickle of blood.

The referee jumped between them then, hurling them apart. A quick glance satisfied the warrant officer that the cut was superficial, and he waved them together once more.

Slinger's throat still felt numb where that left had landed. It made breathing difficult, but he was anxious for more. No man had been able to stand up to his pounding before. It stood to reason that Hargrave would have to slow up.

An instant of feinting, then Slinger bored in again, to find the sergeant coming in, too. The shriek of the mob rose to a crescendo as they hammered, wide open, swapping blow for blow. Above, the motors of those distant planes made a curious overtone, nearer than before.

Bozek rifled home a right to Hargrave's heart, jabbed a left at his head which bounced off a protecting shoulder, and started a right for a follow-through. But it did not land. Big Jock Hargrave had taken that heart blow without faltering. Now his countering

right flashed in an uppercut to Slinger's jaw.

A galaxy of stars swarmed around Slinger's head. He heard the bell clang, dimly, before his knees seemed to turn to rubber. Somehow, he made it to his own corner.

IT was queer how white and strained Caska looked, waving the salts bottle. Suddenly, Slinger realized that the acrid odor had brought him to. He had been out on his feet. His throat felt as though an iron band was around it. He had been saved by the bell in the first round. Jock Hargrave could have butchered him, given another few seconds.

"Can yuh hear me? Keep away from him! Wear him down! Can yuh hear me? Don't slug—box!" Caska was saying over and over.

"Sure, I hear you," Slinger panted, speaking above the crowd's clamor and the drone of those airplane motors.

Even Caska did not realize how close Slinger had been to a gone goose. Then the bell rang once more, and he got up. It was an effort, but he felt better on his feet. This time he would keep away. He had to keep away. If only those motors overhead wouldn't roar so loud! They bothered his thinking, somehow. He kept seeing in memory the crater that bomb had made in front of the Wing On store.

Afterward, he had no memory of that round. He managed to cover up and roll with the socks which the sergeant hurled at him, but he knew he was just going through the motions. Dimly he wondered why there was not more force behind Jock Hargrave's blows. They stung him repeatedly, but they did not jar him to the bone as they had in that first round.

Another minute of rest. He began to breathe more freely, but the upper lid of his eye was puffing. It was hard

to see. Hargrave must realize that advantage, yet he had not tried to reopen the cut which Doc had closed with adhesive and collodion. That was square of Jock.

The machine guns had started their raving again, Slinger noticed subconsciously. Anti-aircraft guns were firing, too. They made a sharper crack than ordinary field guns. The drone of motors had increased to a sharp, all-pervading hum.

Then the bell rang once more, and he was going out to meet Jock Hargrave. Overhead, the searchlights were sweeping the heavens, looking for those Chinese bombers.

Strangely, Jock Hargrave did not slug as he came in this time. Instead, he clinched and tied up Slinger's arms. Dimly Slinger heard him muttering in his ear.

"Stand up, fella! The mob's jittery now! If those bombers come close, they're going to rush the exits. A lot of 'em will be hurt! Stand up and make 'em forget it in watching us!"

There was the ring of command in Staff Sergeant Hargrave's low-voiced words. Slinger Bozek stiffened as he heard it. Hargrave was not worried about those bombs. He was thinking about the nervous, overstrained Chinese in the bleachers. The Marines in the ringside seats could not prevent a panic if the mob started to storm the exit aisles to seek safety outside. Unless a bomb made a direct hit on the arena, they were safer where they were now.

Slinger nodded as the pudgy warrant officer separated them. An instant later, he bored in as the official waved them to continue.

Again they were toe to toe, slugging their hearts out, taking one to land one. Jock Hargrave went to his knee, came up on three, and waded in to meet Slinger's immediate charge.

Slinger knew why Jock had pulled his punches in the second frame and carried him along. But it was no longer possible to pull a punch now. They had to go in wide open to keep the crowd in their seats, and neither man could afford to go down for the count.

Overhead, the motors of the Chinese bombers were drowning out all other sound, but the two massive figures in the ring kept all eyes on them by the savage earnestness of their encounter.

Another corkscrew punch blasted Slinger's throat. He gasped, and paid for it with a left hook to Hargrave's jaw.

The roar of the motors was diminishing now. Bombs were falling in the Whangpoo, but the planes had gone beyond the Settlement. Hargrave went to his knee again, and took a six count before he straightened up.

SUDDENLY, Slinger realized that Jock Hargrave's age was telling. Thirty was old for a fighter, even if he kept himself in the pink of condition.

But Hargrave had those two first rounds in his pocket. If he lasted this one out, he would take the fight on points and keep the title. And Jock Hargrave had deliberately given up his chance to win by a K. O. to carry Slinger Bozek through the last few minutes for the sake of the people in the bleachers who would never know.

Still, Jock Hargrave would never forgive him if he kept that title because Slinger Bozek took pity on him. Slinger did not know how he knew, but he did know. And no punches would be pulled in this round.

Slinger circled cautiously, jabbing with his left, working the sergeant to-

ward the ropes. He meant to win it in a hurry, by a knock-out.

Hargrave rocked back before him, covering with a jabbing left, protecting his jaw with his right glove. He did not seem to realize how close those ropes were to his shoulders.

Slinger had him where he wanted him now. He lunged forward, battering with rights and lefts, forgetting Jock Hargrave's years of ring experience.

Hargrave went back against the ropes, but he did not cover and try to roll away, as Shifty Brewer and so many others had done. Instead, he came out like a wild cat, the spring of the ropes behind him, and his cocked right blasted to Slinger Bozek's button.

Slinger hit the mat, came up to his hands and knees once, then rolled over. The cunning of experience had beaten him at the last instant.

He fought against the blackness that swept over him. Then he choked as the smelling salts struck his nostrils and cleared the fog. He was in his corner, with Caska and a dozen others working over him. Turbull and Lafferty were there, and even Jock Hargrave.

Somehow, Slinger Bozek felt no humiliation. He had done his best, and that best had not been good enough. But it had been a square scrap, from start to finish. It did not hurt to be beaten by a man like Hargrave.

"Nice work, fella! You sure had me going," Jock was saying. "This is my last scrap. I know when I've had enough. Next year I'll be in your corner when you lick all comers for the title."

"I'll sure be glad to learn that corkscrew punch," Slinger Bozek said honestly, wringing hard on the taped hand that Jock Hargrave stuck out.

Watch out for **THE NERVOUS WRECKER** in the next issue
(a boxing story by T. W. Ford)



TRAINER AND COACH

Including Handley Cross's Question Box

Conducted by **HANDLEY CROSS**

Letters should be addressed to Handley Cross, Street & Smith's Sport Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y. All letters must be signed with the reader's full name and address, and a stamped, self-addressed envelope for the reply should be inclosed. This service is free to all readers.

BE A FLAT-BACK!

STRONG men are flat-backed men! If a thousand men were stripped down to bathing trunks and placed in a line, any competent athletic trainer could walk along behind that line and pick out the really strong and well-built men in it as fast as he could walk by merely glancing at the lower part of their backs.

There are strong men who are short and chunky, like Tony Canzoneri, and strong men who are lean and gangling, like Don Budge. They weigh anywhere from a hundred to three hundred pounds. But they have one thing in common—all have flat backs.

Their backs don't curve in just above their hips and then reverse-curve outward just below the shoulders. From the base of their necks to their waists, their backs are *flat*.

The finest back I've ever seen is Jack Dempsey's. Next to him, Max Baer's. And next to his, Johnny Weissmuller's.

Check up on yourself. Stand up against a wall, so that your heels are

about five inches away from it, and your shoulders are touching it. Now, without changing position of your body, reach back and see how many fingers you can get between the wall and your back, about three inches above the line of your hips.

No room for a single finger? Swell; you're a real flat-back. Room for one finger? Fine; much better than average. Two, three or four fingers? Not so good. Time to get to work on your back.

Here's an exercise, devised by Bob Kiphuth of Yale, which will help to straighten it out.

Stand as you stood when you made the test, but with your arms hanging straight down and your palms toward the wall. Now contract the *lower* muscles of your abdomen and at the same time draw your buttocks *together* and *downward*. Being careful not to raise your shoulders, force your shoulder blades together.

Now relax, without allowing your ab-

dominal muscles to slump. Start with ten times a day, and gradually increase to twenty times a day.

Do this exercise every day for two or three months and you'll be eligible for membership in the Athletic Order of Flat-backs.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

In a basket-ball game, one of our opponents shot for goal from close to the basket. The ball went through the basket from underneath, and then dropped down and went back through the basket again. Our opponents claimed that it was a goal. Were they right? Please print answer. H. T. C., Indiana

It was not a goal. The ball entered the basket from below. Section 1 of Basket Ball Rule 7 reads: "A goal is made when the ball enters the basket from above and remains in or passes through."

I have been told that an athlete in training should drink plenty of water. But what is meant by plenty of water—how many glasses a day? Should an athlete drink much water before he is going to compete? R. B. A., Delaware

Many trainers think that an athlete in training should average a glass of water an hour during his waking hours. On days that an athlete is going to compete, he should cut his water drinking down to four or five glasses. After competition or training, an athlete should drink as much water as he wants, but he should drink it slowly, and only a few mouthfuls at a time.

I would like to know the official size of a boxing ring. K. H., Michigan

There is no official size. Each State makes its own rules. Most rings for professional bouts are twenty feet square.

I have started to play hockey and love the game, but I am handicapped by being a little slow on skates. Also, I am

not so good on starting and stopping quickly. Please tell me how I can overcome these faults. I am willing to work hard to do so. W. B., Vermont

The hockey player should take quick, short and hard strokes; this style enables him to get up speed quickly. Push hard with the inside of your skate blade at the end of every stroke. Be careful not to raise your foot too far off the ice after the finish of the stroke as that cuts down speed.

To stop quickly, turn your skate blades at right angles to the direction in which you are skating, with nearly all of your weight on your forward skate.

Practice quick starting at every opportunity, both from standing still and from skating slowly, until you have acquired the ability to get going at top speed in two or three strokes.

It is the player with a change of pace—the clever "stop-go" skater—who becomes a star at hockey.

What can I do to harden my feet? I am a handball player, and have continual trouble with sore and blistered feet. H. McF., Maryland

Wear heavy wool socks while playing, with light cotton socks under them. If your feet perspire freely, sift a mixture of boric acid, alum and talcum powder into your shoes; your druggist will make the mixture for you. A good method of hardening the feet is to apply compound tincture of benzoin to them with a brush.

