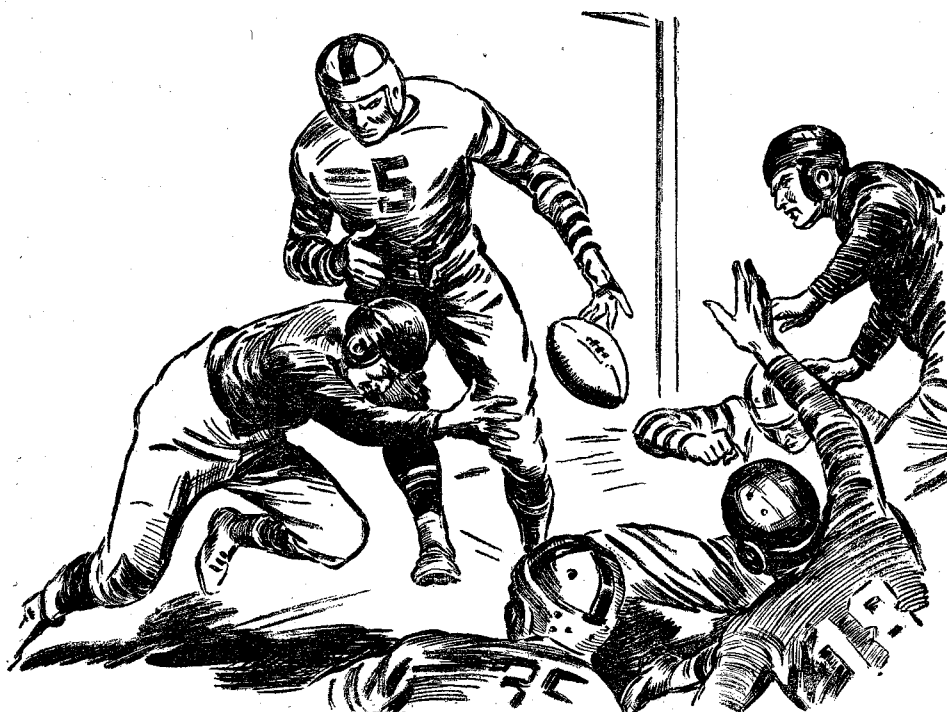


No Minutes to Go



This is a story about football, and about a college man who wouldn't play it. There probably isn't any moral here at all—unless it's that a coach can make the worst mistake of his career and still turn out a winning team

By EUSTACE COCKRELL

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"Second Sight," etc.

MATT WOOD, head football coach at Eastminster, got up from his desk and walked to the window. From the third-floor office in the old brick gymnasium his gaze commanded all that was Eastminster.

He looked out on the campus, his head a little bowed, his body sagging. The campus was brown in the early September sun and it was hot. It hadn't rained for a long time.

Over beyond the Administration Build-

ing he could see part of the stadium, its concrete tiers rising proudly. It was too big. It had never been filled and it had never been paid for. . . .

What if Grimes should suddenly appear walking across that campus? Lumbering, rather. Solid and fast. He'd have been an all-American tackle at a big school.

And Jughead Smith—never called a wrong one in his varsity career and he could pass 'em through a knot-hole at forty yards. Flunked out his last year and never graduated.

And Dusty Rhodes, one fifty-five, the best end he'd ever seen. Dusty had guts; he never wore any pads but shoulder pads and he never had a time out in four years.

Matt Wood could still see his red hair flaming—going down, always coming up.

They paraded by, football players of thirty seasons. When was Dusty here? '12 to '15, that was right. A long time.

Dusty was killed in the Argonne. Jug-head Smith played pro a little but it didn't pay much in those days. Wonder what ever happened to him.

And Grimes. What a tackle! Grimes had a hardware store out on the West Coast.

Matt Woods rubbed his grizzled head and sighed. It did seem sort of silly. Maybe Ames was right. It wasn't important whether you filled the stadium, whether you won any games.