I am an amateur cyclist. Please tell me how to develop my leg muscles, and what sort of outdoor and indoor exercise I should take during the winter, when cycling is impossible. F. S., QUEBEC

Riding a bicycle is an excellent method of developing the leg muscles. So is ice skating. Ice skating would be an excellent off-season exercise for you. All-around gymnasium work would be the best form of indoor training.

Drive Your Own Race

His backer had staked all on that race, and the sense of responsibility weighed heavily on Jerry



by LESLIE
McFARLANE

Author of:
"Elmer From The Arctic," etc.

AN electric excitement had laid siege to Gold Acres. Every one within a radius of fifty miles had crowded into the gold camp this morning; every one was packed in the main street; every one was talking, yelling and whooping at once.

The frenzied barks and yelps of scores of dogs created a deafening uproar, and, at intervals a minute apart, the babble of the crowd swelled to a cheer as the tumult was punctuated by a revolver shot. The first Gold Acres Dog Derby was getting under way.

The Dog Derby was the booming young gold camp's way of shouting to the world: "Hey, look at me! I've arrived!"

The four-day jamboree had been awaited for weeks. Until it was over, Gold Acres would know no rest. With the sum of \$2,500 posted as first-prize money, the race had attracted the best teams and drivers in the Northland.

Hans Berger, famous driver from Athabaska, had brought in his Huskies, great racers all and winners of many snow Marathons. Johnny Lasalle had come down from The Pas. Indians, half-breeds, Russians, Finns, Swedes, Englishmen, Canadians and Americans were entered, and their dogs represented everything from mongrels to Siberians.

Jerry O'Neill, waiting for his turn, patted King, the lead dog, and then shook hands with "Big Alex" Baine.

"Good luck, kid!" said Big Alex. "Drive your own race. Don't listen to anybody. You know the course and you know the dogs. Plan your own race and drive it your way."

"I'll do my best, Alex."

"Number Four to the post!" bawled the announcer, a red-bearded shift boss from the Golden Queen. "Sorensen entry. Pierre Marcoux driving. Number Four!"

"You're next," said Big Alex.

Jerry nodded. He was trembling all over. It was his first big race. Big Alex should have been driving the Baine team, but the left arm of Alex's mackinaw was dangling limp. His arm was in a sling beneath. A trial run over the course three days previously had shunted the veteran snow driver to the side lines when he broke his arm in a fifteen-foot fall over a cliff on Bitter Ridge.

Jerry O'Neill, with only youth and courage to balance his inexperience, had been pitchforked into the race at the last minute.

"You know what it means if we lose," said Big Alex calmly.

"We won't lose," Jerry replied, trying to get confidence into his voice.

"If we can grab that \$2,500," said Big Alex, "I can buy the equipment I need to give Sorensen a fight this summer. Without it, the Baine Freighting Company goes under."

"You're as good as washed up right now, Baine," said a harsh voice.

A big, cold-eyed man with a bulldog

jaw stood in the snow beside Alex Baine. His feet were planted wide apart, his hands were thrust into the pockets of his short fur coat, a cigar was cocked at a challenging angle between his teeth.

"Think so, Sorensen?"

"Wolf" Sorensen was Alex Baine's business rival and deadliest enemy. Boss of the Sorensen Transportation outfit, his bigger capital and crooked methods had driven rival freighters to the wall. Alex Baine was the last to hold out and unless Alex Baine could find money quickly for tractor equipment with which to fight the Sorensen opposition, Sorensen would soon have a monopoly of all freighting in the gold camp.

"Sure, I think so. Tell you what I'll do, Baine. I'll offer you three thousand dollars right now for your business and equipment. Take it or leave it. After the race, I offer nothing."

BIG ALEX didn't even hesitate. It was a chance to save something from the wreck as against losing everything if Jerry failed to win the race for him—and no one knew better than Big Alex how slim were the youngster's chances.

But the veteran shook his head. "Getting scared, Sorensen?" he said coolly.

"Scared!" snorted Sorensen. "I've got two teams in this race. And I'm gonna win it. By the time it's over, you'll be glad to take anything I care to offer you. But there'll be no offer." His lean face was malicious. "Get that? There'll be no offer."

Bang!

A revolver shot sent Marcoux and the first Sorensen team on their way. The crowd cheered.

"Number Five to the post!" roared the announcer. "Baine Freighting entry. Jerry O'Neill driving. Number Five!"

Jerry gripped the sled handles and urged the dogs up to the line. Sixteen

dogs, headed by old King, whom many regarded as the best lead dog in the Gold Acres country.

He knew the dogs and he knew the course, he had the strength and endurance to carry him through the four-hundred-mile grind, but he knew that his own lack of experience would count against him. He would be pitting his strength and skill against veteran drivers who had raced the Northland trails for years from Quebec to Alaska.

"Number Five!" shouted the announcer again.

"Go out there and win for me," said Big Alex. "Drive your own race, Jerry. I know you'll be in there tryin'."

The howling crowd pressed against the ropes that marked off the starting point. Gold Acres roared its good wishes. The starter's revolver shot banged out in the frosty air, almost drowned by the wild shout of the mob as the animals swung off down the Derby trail.

Big Alex Baine watched the sixteen fleet dogs and the parka-clad youth pulling away on the first lap of the long grind. His whole fortune, his whole future depended on Jerry's ability to bring the dogs through, but no one knew better than Big Alex that lack of experience was a big handicap.

No one knew better what faced a driver in such a race. Cold and exhaustion, storms, treacherous mountain trails—no racing in the world puts a heavier premium on luck, grit and physical condition.

Big Alex felt a tug at his sleeve. Casey Hodgins, an old-timer of the camp, stood beside him.

"Sorensen isbettin' against you," said Casey.

"Let him bet," growled Big Alex.

"He seems mighty sure you're not going to win."

"My chances are as good as his."

"There's some ugly talk goin' around," muttered Casey. "They say Sorensen promised Jerry five hundred dollars and a foreman's job as soon as the race is over—if he loses."

"Just talk!" scoffed Big Alex. "Jerry wouldn't let me down. Why that kid's been like a son to me, ever since he came to Gold Acres."

"Just the same," grumbled Casey, "I don't like the talk."

Big Alex frowned. He didn't like the talk, either. But nothing would ever induce him to believe that Jerry would throw him down.

MIDL-AFTERNOON, with a zero bite in the air, the sky bleak with clouds and a northwest wind sifting clouds of snow from the crags above, found Jerry and his sixteen dogs toiling up the trail on Bitter Ridge.

They were good dogs, not too young, not too old, and skillfully trained, from King the lead dog to young Whitey at the wheel. Jerry knew every one of them by name and nature, for dogs have personalities as distinctive as men. He knew what they could do and how to get the best out of them.

But how could he be sure of getting the best out of himself in this terrific test? When he thought of what it would mean to Big Alex if the team failed to come home in front, the sense of responsibility became like a heavy burden on his back.

Jerry glanced behind at the dark dots against the clean white surface of Bitter Lake, far behind and below. The teams were strung out on the snow-covered ice as far back as Caribou Bluff, crawling along like so many black snakes, twelve teams in all.

Two outfits had passed him. Jerry didn't worry about that. It was part of his program to take things easy the first day. Up to Bitter Ridge he had ridden

on the sled, saving his energy and letting the dogs go their own gait.

He had been once over the course with Big Alex, caching supplies of dog food at strategic points along the route.

"Always cache the dog food!" insisted Big Alex. "There's so much bettin' on one of these races that a man can't trust his own grandmother. And I've known dog food to be doped or poisoned before this."

The course swung northwest through the Bitter Ridge country, past Red Eagle Mine to Graveyard Creek, then to Whisky River, over Desolate Divide to Henry Lake, and from there on to Snow Head, the halfway mark. Then it twisted back across Sunset Dunes to Suicide Cabin and Dogrib Lake, from where the last lap of the run swept eighty miles through the mining country back to Gold Acres.

Barring storms, Jerry planned to make six-hour stops for sleep and food, aside from the shorter stops he would make along the way. He knew exactly when and where he hoped to make the long stops. Some drivers preferred plenty of brief rests. Jerry felt that his dogs would do better traveling by long stages.

In this he was driving his own race, as Big Alex had advised. Not even Big Alex himself, he reflected, as he brought the dogs over the Ridge, could make him change his program.

It was all planned in his head. He knew just how much mileage he wanted from the dogs each day, just when he planned his final dash.

But any one of a dozen factors could spell disaster. A blizzard that might send the dogs wandering from the trail, a smashed sled, sickness, loss of a food cache, an accident to the team, foul play on the part of a rival outfit—especially one of Sorensen's outfits—anything could happen.

But that was what made dog racing!

JERRY made Graveyard Creek that night, after a hustling drive over the last ten miles to beat a snow-storm in. The storm would block the back trails by morning, and the deep drifts would handicap the teams that failed to reach Graveyard that night.

Jerry was in eighth place. Hans Berger and two other drivers were just crawling into their bunks when he reached the rest cabin.

"Johnny Lasalle, Marcoux and two other fellers, they stayed half an hour and pushed on," volunteered Berger, a big, mahogany-faced man with a friendly smile. "Too fast. Me, I get my sleep and pass 'em to-morrow."

"Too early for that sort of sprinting," agreed Jerry.

He dug the cakes of frozen, chopped meat out of the cache, thawed out the food and gave his dogs a good supper. Jerry was hoping the storm might hold up Sorensen, but half an hour after his arrival, the freighter came fighting through the snowy darkness and stamped into the cabin.

It was pitch dark and bitterly cold when Jerry hitched up by lantern light after his six-hour rest and got under way ahead of Berger and Sorensen.

Dawn found him at Whisky River, where he passed one of the teams that had led such a pace the previous day. The driver was paying the penalty now, for his dogs were lagging badly; two of the animals had gone lame.

Past the summit over Desolation Divide, Jerry ran into hard going. The trail was alternately piled high with deep drifts and wind-swept to an icy smoothness over dangerous expanses of sheer rock. In the drifts, he had to go ahead of the dogs, breaking trail; in the clear, he had to stay behind the sled and keep his foot on the brake.

The dogs slipped and slithered on the ice. With fifteen dogs behind him, old King had trouble leading the way.

Occasionally one of the dogs would lose footing and pitch forward, dragging some of the other animals with him. Jerry would have to brake the sled to a standstill to prevent a tangle.

Carefully, he let the team down over the last steep slope of wind-swept trail. Beside the path, the mountainside swept smoothly over icy rocks over a sharp rounded slope. Jerry tried to keep his eyes off it. If a team got off the trail and lost control, dogs and driver might toboggan helplessly down over that glare ice to the edge of the cliff.

Old King, picking his way cautiously down the slope, was suddenly thrust forward when two of the animals midway up the line lost their footing and hurtled forward.