Look at what was happening in Europe. That was important. It was important what they did at Washington. It was important what was happening in China. It wasn't important whether Yale won from Harvard or Eastminster won from Cam-eron. Maybe Ames Conroy was right.

Matt Woods still stood at the window and he still looked out over the campus but he didn't see the campus. He didn't see anything . . .

But Harry Myers was a fine man, now. He'd been a swell-headed rich kid, come to a freshwater college so he could be a big frog in a small puddle. He hadn't been. He'd been well hated. But he had made a guard. A mighty good guard. So good he never got in the papers, except when teams he'd played against named him on their all-opponents team.

Harry knew how to come out and lead interference on an end run. Harry had wound up president of the senior class and he'd given a thousand dollars on the new stadium. Was that important?

Maybe football didn't have anything to do with it. Maybe Harry just grew up. Matt Woods wished he could know.

Did football develop character, and if it did what was character? Wasn't it bad for a kid to have the rest of the campus sort of look up to him because he could hit the line or run an end? Didn't a star athlete come out of college behind the

eight ball? Because unless he turned pro nobody as a rule cared whether he could run an end or sew a fine seam. They just didn't give a cuss.

AMES CONROY was right, maybe. He wanted to be a chemist. Ames was a town boy. And he was old. He was older than the boys who came to Eastminster, by two or three years. The years he'd stayed out of school and worked until his mother died.

And Ames was from the wrong side of the tracks. He'd been a great end in high school and high-spirited and ornery. But that was before his father died. Ames had carried water to the team that Harry Myers had played on.

But Ames Conroy had gone sour. Maybe Ames was right.

Still you have to try, Matt thought. You've got to try. I've got to try and build me a football team every fall. I can't do anything else now. I'm too old. I've got to think it's important and I've got to get Ames out if I'm going to have a football team.

He took out his big silver watch and looked at it. Somebody was coming across the campus, coming to see him. He walked over and sat down at his desk.

"It won't do any harm," he muttered to himself. "I don't see how it can do any harm."

The door opened and Matt Woods looked up. "Hello, Ames," he said. "How're things?"

Ames Conroy moved across the room without self-consciousness and took Matt Woods' hand. "All right," he said. "How're they with you?"

"Lousy," Matt said.

"This heat," Ames said, "it gets you on edge. A good rain and a night cool enough so you can sleep'll make the world look different."

Matt Woods was silent for a moment, then he said: "Ames, you're a senior. What are you going to do when you get out of school?"

"Coach," Ames said, "I'm going to be

a chemist, and I'm going to be such a swell chemist that I can get a job when I get out of school."

Matt Woods walked to the window. "Come here, son," he said. "You see that campus, you see that stadium, you see it all. It doesn't amount to anything. If it disappeared it wouldn't make any difference."

"But I've got a feeling about that little campus and about Eastminster and all that stuff. And you haven't. I can't understand that."

Ames Conroy smiled and there was a little pity in his eyes. Patiently he said:

"Coach, you're right. I've paid my tuition and I worked for the money to pay it with. I couldn't afford to go to a better school and it's only good luck there are other people at this school like you. I refer to some members of the faculty. I think they're fools to waste their talents on a place like this but I know how lucky I am that they do."

Matt Woods looked out over the campus and he didn't turn to Ames. He said: "I was after you last year and the year before to come out for football. I'm after you again I need an end and I need one bad. I don't know whether you'd make the raffle or not but I'd appreciate it if you'd give it a try."

Ames Conroy didn't say anything.

"IT'S the wrong attitude for a coach to take," Matt said, "but you're not a kid. I don't have to worry about you gettin' swell headed because I try to get you out. If I said I could get you a little dough for playin' it would insult you, and anyway I can't. We don't carry anyone here because they can play football. Maybe that's the trouble."

Ames Conroy looked at the floor. "You know my history," he said evenly. "Every one in this lousy town knows my history. My father was no good and he's long dead. And now my mother's dead."

His voice rose a little. "Don't you think it ever occurred to me to want to go to college and be collegiate, and play football

and go to dances and wear collegiate clothes and all that stuff? Well, I don't want to now. I guess I'm too old.

"I want to be a chemist. I want to make money when I get out of school. Maybe I'm cold-blooded but I want an education, an education that'll help me make money when I get out of school. I wouldn't waste ten minutes a day if it'd make me all-American, let alone all afternoon all fall."

"Maybe the exercise would make you so's you could think better, study better," Matt Woods said, half-heartedly. "Make you more efficient."

"Coach," Ames Conroy said. "I'm not coming out for football. I've paid my tuition. I worked for the money. I didn't come here to play, I came here to work. And that's what I'm going to do. I don't owe this school a thing."

"When you have a lot of jack," Matt Woods said, "what are you going to do with it?"

"Why . . ." Ames Conroy looked up. "What?" he asked.

"I asked you what you were going to do with all the jack after you make it?"

"I'm going to have fun," Ames said. "Live in good hotels, order people around. Eat steaks." Grimly he added: "Not what I've been doing all my life."

"Ames," Matt said, "you're a fool. I'm not going to ask you to change. But I hope you do. You're playing the Alger boy too hard. I don't want you to go rah rah but I think you ought to have some fun."

Matt Woods got up from the desk. "So long, son," he said, abruptly. "Good luck."

And he walked back to the window.

Far across and low in the southwest sky there was something visible. Then there was a sound. Suddenly in the hot still air there was a rustling of tired leaves.

A tiny funnel of dust scampered up the graveled drive that ran through the campus and dissolved itself against the pale vines that clung dispiritedly to the gymnasium.

The air was cool. Definitely cool. And

the air was in motion. The next clap of thunder was louder. And the black clouds were rolling faster, tumbling over and over each other in furious and beautiful haste, pilling high in the western sky.

As the first tentative drop hit, Matt Woods grinned. "Yes," he said aloud, remembering Ames' prophecy, "the world does look better, Ames my lad, and I've had an idea." He walked over and picking up the phone, gave a number. . . .

"IN THE first place," Matt said, "I think we'd be doing him a favor. All work and no play, you know?"

Linda Hamilton smiled. "Why me," she asked, "with the campus soon literally crawling with better sirens than I'd ever be?"

Matt Woods grinned. "Don't be modest," he said. "And anyway, this Ames has turned out a good-looking boy since your day. I've got to have some one of some sophistication, else she would fall for *him* rather than vice versa."

Linda smiled reminiscently. "I adored him in high school," she said. "He was always so beautifully shabby and tough—and such a good athlete." Linda sighed a mock sigh. "But he never knew I existed."

"I had just talked to him when I called you," Matt Woods said. "He says it's spinach and he wants none of it, but I happened to think of you. You've been away for six years and you know your way around. If he got to kind of liking you he'd probably listen to you about giving it the old college try."

"If he never comes out of the laboratory," Linda said—but her eyes were sparkling—"how would I ever have a chance to lure him out under the harvest moon and tell him I like big strong athletes?"

"Let me think," Matt Woods said. "Let me think."

Linda smiled a little wistfully, watching him. "You care a lot about that football team, don't you?"

Matt Woods sighed. "I guess I do," he

said. Then his whole face brightened.

"I got it," he said. "I'll have him over to dinner in a couple or three nights. We're old friends—he used to be the team's mascot—even if he won't come out for my team."

"You come by about ten. You come by and have the top down on your car. It'll be only natural for you to offer to take him home and it'll be a pretty night if this rain lets up by then and I think it will."

Linda grinned. "You know," she said, "you've got your nerve asking anyone to try to do what you want me to."

Matt Woods chuckled slyly. "You weren't too hard to persuade," he said. "I have a feeling you think the role has possibilities."