Jerry jammed down on the brake hard. But it didn't bite. The snow crumbled away and the sled pitched forward against the wheel dog. Thrown off balance, the animals yelped and pulled sidewise off the trail.

The whole pack was in commotion now, as one dog was hurled against another.

The sled was slipping off the trail, over onto the icy incline. Jerry grabbed the steel staff from the sled, slipped it through the hole in the brake bar, and tried to dig it into the ice.

He was too late.

The dogs were piling ahead in confusion. The wheel dog had been yanked off the trail and was out on the ice. The sled runners glanced off an icy rock, and then the sled suddenly pitched over on the sheer incline.

JERRY, sprawling, clung to the handles for dear life. The dogs were yelping and barking in a frenzy. Inextricably tangled in the harness, piling off the trail, they were trying to get a foothold on the treacherous slope, but were sliding helplessly downward.

King was off the trail now, too, as the drag of the sled and the rear dogs took

effect. They were all slithering down the glare ice and rocks.

The sled hit a rock snag, held steady for a moment. Jerry got to his knees, flung the sled upright. Just as it began to shift again, he slammed the steel bar hard into the ice beneath.

The bar held.

If they had ever gained momentum on that slope, they would have all gone tumbling a hundred feet to the cliff beneath. But the bar held.

Panting, Jerry sized up the situation. The dogs were clinging tooth and nail to the slippery slope. The ice bar served as an anchor for the outfit. But without help, it would be impossible to regain the trail above.

Then he heard a shout. Jerry looked up. Wolf Sorensen's team was coming over the ridge. The dogs raced down the slope, plowed through the drifts, skidded across the first glare patch, the sled braked almost to a standstill.

Jerry gritted his teeth as he considered the humiliation of accepting help from Big Alex Baine's enemy. He would not ask for aid, but trail etiquette demanded that Sorensen give him a hand.

Sorensen's lead dog reached the dangerous zone. Sorensen, applying the brake, let the sled down slowly. There was a malicious grin on his swarthy face as he looked down at the tangle of dogs and sled on the slope beside the trail.

"Sweetest sight I've looked at in years!" he shouted ironically.

Sorensen made no move to stop. He got his team over the ice, gave a shout to his dogs when they reached the deeper snow, and then his sled went swinging around the side of the mountain.

"The low-down rat!" spluttered Jerry.

The sled lurched as one of the dogs slipped and dug frantically with his paws into the smooth slope. The harness tightened.

Jerry dug the bar savagely deeper

into the ice. Only that slim steel shaft stood between the outfit and destruction.

He crawled up the side of the slope a little distance. He might unhitch the dogs one by one and get them back onto the trail. But that plan had its undeniable risks. One slip, and an unharnessed dog, no longer attached to the anchored sled, might go careening to the rocks. Jerry began figuring ways and means.

"Hi!"

Another team was coming down trail. Hans Berger, foot on brake, was making the steep and slippery descent. He shouted again as he drew near. In the heavy snow above the danger area, he dug in the brake bar and brought his dogs to a stop.

"Got yourself in a jam, hey?" he cried.

"I should say so!" Jerry called back. At least Hans Berger wasn't going to pass him by. "Going to give me a hand?"

"Why not?" grunted Berger cheerfully. "Mebbe I need help myself some day."

He left his dogs and picked his way down the slope. It didn't take long. Single-handed, the job would have been enormously difficult. Between the two of them, they got the outfit back on trail in five minutes.

"Sorensen wouldn't help you?" asked Berger, puzzled.

"Well—after all, it's a dog race."

"So!" Berger wrinkled his round face in disgust. "I like to win, yes. But not that bad."

SORENSEN'S team of matched Siberians, noted for their endurance, was leading the race when Jerry checked in at Snow Head, the halfway mark and turning post, late that night. His own dogs had held up well.

Outside of the delay at Desolation

Divide, he had made good time and had passed two teams. The teams were beginning to thin out now. The fast runners had shot their bolt. From now on, endurance would count.

Jerry spent six hours at Snow Head, according to his set program. Sorensen had pushed on ahead to the next rest station. Hans Berger, Pierre Marcoux and Johnny Lasalle checked out of Snow Head during the night, so that Jerry was in fifth place when he hit the trail before daybreak.

Sorensen, he figured, was pushing his Siberians too hard; but it was possible that Jerry was wrong, and that he might be letting the man get too big a lead. After all, Sorensen had left the starting post four minutes behind him, so Jerry would have to beat him to the finish line by that margin to win. That had to be kept in mind.

Out on Sunset Dunes that day, Jerry asked his team for everything it had in the way of sustained speed, and the dogs responded nobly. It was easy going across flat country. The animals fairly flew. At this sort of going, Jerry felt he would back Alex Baine's animals against any team in the race.

He passed Johnny Lasalle's team at the rest cabin at Sunset when The Pas entrant was snatching a short rest. A mile south he passed Pierre Marcoux, handling Sorensen's second string of dogs.

The animals were limping, their paws bleeding from the cuts they had received on the hard crust of the dunes. One dog was trailing behind the sled. It was the rule of the race that every driver must return with every dog with which he started, dead or alive.

"Third place!" muttered Jerry, well satisfied.

Hans Berger and Sorensen were the drivers to beat; he had known that from the beginning. Jerry was content to stay in third place for a while, if he could do so without losing ground. Berger

and Sorensen might run their teams ragged racing against each other, and they were breaking trail for him besides.

He had a bowl of soup and a short rest at Secret Bluff, but hustled on at once when a telephone report to the cabin attendant showed that Johnny Lasalle was gaining on him. All that afternoon, Jerry drove steadily.

He was beginning to feel the physical strain of the long grind now. It was on the home laps that races were won and lost. In spite of the fact that he wore sun glasses, his eyes were beginning to ache. His legs were beginning to feel like lead. On the level stretches, where his weight made slight difference, he rode on the sled and managed to save his strength.

He reached Suicide Cabin that night, thirty minutes behind Sorensen and Berger, who were sleeping there. Jerry examined the feet of his dogs and made a swift decision.

"I'm pushing on," he told the cabin attendants, after they phoned in his arrival.

He had dog food cached there and at Dogrib Lake, twenty miles farther on. Jerry decided that the animals were in shape for the longer run. The animals would recuperate quickly after a long rest, and if they went on to Dogrib Lake now, they would have a shorter run on the final day.

"You'll tire them dogs so bad they'll be in no condition for to-morrow's dash," drawled one of the cabin watchers.

"Plain foolishness," grunted another.

But Jerry knew his team and he was driving his own race. He shouted to King, cracked the long whip over the heads of the team, and pushed on into the darkness.

HE was staggering with exhaustion when he reached Dogrib at midnight. The dogs were so weary they could scarcely eat. Jerry began to wonder if he had outguessed

himself. Perhaps that extra dash had been too much after all.

There were half a dozen men from Gold Acres at the cabin. They had driven out from town to watch the leaders arriving.

"Big Alex is on his way up here," one of them told Jerry. "He ought to be here any time."

Jerry ate and headed toward one of the bunks. "Call me in six hours," he said, peeling off his parka. "Six hours, get it? No more, no less."

"Don't you want to be wakened if Sorensen or Berger go through?"

Jerry shook his head. "I'm taking six hours, I don't care if the whole nineteen teams go through."

He pitched into the bunk and was asleep in a moment.

It seemed only a few seconds later when he was awakened by some one tugging at his shoulder. Jerry blinked. In the lamplight he recognized the face of Big Alex Baine above him.

"Better get goin', Jerry!" urged Big Alex. "Sorensen has just gone past."

Jerry blinked, drugged with sleep. "Hello, Alex," he mumbled. "What time is it?"

"You've been asleep four hours. Sorensen has just passed. I came in about an hour ago. Figgered I'd better waken you."

Jerry shook his head.

"Wake me in two hours, Alex. I've got to have six hours sleep here. The dogs too."

Big Alex stared at him incredulously. "But you'll lose the race, sure!" he exploded. "You can't give Sorensen a two-hour lead. And Berger is on the trail again. They just phoned down."

"Well, that means they only slept four hours each at Suicide Cabin. It's not enough." Jerry dropped to the pillow and pulled the blankets over his head. "Let me finish my rest."

"Jerry!" snapped Big Alex. "You're drivin' my team. I'm your boss and

I'm givin' the orders. You get up and get out on that trail."

Jerry sat up in the bunk. "You know the rules, Alex. Nobody is allowed to give a driver orders at any time. I'm not takin' 'em. I'm driving my own race, just as you told me, and my plans call for six hours sleep here. Now leave me alone."

Big Alex, with bankruptcy staring him in the face if Jerry failed to regain the lead, was excited and angry.

"They told me in Gold Acres that Sorensen promised you a lot of money and a good job if you lost," he said slowly. "This doesn't look so good, Jerry."

"And I told Sorensen to go jump in the lake!" shouted Jerry. "You can believe what you like. I leave in two hours and not a minute before. Think what you want."

Jerry's nerves were frayed. He turned his back to Big Alex and pulled the blankets over his head again. It stunned him to know that Big Alex suspected him of deliberately trying to throw the race. But not even for the sake of clearing himself of that ugly suspicion would he change his plans.

Drive your own race!

That had been the advice of Big Alex himself. And Jerry intended to stick to it.

IT was still dark when he finally awakened. Big Alex, sitting in a corner of the cabin, was silent and moody as Jerry had breakfast. Jerry went over to him, slapped the big man on the shoulder.

"Don't look so glum, old-timer!" he said cheerfully. "This race isn't over yet."

Big Alex glared at him. "You're two hours behind the leaders!" he choked. "So far as I'm concerned, it's over. You've let me down, boy. I'm not sayin' you did it on purpose. Maybe it's just stubbornness. But I was racin'

dogs before you were born and I know you can't catch that team of Sorensen's now. And you know how much depends on that prize money!"

There was no use arguing. Jerry went out and hitched up. A few minutes later, he was snapping the long whip over the heads of his sluggish dogs, urging them out into the darkness of the trail.

Tired after more than three hundred miles of hard travel, dogs and driver were showing signs of leg-weariness in spite of their six-hour rest.

There was comfort in knowing that he was just beginning his eighty-mile dash, while Sorensen and Berger had already been on the trail a good four hours, with only four hours' sleep behind them.

Could they hold up? Could he hold up? Could his dogs stand the gaff? Even with six hours' rest?

The hours dragged. Mid-morning. The white expanse of Owl Lake, dazzling under the sun. Two black blotches against the snow. Five miles ahead.

Jerry's eyes ached. His whole body was one great ache of pain. Legs rose and fell mechanically as he plodded behind the sled. Once in a while, he snatched a respite, riding behind the sled, but only for a moment or so. The dogs felt the extra weight. It held them back.