Linda looked out of the window. "It's quit raining now," she said. "I'll see you soon. Give me a ring the night I open." She walked to the door.

"Enrollment starts in five days," Matt Woods said. "And I sure need an end. Don't let me down."

"The Hamilton motto," Linda said as she opened the door, "is *any* means for an end."

AMES CONROY, lining up for the kick-off, felt that little cold tightening in his stomach such as he'd used to feel, and he felt his heart pounding a little in the tempo of the band's vigorous blaring.

He resented it a little bit, feeling ashamed of himself for an instant for feeling adolescent; and then he heard the whistle and was moving down his side of the field, watching the kicker, taking a half step to avoid an offside; and then he was watching the ball in the air, watching the interference form.

Then some one threw a rolling block at him and he thought only of the game.

They tried his end on the first play and Ames shifted, working on the blockers with his hands, floating; and he found a hole and dived for the runner cutting back and they were going back into punt formation, second and fifteen. The line

backer beat him on the back, once, and he grinned.

The Eastminster tackle, playing inside of him, blocked the kick and the ball was bounding end over end and Ames was on it recovering it with a long dive. He could hear the hubbub in the stands and he grinned again, hearing himself shouting. In four plays Eastminster scored.

Six to nothing, then seven to nothing, but it wasn't as big as it looked; and before the second quarter was over Ames could feel each spot on his body that had been hit and Eastminster was battling to preserve that seven points and Ames Conroy was getting up each time a little slower.

Five minutes before the half ended Matt took him out.

Conroy bent over and the trainer pulled his jersey off over his head. Matt Woods walked down the line of benches, grinning, talking. He stopped before Conroy. "Sweet game, son," he said.

"Yeah?" Ames said, not looking up. He sat down and started unlacing his shoes. Matt Woods stared down at him a minute and then walked on.

Ames unknotted the lace in his left shoe. . . . Sweet game, eh? Lot of guts, Ames my boy. Out there wasting time when you know you should be working. Out there because of a gal. A rich gal that's just in town for a couple of months to sell the property her father left her and then she's gone.

Gone back to her world. A little New York, a little Miami, a little Lake Placid. A dash of the old home town every six years to see how the other half lives.

Be-kind-to-Conroy week! Give the boy from the wrong side of the tracks a break. Egg him into going out for football. Make a fool out of him.

Ames finished peeling off his clothes and walked into the shower.

Matt Woods stopped before him again as he was dressing. "Get a lot of sleep over the week-end," he said. "And you needn't show up Monday."

Ames Conroy looked up at him, then,

and there were little lines of disgust in his face. "I've a lot of work to do over the week-end," he said. "Did I play my position today?"

Matt Woods said troubledly: "You played a sweet game, son."

"All right," Ames said. "I'll do my own sleeping." And he pulled on his jacket and walked to the door.

HE CAME out of the gym, and there was the roadster. Linda called to him. He walked over, and put his foot on the running board. "Get in," she said. "You played a sweet game today, lad. I'll drive you home."

Ames climbed into the roadster. "Yes," he said, bitterly. "That's what I heard."

"You certainly did," Linda said emphatically, "and doesn't it feel grand to be in training again?"

Ames Conroy turned and looked at the profile of the girl beside him. Yes, that was it. It's worth it; what if it is only two months?

I'll take this. I'll take riding down this beautiful old drive with Linda Hamilton, looking at her, hearing her talk, being in love with her. Hopelessly in love with her and knowing it's hopeless. Even thinking sometimes when I'm away from her that she's shallow and selfish, and not caring if she is because I'm in love with her. Yes, I'll take this.

I'll take going out for football because she wants me to, knowing I can't spare the time, and when I do spare the time, stealing it at night. Coffee, black enough and strong enough, is a wonderful thing. . . .

Ames mustered up a grin. "I'm not exactly in the pink of condition," he said. "But we won a football game, anyway, and that's news at Eastminster."

"Darling," Linda said carelessly, "you played superbly. And I have a plan for us. Tomorrow we go back to nature. This is a glorious time of year for a picnic. We'll drive some place 'way away, and just sit and watch the leaves turn redder."

"But—" Ames began. Then he stopped.

She had said *darling*, very definitely she had said *darling*. Quite casually, to be sure, and no doubt it was a common term among the people she had known these last six years. "All right," he said, trying not to sound too eager, "I think that would be swell."

Linda gave him a fleeting look. When she turned back her face wore a tiny frown, but her voice was gay. "I'll pick you up early," she said. "I'll have the victuals."

"But can't I see you tonight?" Ames asked a little doggedly.

"No, darling," Linda said. "I want you to go to bed early. You look terribly tired." She stopped the car.

"Till morning," she said. And she drove off swiftly, leaving him standing there. She didn't look back.

NO, LINDA, my girl, you didn't look back, did you? You should have looked back before that picnic with Ames Conroy. And you should have looked ahead a little, too.

You're back here in the old home town, and you've sold the house and property your father left so hopefully and you're lucky to break even. The roadster and money to live a little while in New York and you'll tramp those streets and see those theatrical agents and maybe you'll be lucky and get a bit.

But you've had one part these last two months. Your father's dear friend, Mr. Woods. He gave you a part. A bit of a lark, my dear . . . Mr. Conroy is stubborn, he won't play on my football team. He's a man instead of a boy. And there he is sitting there on your sofa, sound asleep.

Why is he sound asleep, Linda? Why, Miss Hamilton, he's sound asleep because you got him out for football with your woman's wiles and he's tried to keep his studies up and he has abandoned that good old principle of sleeping at night. He has done that a bit too long. He's got circles under his eyes and he's drawn too fine. But he plays his end of that line and he's practically a hero.

Yes, that was a part, Linda, dear Linda, and you did what the book says—you put your heart into it. . . . Now try to get it back.

There's only one more game, my dear, and dear old Eastminster is undefeated. Isn't that lovely? It's a hateful little school to do that to my darling—but it wasn't the school, it was you.

The weeks have slipped by and you haven't had the guts to tell him that he's out for football because dear Mr. Woods asked you to be a heel—and you agreed. Because you fell in love with him—and maybe he with you.

But wait till you tell him what you've done . . . and you must tell him, you know that. See how he'll look at you then. Just watch his face. Just watch his face when you tell him what you've done.

Linda Hamilton stood up softly and walked twice across the room. Her face was drawn and she blinked back two tears savagely. Then, walking to the door, she closed it softly behind her.

HONEY," Matt Woods said, "I'm sorry. But Saturday will see it over. I can't help wanting to win that one."

"He's over at my house," Linda said. "Sound asleep. Sitting up on the sofa sound asleep. He's almost a wreck. Classes all day, football all afternoon. Keeps up the toughest course anyone ever took at this lousy school making straight A's and sees me besides. I tell you he can't stand it for another week."

"But he makes too much difference, Linda. Honest now, don't you get a kick out of seeing Ames Conroy win a football game for Eastminster?"

"That's not a fair question," Linda cried. "It's not fair to him."

"That Cameron," Matt said. "They've got a club. We'll fill the stadium with them. I haven't had an undefeated team since twenty-six. Stick a reserve in there at Ames' end and we wouldn't have a chance."

"You'd fill the stadium?" Linda said and her voice dripped sarcasm. "You

might have an undefeated team? Isn't that swell? Isn't that important—"

"To me," Matt said, interrupting. "It is."

. . . The old ghosts walk, Grimes and Harry Myers and Jughead Smith and Dusty Rhodes and Ames Conroy. And all the others. And Ames Conroy. And you thought it was important, didn't you, Matt?

Head coach for thirty years and you'll do anything for a winning team because a winning team attracts good material and every fall you've got to build a football team, every fall until you die because you're too old to do anything else. Yes, you character builder, you . . .