The dark blotches were nearer now. He was gaining on them. How far to Gold Acres? Ten miles? Fifteen? Twenty? More than that.

Whitey, the wheel dog, was limping. He had been limping ever since the sled piled up against him when they were taking that slope on Owl Ridge.

Noon. Whitey was on the sled now. Only fifteen dogs and extra weight, but it couldn't be helped. Whitey's game leg had given out.

Jerry plodded on, dragging one foot after the other. Queer thoughts kept

flashing through his head, as if he were delirious. He wasn't thinking about the race now, about Sorensen, about Big Alex Baine. He was just following a sled and fifteen tired dogs through the snow.

They were in the hills north of Gold Acres now. There was only one dark blotch on the trail ahead. The other had disappeared beyond a hill. The dark blotch was crawling very slowly. Jerry drew nearer and nearer. The other team vanished over the top of the hill.

At the top of the slope, Jerry gripped the sled handles, welcoming the ride down. It would be a little relief from that constant *trudge-trudge-trudge* through the snow.

He looked for the team ahead. He saw it. But the dogs weren't on the trail. The sled was upside down and the dogs were threshing, helplessly entangled in a great clump of willows. The driver was staggering knee-deep in snow, trying to sort them out.

And on the slope of the next hill, two hundred yards ahead, was the other outfit. Sorensen's team. Jerry could recognize the Siberians at that distance.

Berger was the driver who had come to grief in the willows.

JERRY'S heart jumped. He shook off some of his weariness. He was within striking distance of Sorensen now. One swift run down that slope, and he would be right on Sorensen's heels, with Gold Acres five miles away. If he could take the lead from Sorensen now, he could beat him.

King yelped as the dogs took the slope. And then, near the willows, Jerry braked up. Even with Sorensen in sight, he couldn't pass by Berger like this; not even if it meant losing time, valuable time at an important stage of the race; not even if it meant putting Berger back in the running, having two outfits to beat instead of one. He snubbed King

to a willow beside the trail and lurched down the bank into the deep snow.

Hans Berger, struggling to disentangle his dogs, looked up.

"Go ahead, young feller," said the Athabaskan gruffly. "This is my trouble."

Jerry was under no obligation—not at this part of the race. It was every man for himself on the last lap.

"Turn about is fair play," he reminded Berger, and pitched into the tangle.

The Athabaskan protested gratefully. "Remember," he said, as Jerry struggled with the willow bushes and helped get the dogs sorted out, "I'll still beat you if I can."

"You're welcome, Hans!"

It was ten minutes before Berger's team was back on the trail. Sorensen was out of sight beyond the next hill.

Jerry began to get panicky. He had to make his bid for the leadership right now. It would not be enough to beat Sorensen to the finish line. He had to beat him in by four minutes. And there wasn't much time left.

"Come on, King!" he yelled. "Let's go!"

The dogs swept down to the foot of the slope, began the upward climb. Tired, as they were, the hill seemed like a mountain. The loss of Whitey, whimpering on the sled, seemed a serious matter now.

The ten minutes had enabled Sorensen to lengthen his lead. When he was in sight again, Jerry could see him using the lash on his dogs without mercy. Jerry's team strained at the harness, giving every ounce of their flagging strength. Inch by inch, they reduced the gap between them and the sled ahead. Foot by foot, they crept up on Sorensen.

Jerry looked back. Berger's team was making poor headway. He had little to fear from that quarter. But he had to catch Sorensen. And beat him to the finish by four minutes.

He could see dark figures standing at the head of the next hill, people who had come out from Gold Acres to watch the finish, people who lined the course all the way in to town.

King sprinted, fairly dragging the other dogs along behind. The lead dog drew closer to the Sorensen sled. And at last Jerry shouted for the right-of-way.

Under the rules, it was Sorensen's obligation to pull over the trail and let the following team go by. His arm rose and fell as he lashed his dogs furiously, trying to keep them in the lead.

One of the big Siberians turned and snarled, rebelling against the whip. Another snapped at the stinging lash. In a second, the lead dog was off the trail, and Sorensen had his hands full trying to get the animals under control.

SORENSEN'S free use of the whip had bomeranged against him. The dogs were off the trail, fighting in the deep snow.

Jerry seized the opening. King pulled ahead and went by. Sorensen, his face inflamed with rage, swung viciously with the whip. The lash cut across King's flanks.

Jerry hadn't touched his dogs with the whip from the beginning of the race. King yelped and leaped forward so suddenly that Jerry couldn't retain his grip on the sled handles. He pitched forward, stumbled and fell, as the dogs raced away.

He struggled to his feet, lurched forward up the trail in the snow. The dogs, running away, might get off the trail, might become hopelessly tangled. Even if they raced all the way to the finish line their arrival would not count officially until he, too, breasted the tape.

Jerry was so exhausted that it seemed impossible for him to run another step. But he slogged on up the trail after the dogs. Then he heard a frenzied

yelping close behind. A rush of furry bodies almost knocked him over.

Sorensen's team swept past. But their sled was empty.

Jerry looked back. Sorensen was stumbling down the slope, whip in hand. The mutinous dogs had broken away from him.

It was a straight race between Jerry and Sorensen now, no matter which team crossed the line first, for arrival would be judged by the time the drivers crossed the tape.

Jerry reeled and stumbled, shouting hoarsely at King. He ran as if in a nightmare, his feet rising and falling woodenly, scarcely conscious of the howling spectators who now lined the trail. He could hear the *crunch-crunch* of Sorensen's mukluks in the snow, the hoarse panting of the man's breath.

Sorensen pulled up alongside him, shouldered him roughly, went slogging past. Jerry lowered his head and sprinted. He pulled up beside Sorensen again, his lungs bursting, heart pounding.

And then, he heard Sorensen gasp. The big man reeled suddenly, wavered, stumbled across the trail and pitched into the snow, beaten and exhausted. Sorensen was through!

A hundred yards farther on, Jerry overtook the sled. King had finally discovered his absence and the dogs were patiently waiting. Jerry struggled to the sled, almost collapsed when he reached it.

That deadly sprint with Sorensen had taken the last of his strength. But it was a downhill ride to Gold Acres now and he was in undisputed lead, for Sorensen's dogs had left the trail and were panting in the deep snow.

Jerry grabbed the sled handles. "Come on, King!" he croaked.

The dogs pulled away and, as if the cheering lane of spectators gave them new strength, they swept down the trail on the last lap into Gold Acres.

The race, so far as it concerned first

place and the \$2,500 first-prize money, was over. With all Gold Acres gone mad, Jerry struggled across the finish line just as Hans Berger was driving past Sorensen.

Sorensen was trying to get his dogs under way again, although he was a good seven minutes behind the leader by now. The dogs, afraid of the whip, were

snarling, becoming entangled in the harness.

"Hi, Sorensen!" chortled Hans Berger. "Mebbe you like me to give you a hand, yes?"

Whereupon his long whip snapped in the air like a pistol shot over the heads of his own dogs and he drove on to second money, chuckling to himself.

NO DOUBLE CROSS

By ARTHUR L. RAFTER



I was booked for a bout at Canton Fair,
 With Hassan Ali, "The Tugging Turk,"
 So I matched myself with Koski, "The Bear,"
 To build my rep, and to get some work.

Now Koski was tricky and fast, but light,
 The kind of a guy I could always toss.
 So when I come on the stage that night,
 I wasn't afraid of no double cross.

Then Koski whispers: "You'll win, I know,
 But I'm telling the ref, it's two out of three.
 My gal is here, in the second row.
 Be a regular guy. Give the first to me."

He speaks to the ref, and we start the bout,
 In twenty minutes, he gets his fall.
 Then the big palooka just beats it out.
 And they start to empty the crowded hall.

Then I spy the promoter, Ernie Blatch,
 And I squawks: "Say, Ernie, the bout ain't done."
 "It was advertised as a one-fall match,"
 Says Ernie. "It's over, and Koski won."



BIG MOMENTS IN SPORT

by HANDLEY CROSS

FOR THE COAST CHAMPIONSHIP

THE big indoor-sports Pavilion of Washington State College, in Pullman, on the evening of March 27, 1937. Seven thousand wildly excited basket-ball followers on hand to watch Washington State, winner in the northern division, battle Stanford, victor in the southern division, in the second game of the play-off series for the championship of the Pacific Coast Conference.

Last night, the Palo Alto Indians won the first game by a three-point margin. It was a contest marked by cautious tactics and close checking. But the crowd knows that the Washington Cougars are gallant fighters, and every one in the Pavilion is confident that to-night they will throw caution to the winds and set off all their fireworks in a neck-or-nothing effort to even the series.

The teams are ready. The whistle shrills.

The Indians break fast and start a hot-footed offensive thrust. "Hank" Luisetti, Stanford's scoring ace and the

standout basket-ball player of the Pacific coast, leads it. Now the Indians are close to the basket. One of them shoots—and misses. Luisetti follows in swiftly, catches the ball as it rebounds from the backboard, and neatly cages it.

The game Cougars come back with a rush. Their determined attack is headed by Sewell Carlson and Ivar Nelson, their six-foot-four center. They bombard the basket. Most of their shots are misses, but some of them are goals. After a few minutes, Washington State rooters are gloating over a four-point lead.

But now brilliant Luisetti goes on another rampage. There's a hush broken only by the tap of the ball against the boards, the padding of rubber soles and the hard-drawn breaths of rushing players as he dribbles the length of the floor. He's under the basket—and for a moment, he loses his leechlike guard. He shoots—and it's a goal!

Again the Stanford attack sweeps swiftly down the floor. Passing, cut-

ting, dodging, passing again, the Indian players try to find a hole in the seemingly impregnable Cougar defense. Now there's a pass to Howie Turner. Swiftly he shoots—and scores!

The first period is half gone, and the score is knotted at 10—10.

The Stanford attack doesn't slow down. Working smoothly against a desperate Washington State defense, the ravening Indians get out ahead—and stay there.

When the gun ends the first half the score board shows Stanford 24, Washington State 20.

SECOND half. Sewell Carlson guards Luisetti so closely that the Stanford star can't score except on a free throw. But Howie Turner and Jack Calderwood take up where Luisetti is forced to leave off, and after a few minutes the Indians have worked into a commanding nine-point lead.

Stanford rooters are noisily elated, but the Cougars' supporters know their team, and so do not lose heart. And now, the Washington State players gallantly reward their followers' confidence. Fighting determinedly, they cut into Stanford's lead. With half the final period played, the Indians lead by only five points.