"I'm sorry," Matt said. "I'll see what I can do."

LINDA sat down on the sofa and shook Ames Conroy gently by the shoulder. He sat up with a start, creasing his face into a grin. "Sorry," he said. "I must have dropped off," he added a little foolishly.

Linda stood up. "Ames," she said, "walk with me to the door."

It was dark in the hall. She'd be moving out of this house in a few days. It was cold. She opened the door. It was cold and crisp outside and she could see hard stars winking between the bare branches of the trees.

"Stand outside, Ames," she said. "I want to tell you something."

She could see his face but not clearly.

"Ames," she said . . . Now troupe, my dear. The show must go on.

"Ames," she said. "Kiss me." She moved back to where it was darker then, away from him.

She began again, flatly, "I'm an actress. I bet Matt Woods I could make you come out for football. I'm not going to see you any more. I'm leaving Sunday and I'm not coming back again. It was a frame-up, Ames. . . ."

You've got the door shut and you're standing there and your heart has ticked off a lot of seconds but he hasn't moved.

"Don't hate me." That's what your heart is ticking off and he's moved, you can hear his feet. He's going, and now he's off the porch. Don't be dramatic; nobody can see you in this hall. Don't waste it . . . don't . . . don't . . .

AMES CONROY got up from the snow-covered ground and he noticed that a little blood was dripping from his right eyebrow. That was where the Cameron guard had stepped on him on that last play when they'd come around his end.

Ames wiped the blood away with a little snow. You cut easily when you're cold, he thought. What was he out here for, anyhow? Linda was gone and a good thing it was. A fine thing. But she was an actress, a very fine one. Superbly superb.

Linda was gone and he'd had more time for his chemistry and still time enough to play football on Matt Woods'

"I Talked with God"

(Yes, I Did—Actually and Literally)

and, as a result of that little talk with God some ten years ago, a strange new Power came into my life. After 43 years of horrible, sickening, dismal failure, this strange Power brought to me a sense of overwhelming victory, and I have been overcoming every undesirable condition of my life ever since. What a change it was. Now—I have credit at more than one bank, I own a beautiful home, own a newspaper and a large office building, and my wife and family are amply provided for after I leave for shores unknown. In addition to these material benefits, I have a sweet peace in my life. I am happy as happy can be. No circumstance ever upsets me, for I have learned how to draw upon the invisible God-Law, under any and all circumstances.

You too may find and use the same staggering Power of the God-Law that I use. It can bring to you too, whatever things are right and proper for you to have. Do you believe this? It won't cost much to find out—just a penny post-card or a letter, addressed to Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 7, Moscow, Idaho, will bring you the story of the most fascinating success of the century. And the same Power I use is here for your use too. I'll be glad to tell you about it. All information about this experience will be sent you free, of course. The address again—Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 7, Moscow, Idaho. Advt. Copyright 1939 Frank B. Robinson.

beautiful undefeated team and that made everything perfectly lovely.

Except, perhaps, for the little detail that he didn't seem to be playing football . . .

The joke's on you, Matt, after all. You were a pretty cheap heel, to play a trick like that on me. And then you told me I could turn in my suit if I wanted to and I thought I'd stick it out one more week and here I am and I might as well be in the laboratory for all the good I'm doing, because the Cameron quarterback is sending every other play around my end and they're gaining.

Yes, they're gaining plenty. These boys are efficient. They function. They are very good. Their interference is superb. Superbly superb. They seem to know which end their bread is buttered on because here they come again and that guard is coming out of there and they're taking me out of this play, out of this play. . . .

Harkness got him. Another first and ten, and this is very interesting, this football. A little on the juvenile side but very interesting.

All those people doing all that screaming and sitting out in this vile weather to watch them knock old Conroy over and skip a few yards around his end and they'll probably score because I don't seem to be able to do a thing about it.