And that brave-hearted Cougar attack keeps right on going. With four minutes left, Washington State is holding the short end of a 35—38 score.

The whistle shrills. Captain Bill Dahlke, of the Cougars, is awarded a free throw. There's a moment of quiet as he steps coolly up to the foul line. He shoots. A wild yell shakes the Pavilion. He's made it!

Stanford 38, Washington State 36.

But now a foul is called on State, and Washington cheers turn into Washington groans as Luisetti neatly cages the ball.

Stanford 39, Washington State 36.

Again the Cougar attack storms down the floor. Now Bill Dahlke shoots. The ball hits the basket's rim, hangs there as rooters gasp—and drops through.

Stanford 39, Washington State 38.

But time is getting tragically short for the Cougar players. They stage another assault; but the Indians stand firm. After a spine-tingling minute of play, they still hold their slim one-point lead.

Still another desperate Cougar attack. But there's a Stanford yell and a Washington gasp as a pass is intercepted. Howie Turner has the ball. Swiftly he shoots. It's a goal!

Stanford 41, Washington State 38.

The Cougar coach sends Clyde Carlson into the game at left guard. A few seconds later Carlson takes a pass. He's out in the center of the floor. But he shoots. And that long, long shot scores!

Stanford 41, Washington State 40.

Less than a minute to play. It's the wildest, maddest minute that the Pavilion ever has known. Foul on Washington State. Luisetti misses his free throw. Foul on Stanford. And Captain Bill Dahlke misses the free throw that would have tied up the game.

Only fifteen seconds left. The Cougars grab the ball and come storming down the floor. Three times they shoot, and three times their desperate shots miss the basket.

The pistol cracks. The game is over. Stanford is the champion of the Pacific Coast Conference.





Basket-ball Ramblers

by ROBERT N. BRYAN

Author of: "Pinch Runner," etc.

Boss Keller asked for a winning basket-ball team. He got it, only this time, the wrong team won

What Has Gone Before:

FRED DUANE and his pal, Butch Ballard, were given jobs with Keller & Company, manufacturers of sporting goods, because of their ability as basket-ball players. They were to play on the company team, the Comets, and at the same time introduce Keller-made goods to schools and colleges.

But when Fred displaced Scanlon, hitherto a regular forward, on the Comets, Scanlon was sore and tried to queer

Fred in many ways. One day, a fight took place between the two, as a result of which, Scanlon left the town.

The Comets cleaned up all opposition in their section of the country, and as a reward for their good showing, Keller was to send them on a cross-country trip to the Pacific coast. There, the Comets were scheduled to play a number of the outstanding teams.

Just before they left for the trip, Fred received a letter from Scanlon, warning Fred about the boss, Sam

Keller. Scanlon said that Keller had never kept his promises in the past, and that he only exploited star basket-ball players to build up a name for the Keller Company.

Fred had a talk with the boss before the departure, but the shrewd Keller reassured him of his good intentions. Fred came out convinced that Scanlon was wrong. But when the Comets started losing their games on the coast, and the entire team was dropped by Keller, and the players left stranded on the coast, Fred regretted he hadn't taken Scanlon's warning seriously.

Wandering about aimlessly one day, wondering just how the Comets could scrape enough money to get back home, Fred was suddenly awakened from his thoughts by his companion, Butch Ballard. Butch was pointing to a haggard-looking youth walking in their direction.

The Story Continues in Detail:

STARTLED by Butch Ballard's tone, Fred looked down the street. Butch had caught his arm, had pointed at something or some one directly in front of them.

Ballard, apparently, hadn't believed what he'd seen; that is, he hadn't believed it at first. And Fred couldn't blame him. As the captain shifted his eyes and he saw what Ballard was pointing at, he was almost stunned with amazement.

A man was working his way through the stream of pedestrians; pushing his way toward the basket-ball players who were, at this moment, descending the steps of the Neptune Club.

Fred blinked, looked twice. But he knew that he couldn't be wrong, in spite of the stubble that covered that face; the gauntness, the pallor, the shadowy, blue-gray hollows that showed at the cheek bones. Scanlon!

"Golly!" Fred breathed. "He looks

kind of down on his luck. And what's he doin' in *this* burg?"

"Maybe he'll tell you," Ballard said grimly. "He's spotted us. Quick, let's collar 'im! Here's your chance to settle that—"

But, as it happened, the other guy needed no collaring. Scanlon had sighted the group, and his face was alight with hope as he elbowed his way toward the men who had once been his teammates. As the fellow approached, that first impression of Fred's grew stronger than ever. Scanlon was almost pathetically down at the heel. He was seedy and dirt-smeared. He looked like a vagrant.

It took the players a couple of seconds to hide their astonishment. But, when the group was at last convinced of the man's identity, some of them offered a half-hearted greeting. They knew he'd been missing for weeks, but they didn't know why.

Even Butch had never learned that Scanlon had written to Fred and had, in a way, made partial amends for his brazen attempt. That letter from Scanlon had outlined the set-up at Keller's, and Fred, who had thought it a series of lies till just a few days ago, hadn't told Ballard about it.

It was plainly to be seen that Scanlon was looking for Fred and nobody else. The guy was nervous, distraught, and his eyes kept shifting from face to face in the circle about him; but, in the end, they rested on Fred and stayed there.

"Listen, Duane," he began, "could we go somewhere, just for a little while?"

"Dunno why not," Fred grunted. "I'm free as a bird. The mayor'll probably give me the keys to the city!"

"Where you headin' for?" Ballard broke in. "Where'll the rest of us meet you?"

"Oh, I reckon we might as well stay in Seattle to-night. It'll give us a chance to figure things out. There's a little

hotel a couple of blocks away, and it looks pretty cheap."

"O. K.," said Butch, "we'll give it a try, if that's O. K. with the rest of the fellows. Be seein' you there."

He glanced at Scanlon coldly, then at Fred. Butch said nothing more, but his look implied that Fred had lost his sanity.

SCANLON watched the group depart. When he and Fred were alone, he muttered: "Thanks for sendin' 'em off, Duane. I guess you never expected to see me again, especially *here*."

"Here or anywhere else," the player admitted.

"I just been driftin' around these past few weeks, and I finally lit out here. But the pickings are tough. I s'pose you can tell that, by lookin' me over!"

"You find us by accident?"

"Well, not quite. Somewhere, I read that the Comets were scheduled to play in Seattle. I figured I might bump into you guys by hangin' around the Neptune Club. That's the gang you're playin' here, isn't it?"

Fred smiled wryly. "That's the gang we were *hopin'* to play," he corrected. But Scanlon, apparently, failed to detect the meaning behind Fred's answer.

"Listen, Duane!" he pleaded. "I'm broke and I'm hungry. If you guys'll take me along for the rest of the trip. I'll do *anything*: handle your luggage, or act as a rubber. Honest, Duane, I'm desperate. Any ol' job! I don't care what!"

The fellow was almost tearful. His eagerness wasn't a stall. It was bitterly real.

Fred hated to blast his illusions. But Scanlon might as well know, like everyone else.

"I'm sorry," he muttered, "but Scanlon, we're just about stranded. The trip's washed up. We won't be playin' the Neptune Club or any one else!"

He then went on to relate how Keller had fired them; also, how Keller had sent out those telegrams, ruining their chances, as soon as he learned that a few of the squad had voted to finish the trip.

"And so," Fred concluded, "it looks like we're sunk. If we figure on gettin' back home, it's a matter of hoppin' the freights or bummin' some rides. There isn't a man on the squad with enough in his jeans for a ticket to Brentwood."

"Ridin' the side-door Pullmans isn't so tough," the other said wanly. "That is, if you manage to eat, and you have any luck with the railroad bulls. I've done it a lot in the past few weeks. Ridin', I mean, not eatin'."

Scanlon, thought Fred, was probably telling the truth. His skin was sallow, his features were pinched. He looked like a guy who would battle an army of wolves for a ten-minute date with a good, thick beefsteak.

"Scanlon," Fred said slowly, "you and I've never got along too good in the past. But maybe, as long as we're both of us down on our luck, we can forget what's gone before. It looks like most of us guys'll be bummin' our way back home, if we get there at all. If you want to throw in with us——"

Scanlon glanced at him sharply. A sly expression crept into his eyes.

"When I asked if you'd take me aboard," he replied, "I—I didn't exactly figure on goin' as far as Brentwood with you."

FRED got the point. He knew why Scanlon had left in the first place. Scanlon had feared that Fred might have him arrested because of that automobile episode.

"You're worried about that auto affair?" Fred ventured.

"Why shouldn't I be? I went plumb off my nut that night, and you might 'a'

been killed. It scares me to think of it, now. And besides, Duane, if I ever went back, you could have me thrown in the can the minute I showed my face in the town!"

"I'm willin' to write that off," Fred grunted. "Nobody knows but Butch Ballard and me, and Butch'll keep still. If you want to go back to Brentwood, Scanlon, there's nothin' to stop you."

"Mean that, Duane?"

"On the level."

Scanlon looked at him gratefully. "Thanks. That's all I can say right now. I'm not so good on the flowery speeches. When are you leavin'?"

"To-morrow, I guess. We'll try for a freight goin' east."

"I'll meet you down at the railroad yards," said Scanlon. "It'll seem pretty good to get back in the old home town. I think I can pick up a job, and I won't forget this break you're givin' me."

"That's all right," Fred muttered. "We'll see you to-morrow. S'long till then."

When Fred rejoined his mates, he cornered Butch and told his pal of his talk with Scanlon.

"Hell!" said Butch incredulously. "You mean, you've promised that rat he could go back home with us?"

"Yeah," said Fred. "He's pretty well down, and besides, there's sumpin I never confessed to you, Butch. He tried to square things by writin' a letter and tippin' me off to the set-up at Keller's."

Ballard's eyes grew wide, as Fred explained in complete detail.

"I thought the thing was a parcel of lies," Fred added, "but even at that, I figured I'd better not tell you. I knew it'd worry you, whether or not it was true. Then, when I found out Scanlon was tellin' the facts—"

"When was that? I mean, when did you know for sure? The night we

heard from Keller? The night we learned he'd given us all the gate?"

"Uh-huh. In Sacramento. Well, since then, I been so up in the air that I didn't feel much like talkin' about that Scanlon letter. I've messed things up so badly—"

"It's all right, guy," said Butch, attempting a smile. "Forget it. I'm not very keen on hittin' the road with the Scanlon egg, but I'll try to put up with him. Where are we meetin' him?"

"Down at the freight yards. To-morrow."

"It's gonna be cold. They don't have heat in those box cars. And the farther east we get, the worse it'll be. You haven't forgotten that this is the middle of winter?"

You bet Fred hadn't. The date was February the 7th.

THAT night, the six-man squad went into a huddle. They constituted the shattered remains of the Comets, the men who had pushed to Seattle, at Fred's suggestion. The men who were faced with the problem of getting back home.

But they hadn't been idle, Fred learned. A couple had wired for money, and funds had been sent them. This lucky pair had families in Brentwood. A third man had cooked up a deal with a truck going east, and would work his way back. Ward had pawned his belongings, including his watch.

"All I could get was a sawbuck," Ward grumbled. "But addin' the ten to the money I got, I guess it'll do—if I go home on the bus and forget about eatin'."

That left Butch Ballard and Fred to account for themselves. They had a few dollars between them. The money would cover their grub for a while, even with Scanlon in tow; but they hadn't the price of a ticket back home, by rail or by bus.

So it looked like the box car and

hitch-hike method for Fred and his pal. They had no alternative.

Early the following morning, the group disbanded, agreeing to meet when and if they all got back to Brentwood. The morning was foggy and cold, and to Fred, at least, the old home town seemed farther away than the jungles of Africa.

Butch Ballard was wavering. He had no stomach for riding the freights, or for thumbing a ride on the road. As he'd hinted last night, it was going to be tough, in the middle of winter.

"Look," he suggested to Fred. "Couldn't you wire to your brother, Harvey, at college, and maybe he's still got a part of the money you've sent him this term?"

"He's needed that dough for expenses," Fred answered. "He probably hasn't much left, if any at all. Besides, he's apt to be off somewhere on a basket-ball trip. He plays on the team and they travel a lot."

"What'll he do when he learns what's happened to you?" Butch grunted.

"You think of the pleasantest things!" Fred snapped. "The kid'll make out. He'll get his diploma in June."

"With no Big Brother to help 'im?" Butch growled. "I wonder!"

"You needn't. But let's quit arguin'. Let's find Scanlon. He said he'd be down at the yards, and he's probably picked out our Pullman. You bring along plenty of readin' material?"

"Naw, the porter'll furnish all that, in the club car!"

Locating Scanlon, they skirted the yards and stopped at a point on the outermost fringe. "We're lucky," said Scanlon. "I hear there's a string headin' east in an hour, and they're most of 'em box cars. Empties. They go pretty slow through here, and I think we can hook one. It won't be so bad."

"It won't be so bad," Fred echoed, but down in his heart he knew different.

The future looked grim and forbidding, especially that part of the future that started to-day.

CHAPTER XVI.

A SHOCK

FOLLOWED a week of cold, clammy freight cars, wearisome plodding through stretches of snow-covered country, and begging for rides in occasional trucks or passenger autos. But luck, though playing a grim sort of game with the three of them, never completely deserted the trio.

A week, to the day, from the morning they'd left Seattle, they found themselves in the outlying districts of Brentwood. Grimy, unshaven, they looked like three tramps. For two of those knights of the road, the next move was highly uncertain. Now that they'd got here, Scanlon and Ballard had nowhere to go. But Fred had an ace in the hole.

"Listen, you fellows," he told them, "I still got a key to the place where I lived, and the rent was paid up for a month in advance when I went on the trip. We can scrape off the whiskers, and maybe I'll peddle that wreck of a car I used to go round in. It oughta be good for some dough."

Scanlon winced as the car was mentioned. "Count me out," he muttered. "I've given you trouble enough, Duane. I'm not gonna sponge on you. Not any longer. Gimme a chance to clean up, and I'll look for a job of some kind. An' remember, Duane, if I click, and you need any help——"

"Thanks," Fred interrupted. "I may, at that. You can't ever tell."

A few hours later, the trio emerged from Fred's little quarters, and things looked brighter. Soap and a razor had almost worked miracles. And, before the day was over, Fred had disposed of his ramshackle bus for eighty-five dollars. Enough to get by on for more than a month—in a pinch.

Butch showed up that night with a grin on his face. "Scanlon collared a job on a milk route," Butch told Fred, "and he says there's one other opening, drivin' a wagon. It won't pay much, but—"

"Grab it!" Fred advised. "That is, if you want it. I raised me some cash, and I got a few chores to attend to, before I start huntin' a job."

One of those chores was a session with Keller. The boss of the Comets had fired them by mail, and he'd made it quite plain that his action was due to their string of defeats on the coast. In his letter, he'd sent them the salary checks that were due them; but other than that, he had made no provision for getting the fellows back home.

They were, Fred knew, entitled to this provision. Keller had gypped 'em, and Fred, for one, was willing to fight for the sum that was due him.

The morning after his long-delayed arrival in Brentwood, he plodded his way through the snow to Keller & Company. Passing the gym, he slowed his gait and pricked up his ears. From within, came the unmistakable *rat-tat-tat* of a dribble; the noise of pounding feet, the echoes of high-pitched shouts. Curious, Fred looked in; and then, as he stood there framed in the doorway, gazing out over the basket-ball court, he almost grew numb with amazement.

A group of new hoopsters, all of them wearing a "K" on their shirts, were engaged in a scrimmage. Keller, it seemed, had shuffled together a brand-new squad. And playing at guard for one of the fives was Harvey Duane, Fred's own brother!

Fred looked twice. He rubbed his eyes, then looked again. He wasn't mistaken. That blond-haired, muscular youth with the jutting, square chin was Harvey, all right. For a couple of seconds, Fred was too shaken to utter a word. His brother at Keller's!

FRED finally found his voice, which was so hoarse that the words almost stuck in his throat. "Harvey! Lay off for a minute. Come over here, fellow. What are *you* doin' here?"

The scrimmaging ceased abruptly. Somewhat abashed, and a little defiant, Harvey Duane came trudging across to his brother. The kid was a good-looking youngster, and nicely set up. But his jaw line gave promise of stubbornness. So did his eyes, at the moment.

The brothers shook hands—the elder aghast, the younger a trifle stand-offish. Harvey appeared to be whipping together a hasty defense for his presence at Keller's—a sort of apology.

"Kinda surprised?" he grunted, attempting a smile.

"Surprised?" Fred gasped. "That's hardly the word! You—you found you couldn't continue at college—couldn't finish it out?"

"Of course I finished it out!" the youngster retorted. "I took some extra courses the first semester. I got my degree at the mid-term. Now, I've got a good job, while the rest of the fellows are up there slavin' till June!"

"How long you been home?" Fred mumbled.

"Only the last few days, and I guess I was lucky. You were away, and I stumbled into a job at Keller's here. He told me he'd been letting some fellows go, and most of 'em formerly played on his basket-ball team. He asked me to help form a new one, and gave me a job in the plant."

"Of course," Fred broke in, "you're in line for a promising 'future'?" But Harvey failed to detect the thinly veiled irony.

"Sure," said the young man. "Keller has plans. I mean, for *me*. He's already promised—"

Fred's heart had gone down like a plummet. Harvey, it was clear, had

swallowed the bunk that Keller had fed him, exactly as Fred had once swallowed it. "But, kid!" Fred protested. "You got to be sensible; got to be *sane!* You studied for engineering! You got a degree!"

"Hell!" the youngster exploded. "What do they pay an *engineer* when he first leaves school? It's just like a doctor, or lawyer, or anything else. You struggle long for years, and you're lucky to keep from starvin' to death. But Keller's payin' me darn' good dough, right from the start. More'n I'd make for a good long while as an engineer!"

Fred was desperate. Harvey was in for the same dose that he himself had received. But Harvey didn't know it. The kid was as blind as his brother had been.

WITH an effort of will, Fred battled for calmness. He strove to speak evenly. "Don't forget," he reminded the youngster, "I worked for Keller myself; longer than you've been doin'. I know what the set-up is!"

"Yeah?" said Harvey. He stuck out his chin, then finally blurted, "You're sore, that's all. You lost your job, and I happen to know the reason. You didn't come up to Keller's expectations. He told me so!"

"In that case," Fred mused softly, "there must 'a' been quite a few guys that didn't come up to his 'expectations.' He let out ten in a bunch, and whether he told you or not, the plain truth is that——"

"Whatever you're goin' to say, don't bother!" Harvey blazed. His eyes had narrowed, his chin was protruding. The kid was angry, and stubborn. There wasn't much use of attempting to reason it out with him. Not just now.

"We'll get together to-night," Fred sighed. "Now that I'm back, you'll be

movin' on in with me? Where you been livin'?"

"With one of the gang," snapped Harvey. "That big fellow, yonder. I figure I'll stick with him, Fred. It's not that I don't wanna live with you, see, but the boss suggested it might be nice if the players would live together as much as they could."

Some more of Keller's hokum, Fred perceived. Harvey had fallen for Keller's deception, was ready to do whatever the boss should tell him. The boss, no doubt, had lied about Fred, and the reasons why Fred had been fired.

Harvey was a good basket-ball player. That was why Keller had wanted him, hired him. Keller was building anew, in a basket-ball way, and Harvey Duane was a mighty fine prospect. So Keller had filled him with hooey, and had, as a major precaution, suggested he room with a fellow employee.

All very smart. Keller was slick, and Harvey Duane was as sold on his boss as Fred had once been. You couldn't tell Harvey that Keller was two-faced, was building him up for a terrible let-down, some time.

Perhaps you could *tell* him. But try and convince him. The kid knew it all!

So Fred, for the moment, decided to detour that topic. He looked at the squad on the court and gave them a rapid appraisal. They seemed pretty husky, and all were quite skillful at handling the melon.

"Those players," he murmured, "they're new around here. There wasn't a one of those guys on the pay roll when I was with Keller. How they been doin'?"

"Keller's appointed me captain," Harvey said proudly. "I'm teachin' 'em some of the stuff my college team used. They look pretty good in the scrimmages."

"How about actual games? You don't pay off on scrimmages."

HARVEY seemed troubled. "We've scheduled some pretty tough games for the end of the month," he confessed, "but nothing till then. You see, it's late in the year to be startin' a basket-ball outfit. We haven't been able to book many teams, and so far, we haven't played *any one*."

"Why should that worry you?"

"Well, as I said, we've got us some tough ones booked for the end of the month. But I'm leery of meetin' those babies without a few tune-ups. You know how it is."

Fred looked thoughtful. He didn't reply for a moment. In fact, as he stared into space, he appeared to be tongue-tied. Harvey wasn't sure that his brother had heard.

"I said," the kid repeated, "that——"

"That you oughta have some tune-ups," Fred said slowly. "All right, Kid. I'll tell you what. I'll round up *my* old gang, and we'll let you work on *us*. We may not be so hot, if you judge by our luck on the coast, but we oughta be able to give you a battle."