They are too good, I guess. It's first and goal. First and goal and I expect they will score over the prostrate form of old Conroy, good old Conroy; swing low sweet chariot I wonder who's kissing her now, tra la. And the gun caught them and the half is over. Tut tut.

MATT WOODS looked over at Ames where he sat on the little bench between halves. He looked played out, he thought. Probably because he was played out. He'd worked too hard and lost too much sleep and he was all in and that was that.

You could play good football, Matt knew, you could even play great football

when you were all in, but you had to have something to do it on, some reason, some feeling about the team or the school or something.

Ames didn't have it and he couldn't give it to him and there wasn't anything to be done about it.

He thought, then, that he'd tell Ames that Linda was there. Linda had come back, maybe she'd never gone away. But she was there at the game, he'd seen her. He'd tell Ames that. It might make a difference. He went over to Ames and patted him on the shoulder.

Matt cleared his throat. "Son," he heard himself say, "you're played out. You've done your best, it's not your fault. I'll start you this half and then I'll send someone in. We'll all live, even if we do lose this one. No use you getting hurt."

Ames didn't look up. "Suit yourself," he said indifferently.

It was time to go back for the second half, then, and Matt went back to the bench and pulled a blanket around his shoulders. It was getting colder all the time. Eastminster kicked off.

They were coming out of their huddle, that big Cameron team. One, two, *hike*. Like a bunch of machines moving into their positions with a sort of relentlessness. They functioned, those boys did. They had power.

Sometimes the snow would fall a little thicker and he couldn't see. Maybe he didn't want to see them hammer that end, sweep those power plays around that end.

Sometimes it seemed to be Dusty Rhodes out there because Conroy wasn't wearing a helmet and he looked little with nothing but shoulder pads. But Dusty had died in the Argonne. It was Ames and they were hammering Ames.

They were hammering Ames and Ames, somehow, seemed to be holding them—they weren't gaining around his end now—but it was time to take Ames out. He'd promised him, and it was time to take him out.

"All right," Matt said to the boy beside

him. "Go in there for Conroy. Cut down the interference, don't try to make any tackles."

Conroy was just getting up. Conroy was getting up and walking around and shaking his head as if to clear it and Jaccard the substitute was racing through the tracked snow across the field and then they could hear Ames Conroy's voice because it was so quiet and sound carries when snow is falling.

"Tell Mr. Woods to climb a tree, please, Jaccard. I'll play my position."

"The so and so," Ames said aloud; "he was going to take me out." He went into his position. He was going to take me out just like I couldn't play my end, just like maybe I wasn't good enough to play on his lousy one-horse football team. Just like those guys could gain around my end forever just because they gained awhile.

"Route one this way, stupid," Ames called to the Cameron quarterback. And he was grinning a crooked grin. The Cameron quarterback obliged.

Sift and float, and then you get in there and cut that fullback down across the knees when he goes back for the hole off tackle. Cut him from the side, right at his knees and he won't get up so fast.

"Listen," Ames said, aloud, "you ain't goin' noplase, son."

He could feel the blood roaring past his ears and there were some facilities for taking oxygen to his blood in the bottom of his lungs that hadn't had anything to do for a long time.

He felt good, with a solid energy flowing through his body and the band slashed across *On Wisconsin* but Ames Conroy fitted the bad verse that Eastminster used to the tune and that's the way he felt it.

The line backer came up and hit him on the back and he rubbed some snow across his face. They were trying, those kids in the band, and it was cold enough so that the tuba player probably couldn't take his lips off the mouthpiece of his horn when he finished this one but he was riding those *umpas* hard anyway.

"Don't you like my end?" he yelled.

MATT WOODS stood in his office and looked out the window at the roadster sitting there. Linda Hamilton's roadster.

It had been beautiful, that play. If Ames hadn't sliced in, taking a chance; if he had taken his three steps and waited, it would have been too sad.

But Ames *had* sliced and it had been beautiful. The Cameron quarter's leg had swung and Ames hadn't been able to get his hands crossed in front of his face and he'd blocked it with his chin.