"Great!" said Harvey. "That's swell of you, Fred." But then his face clouded. "I wonder if Keller will——"

"If Keller's skittish about your playin' a gang that used to work for him—well, tell him he needn't be. Tell him I said so. We won't create any ruckus. And look here, Kid, you might tell him this: If he charges admission, we won't be askin' a share of the gate receipts. I think that'll swing it!"

It ought to, Fred reasoned. The game could be nicely steamed up—the Comets against the brand-new Kellers. It ought to attract a crowd, and at fifty cents a head. If Fred knew Keller, that should provide the clincher. A hundred per cent of the gate receipts was a strong argument.

"Sure, I'll speak to him," Harvey agreed. The kid was delighted. In view of those coast defeats, he didn't appear to regard Fred's gang as much of a threat. "I'd like to see it come off, and I'll let you know as soon as I see Keller."

"O. K., boy," Fred answered. "You know where to find me."

Fred left the gym. His mind in a whirl, he had almost forgotten the thing that had brought him here. And, when he finally did recall it, he shelved it for good. He didn't believe that he wanted to argue with Keller right now. It might spoil everything.

Two days later, a game was arranged on a definite basis. Keller had seen no objections, had thought it all right. He naturally would, for how could he lose by it?

Wasting no time, Fred got in touch with his former teammates. He told them the story; and, as he did so, a few of them smiled rather grimly. Join him? Of course they would join him! They welcomed a shot at these new guys—and Keller.

Ballard and Fred would play at their old-time forward positions. Ward would be center. Scanlon was eager to help, and Scanlon, though really a forward, could take over one of the guard positions. The other defensive post would fall to McRae, an experienced man at the job. In addition, three subs agreed to show up and be ready for possible duty.

The former Comets were loaded for bear. The night of the game, Fred gathered his mates round him before they went out on the floor. They were tense and determined. They wanted to win, and they meant to, Fred most of all.

Fred had his reasons. But winning, alone, would not be sufficient; and that's where the tough part came in. Would his carefully planned campaign accomplish its ends? Or would it, perhaps,

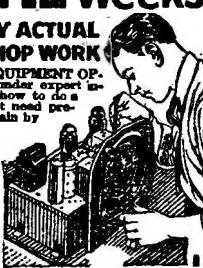
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explode in his face, like most of his plans of the past few weeks?

CHAPTER XVII. BROTHER VS. BROTHER

UPSTAIRS in the gym, a near-capacity crowd had gathered to see the former Comets square off with Keller's new gang, who were simply known as the "Kellers."

Fred, at a forward spot, was pitted against his younger brother, who held down one of the guard positions on the Keller's squad. It pleased the crowd, and they looked for a ding-dong show if the brothers were hot. The thing was a natural hook-up, with plenty of drama in prospect.

The teams went out to position. A moment of silence, and then, the toss-up. Ward outjumped the Keller center, and Scanlon, at guard for the Comets, came barging in for the tap. He tossed to Fred, who dribbled around his brother and passed to Butch Ballard.

Butch cut loose with a back-bounce pass to Scanlon, and Scanlon was free. A leisurely set-shot from twenty feet out; the swish of the ball as it dropped through the netting. The Comets had scored!

Fred stole a glance at the side line. Samuel Keller was there on the bench, surrounded by some of his players, and Keller was rubbing his chin, looking very much puzzled. He wondered how Fred had been able to collar Scanlon. Keller had not been aware that the guy was in town.

The Comets had scored, so Harvey Duane threw in for his team from the end line. Quickly, the Keller men shuttled the ball to the fore court. Harvey took a pass, was smothered by Fred, and a held ball resulted. But, on the jump-off, the Kellers recovered the sphere, and one of them shot for the hoop from a dangerous angle. It looped through the cords, knotting the tally.

That shot had been lucky, and every one knew it. The Kellers, however,

were plainly elated; and riding the crest of a wave, they started to force the play whenever they captured the ball. These babies were fast and aggressive, and most of their fore-court maneuvers were nicely conceived.

Defensively, Harvey Duane was the very backbone of the team, and Harvey was sticking to Fred like a coating of road tar. Thus, with the Comets' leading offensive weapon stilled, the Kellers went into a gradual lead as the minutes ticked on. When the clock showed three minutes left in the opening half, the Comets were trailing, 17-12.

They hadn't been clicking. They looked rather futile. They didn't resemble those Comets of old.

As the interval neared, Fred called time, his first of the game. The Kellers had passed out of bounds, and the ball would go to the Comets when play was resumed. Fred and his glum-faced teammates went into a huddle.

"They've stopped us cold," Butch groaned. "They're tough on defense, and they're keepin' us all bottled up. Why, Fred, you haven't scored once. That brother of yours——"

"The kid's pretty good," Fred admitted. "But listen, you fellows, I want you to pass me the ball the next time I'm down near the goal. The rest of you guys be ready to help if the kid outsmarts me."

The signal. Time in. The Comets were given the ball, out of bounds, and Scanlon threw in. He tossed it to Ballard, who looped it to Ward, who rifled a pass to the scoring area. There, Fred took it and pivoted sharply; started a dribble. Harvey was in front of him, guarding the goal; and as Harvey approached, Fred made a feint to his left. Then, without checking his speed, he pulled off a beautiful cross-over dribble that carried him neatly away from the lunge of his brother.

The rest of the route was unguarded. Harvey was the safety, and Fred had got past him. A leap and a lay-up; the plunk of the ball as it wallopèd the back-board. A goal for the Comets! 17-14,

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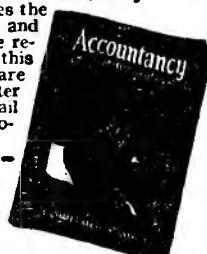
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with still two minutes to play in the opening half.

THE Kellers threw in, but a few seconds later, Ward, of the Comets, went into the air and stole a pass intended for Harvey Duane. At once, the Comets' offensive machinery got into motion. Ward and Ballard and Scanlon, working a series of cross-court passes, shuttled the ball to the edge of the free-throw circle.

Meanwhile, Harvey Duane had fallen far back on defense, the better to cover his brother. Harvey was the type who usually guards with his back to the goal, preferring to head off the man he is guarding.

Now he had planted himself in front of the basket, his body hunched low. He figured to turn Fred out, that is, toward the side, if Fred should come through for a possible pass.

Fred was doing just that—running straight for the hoop. He looked like a sucker for Harvey, who was moving to cover him. But, as the youngster approached him, Fred suddenly stopped, drawing Harvey off balance. Catlike, he feinted, then circled his brother while Harvey was floundering awkwardly.

Zip! In that scant split second, Ballard had passed to Fred. *Whop!* It connected. Fred took the throw on the run, and was whipping the ball into the net, as Harvey recovered his senses.

The crowd in the galleries yelled. The Comets had scored once more, and were now but a point to the bad. Twice in two minutes, the elder Duane had found the basket. He'd looked like an antelope, shifty, alert, elusive.

The tally was 17—16. The Kellers were still in the lead, a lead they maintained to the end of the half. In the half coming up, thought the fans, there were going to be fireworks!

Down in the locker room, Fred was approached by a tall, lean fellow in his earlier forties. The man was a stranger, and Fred Duane had never laid eyes on him. Also, the stranger didn't belong

here; the locker-room space was for the players. But that, apparently, hadn't deterred him.

He pulled out a card, and attempted to hand it to Fred. "My name's Walt Lane," he opened. "I'm—"

"Sorry," Fred grunted. "Whatever it is, it'll have to wait until after the game. We don't get very much time between halves."

He brushed on past, returned to his mates. Whatever the stranger wanted, he'd have to go sit on his hands for a while. The Comets, especially Fred, were not in a mood for minor distractions. They'd just about closed up that gap on their rivals.

But, still, the work that Fred had laid out was far from accomplished!

CHAPTER XVIII.

HUMBLE PIE

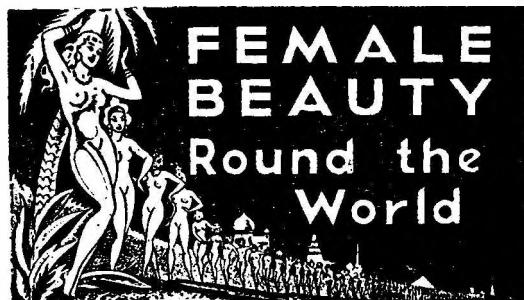
WHEN the ball was tossed at center to open the half, Ward, with a beautiful leap, was again successful in making the tap. He batted the ball to Scanlon, who rifled it to Butch Ballard, and Butch set out for the goal. But halfway down, he halted his dribble and passed to Fred, then started a pick-off. Harvey, however, got past him and circled toward Fred.

The Comet leader stood perfectly still as he caught that ball and eyed his brother. As Harvey approached, Fred lifted his hands, as if for a set shot. Excited, Harvey went into the air with his arms flung high; and Fred, like a streak of blue lightning, was off on a dribble.

No one was near him, save Harvey. But Fred had gone by him so fast that the youngster was out of the play by the time he had settled to earth. He whirled and gave chase, but his effort was useless. You rarely caught Fred from behind when he had a clear path; and he certainly had one this time.

Up on the score board, the figures were changing. Comets 18, Kellers 17!

Fred half smiled—a grim little smile that was scarcely visible. All through the opening half, he'd been studying



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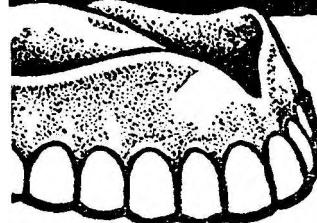
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Harvey, watching his brother's movements. Fred knew now, beyond any shadow of doubt, that Harvey could be feinted off balance, well out of position.

One minute later, with Fred and his mates in the lead, 18—17, Fred took a pass near the basket and started to shoot. This time, Harvey decided he wouldn't be fooled. He lunged at Fred and crashed his brother, as Fred was getting the ball away. But the shot was successful, and, in addition, a foul was called on Harvey for personal contact.

The goal had given the Comets two points. Fred made good on the free-throw try, awarded because of the foul, and an extra point was chalked to the Comets' account. Their total was now 21!

"Nice work, youngster!" Fred gibed Harvey. "I mean, that foul. That the way they taught ya to do it in college?"

The foul had not been intentional, Fred knew that. But he wanted to get Harvey's goat, and his strategy worked to perfection.

The Kellers threw in, and Butch intercepted a pass. Fred called for the ball. Instantly, Harvey was upon him, and Harvey was angry and excited. He slapped at the leather, and only succeeded in hacking his brother. The toot of the whistle. A personal foul—and that was the second on Harvey.

Once more Fred converted. The Comets were out in the lead by a good five points.

The Kellers were given the ball out of bounds, and they worked it into the fore court. Harvey took a shot at the goal, but his effort was wide of the mark, and Scanlon got hold of the ball. Swiftly, the Comets advanced the leather across the dividing line. A pass from Butch to Ward, another to Fred in the scoring area.

Fred expected his brother to try for the ball, and possibly charge him again. But Harvey did no such thing, this time. Plainly hesitant, plainly afraid of committing a personal foul, the younger Duane held back.

Too late he saw Fred zigzag past him with one of those puzzling cross-over dribbles. Too late he came to his senses as Fred, with a leap and a lay-up found that basket once more.

The Comets 24, the Kellers 17. Fred Duane had gone on a point-making spree that threatened to turn this ball game into a shambles.

A sensible team would have called time out, in an effort to figure some method of halting the onslaught. But most of the Kellers were up in the air, and Harvey, the captain, was the worst of the lot by now. He was rattled, completely unstrung.

SHORTLY thereafter, the Comets got hold of the ball when Harvey threw wild, and Fred and Scanlon both worked loose on a crisscross play. Sucked in, Harvey collided with one of his mates, and the Keller defense was thereby split open. Fred looped the melon to Scanlon, who easily caged it.

The crowd in the stands was laughing derisively. This was becoming a slaughter, no less. The Comets had turned on the heat, and the Kellers were fading, especially Harvey. The younger Duane was scrapping, was fighting his heart out; but Harvey had cracked.

As the merciless carnage went on, the other Keller back-court man came over to help guard Fred. And that was the final mistake that Fred had been waiting for. Changing his tactics, he set himself up as a decoy, and time after time, Ballard or Scanlon came galloping into the openings thus created.

The clients were hooting the Kellers; jeering poor Harvey by name; and as goal after goal was poured in, the rout of the Kellers became complete, if it wasn't already.

They finally got so bad that they couldn't hang on to the ball for more than a couple of passes, which usually ended in grief. They were given the ball at the end of the court after each of the goals by the Comets; but most of the time, they only succeeded in bum-

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gling a play or in having a pass intercepted.

A lot of the crowd walked out before it was over. Of those who remained, three quarters were cheering the Comets; the balance were getting their fun by taunting the Kellers.

And finally, *pop*, the crack of the pistol that ended it all. Fred Duane looked up at the score board. The Comets had 46 points, and it might have been more, if they hadn't let down in the closing few minutes. But that was enough, for it doubled the count of the Keller quintet—46—23!

And then, without warning, a squat little figure came stomping out onto the floor, his beet-colored face contorted with rage and disgust. It was Samuel Keller, and Keller was snorting and ranting.

Fred had never seen the man aroused before, and the picture was ugly, repulsive. But Keller, apparently, had no thought for Fred, or the rest of the Comets. Instead, he launched a bitter tirade against the team that was now representing him.

"Out of here, all of you!" Keller screamed. "You're through. You're fired. Get out! There isn't an ounce of basket ball in the whole damned outfit!"

"Fired?" gasped Harvey Duane. "You mean—"

"I mean from everything. Whaddaya think I hired you for, you lunkhead? Why'd I hire the rest of these clumsy giraffes? I wanted a basket-ball team, and what did I get? A collection of clowns. And you're the worst of the lot!"

But Harvey was still incredulous, still half stunned. Off in the background, Fred Duane was gritting his teeth, preparing for trouble. He knew how his kid brother felt.

"You're takin' our jobs at the plant," Harvey muttered. "because we don't measure up as a basket-ball team?"

"Get out!" raged Keller. "That's what I mean. Get out!"

Fred saw Harvey step forward, his right fist knotted. Just in time, the elder Duane leaped into the breach and jostled the youngster aside. If Harvey cut loose, as mad as he was, there might be hell to pay.

Keller, perhaps, deserved some hell, and he got it. But not from Harvey Duane. A burly guard with a "K" on his shirt and a scowl on his face unlimbered a swing. It came from the floor, and it caught the heavy-jowled Keller square on the mouth. Keller went down with a thud, and before he had finished his bouncing, Fred had hustled his brother away from temptation.

HARVEY said nothing. But half an hour later, while most of the fellows were packing their stuff, Harvey got off in a corner with Fred. The kid was so down he was almost pathetic.

"I s'pose you'll never forget how I acted," he groaned, "and durned if I blame you. Fred, I oughta be kicked from here to Alaska. Besides, after all you've done for me—

"Well, start kickin'! I'm ready!"

Harvey bent over. Just for the fun of it, Fred obliged him, planting his shoe where he thought it would do the most good. But Fred was grinning.

"Harvey," he admitted, taking the youngster's arm, "now that it's over, I reckon I better confess. The reason I wanted this game, and *suggested* this game, was to give you the works. I hated to do what I did, to-night, but I figured I had to. So, I started pourin' it on, hopin' you'd kinda blow up, and hopin' that if you *did* blow up, Keller'd fire you. Kid, if you'd *stayed* with that chiseler—"

"I know," muttered Harvey. "Sooner or later, the crash would 'a' come, and besides, there might 'a' been trouble. I realize that, now. But I didn't before. When you tried to tell me the truth, I thought you were jealous, that's all."

"You're out of a job," Fred mused, "along with the rest of those guys. But, fellow, you're well rid of it all, and I

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guess you know that. Now you can look for a spot where you won't be wastin' that college degree. You'll find one, too!"

"You bet I will!" said Harvey. "And when I do, I'm gonna start payin' you back. But, Fred, you're out of a job yourself right now. What'll you do in the meantime?"

"There won't be very much 'meantime,' kid, I hardly believe. A fellow named Lane was tryin' to see me tonight. He caught me here in the locker room between the halves. I shooed him away, but he didn't get sore. He looked me up when the game was over, and, kid, we've just had a talk. You know what he wanted?"

"I'll bite."

"Lane's hooked up with the biggest sporting-goods house in the country. They're planning to open a branch near here, and Lane is lookin' for salesmen. Wants somebody to cover the Brentwood area. Heard I'd been with Keller and learned the ropes, or a few of 'em anyhow."

"Whew!" gasped Harvey. "And you mean, he gave you a job to-night?"

"Well, not exactly. But, fellow, he told me to see him again in the morning, and, son, will I be there!"

"Sounds to me as if you're in.' And it also sounds like Keller & Company's due for a thumpin' around—when you and this guy Lane start hittin' the ball!"

THE END

Skiing is the latest sport craze in this country. If you are one of the enthusiasts, we urge you to read

Bartered Skis

by Warren Elliot Carleton

In the 2nd March issue of Sport Story Magazine, on sale February 18th, 10c per copy.

Continued from page 4

expected to be geared up to his highest pitch of form every time he played.

Maybe young Mr. Budge didn't know about the cash customers and the seven-fifty they had laid on the line. Or maybe, he's made the mistake that others have made before him. He's played so much tennis the last three years that he's gone stale, become overtennised.

The Australian trip which Ellsworth Vines made in the winter of 1932-1933 was blamed for his downfall during the summer of 1933, which was climaxed by his defeat by "Bitsy" Grant in an early round of the National Singles Championship.

It would be too bad to burn out a fine young player of Budge's caliber, even to satisfy the demands of cash customers who are as liberal as those Down Under. And probably, without the inducement of a cut of the gate, young Mr. Budge just couldn't shake off his staleness and go out to make the Von Cramm fur fly, as he did in the Davis Cup match and the National Championship.

Besides, that Von Cramm is a nice guy and a swell tennis player. It seems too bad that Budge shouldn't let him take a match once in a while, just as a sporting gesture. The real mistake was to charge \$7.50 to see

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an exhibition match—with nothing at stake.

Even the mighty Yankees lose a game to the St. Louis Browns once in a while.

In spite of taking nearly all the center jumps out of basket ball, it is still a game in which the tall man has a decided advantage. This is true not only in the matter of "dunking" the ball into the basket by players who stand six-three and over, but also in the matter of defense.

I was particularly impressed by this when I watched Stanford playing City College in Madison Square Garden in December. The little C. C. N. Y. five put up a grand battle, but they just couldn't work past that defense of long, waving arms, and lanky bodies, to get in for a close shot at the basket.

A good tall man is always better than a good short man—to revamp an old boxing adage.

As usual, there are some Locker Roomers waiting with views to express, brickbats to throw, suggestions to offer, and arguments to start.

More power to them!

The first letter writer offers an unusual Ace All America football team, which makes just about as much sense as the ninety-nine others that were published here, there, and everywhere at the close of the past season.

Dear Editor: Every "All America" team has its supporters. But here is one "All America" football team, concerning which there can be no question, because every man is an "ace" for his position.

With one exception, all are in their correct positions.

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Yours truly,

Ed. F. Nance.

Altoona, Pennsylvania.

Gentlemen from Kentucky are not strangers to the Locker Room. They are always welcome to take the floor. But this one seems to think he's some kind of stepchild.

Dear Editor: I don't know whether you get many letters from Kentucky or not, but I never see any in your Locker Room.

As for me and many other fans in Kentucky, we like more basket ball and boxing stories, but, of course, you cannot please everybody. *Douglas Moore.*

Paris, Kentucky.

Not much hockey is played in Arkansas. So this reader doesn't care much for stories about the game. And yet, I have heard Locker Roomers from the South say they like to read about sports that they never get a chance to witness, because they learn about these unfamiliar sports from the stories.

Dear Editor: I have been reading Sport Story for about two years. I agree with Stanley Fisher when he asked you why don't you put some out-of-season stories in once in a while.

Down here, we never have played hockey. Therefore, it is not very interesting to read hockey stories all winter.

Tennis is my favorite sport, but I like basket ball, also. Why not put a tennis story in the winter numbers? I would also like to have a sports cross-word puzzle on basket ball and football.

John Allen Harris.

Lewisville, Arkansas.

All letters should be addressed to the Locker Room, Street & Smith's Sport Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

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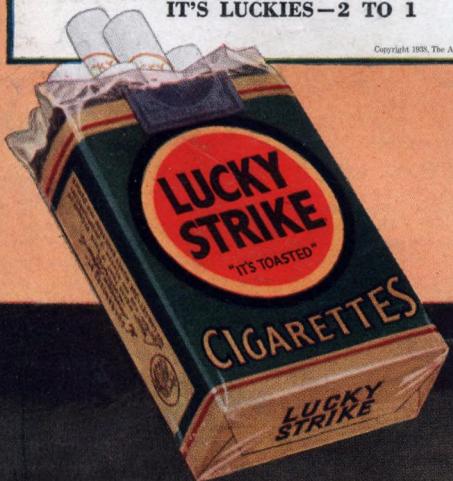
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