It had been terrible. It had dropped him like a log and the Cameron quarter had been plenty busy getting back and falling on the ball. But still it was a safety—two great big points. . . .

That long last quarter. Power and still more power. Try that end. Try the punch-drunk end that won't get out of the game, that we gained around all the first half. That's the way they'd figured. Still, they hadn't scored. . . .

Linda Hamilton came in the door. "You wanted to see me?" she asked frostily.

"Yes," Matt said. "I was afraid you wouldn't come. You got my wire?"

"Yes."

"And you think I am a big heel because I got you to lure poor Ames out for football and then you got kind of fond of him and renounced all and told him you had lured him out—you blamed it on me?"

"Yes," Linda said. "Yes to the 'big heel' part."

"Well," Matt Wood said, "after you renounced all and told him, he didn't turn in his suit did he? When I tried to take him out today he wouldn't leave the game. You didn't have anything to do with that and neither did I."

"You know what happened to him? The old college try got him. He got all dewy-eyed and unselfish about Eastminster and so he stayed in there and played a beautiful game."

"Well," Linda began doubtfully.

"If I loved a girl I'd play football for her. I wouldn't mind. And if I was a girl that loved a boy I'd tell him so."

Tears came to Linda's eyes and she didn't say anything for a minute.

Ames came in the door. "You wanted to see me, coach?" he asked gruffly. Then he saw Linda.

Linda turned to him; she walked over to him and put her arms around his neck and she said: "I love you, Ames."

Ames said over her head, "What the such-and-such is this?"

"I don't know," Matt said. "I just told her that if she loved you the simplest thing would be for her to tell you so." He paused. "The same thing goes for you, too, stupid."

Ames didn't say anything. He looked down at Linda's head on his chest.

"I fix it so a beautiful girl falls in love with you; I breed a little unselfishness into you with my football team and you are all set to come in here and tell me what a big heel I am," Matt said.

Ames grinned. "You are, aren't you?"

"Nope," Matt said. "I'm a football coach."

Ames nimbly thumbed his nose.

... Matt Woods rubbed a bigger hole in the frost on the window of his office. It's all right, all right! They are both in the car, now. Not bad, Matt, old cupid, old kid. The car is moving down the drive.

Matt threw up the window and bel-lowed: "Matt Woods' a lowdown louse!"

He heard them laugh.

Laugh, and the metropolitan papers laugh with you—that is if you have an undefeated team. Pretty sweet team. Some nice stories tomorrow. The Old Master. School spirit got boy, boy got girl. Nice going, coach.

I'll have some boys coming up next year. I'll have me a real club next year! We'll probably take Cameron three, four touchdowns next year.

Why, a dry field today so they could use some of those pass plays the veteran gridiron genius, grizzled Matt Woods, taught 'em, and it'd have probably been a lot worse than: Eastminster twoooooooo. Cameron zeroooooooo.



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Jesse James hated guns;
and as soon as Emmett
pulled his, he leaped

Red Snow

Five men on a dead man's map, with a quarter of a million to split between them. But the youngest man knew a trap when he saw one, and he had a Colt to call his own

By ARTHUR LAWSON

Author of "Brother Cowpoke," "Squaw Lady," etc.

I

JEFF HALEY, once known as "The Kid," turned his back on the Huntsville Penitentiary and rode straight into the sunset without once looking back. His mind was busy with what lay ahead—and his instinct told him that something was loco. The law just does not suddenly turn Santa Claus and let a man out of jail before half his term is served. Not without some good reason.

The warden had tried to explain it to him:

"We figger you learned your lesson, Jeff." But that was not the answer. "You were only a kid when you helped wreck that U. P. train and lifted the quarter million from the baggage-car safe. You didn't know what you were doing. So the governor thought it over and is giving you a pardon. Ah . . . uh—you wouldn't want to tell us now what happened to that loot and who was in on the robbery with you?"