

The Record Isn't Everything



by Darrell Sifford

IRV LOOTEN'S chin was square with determination. It jutted defiantly below a nose that tailed off a little to the left. Pale green eyes, narrowed to tiny slits, burned beneath a shock of unruly hair.

Irv brushed back a lock and surveyed the dimly lit waiting room. His shoulders were hunched and his left hand was jammed deep into the pocket of a double-breasted suit.

He puffed nervously on a cigarette and looked at his wrist watch. It was 7:30 P. M. Any moment now the big

oak-paneled door over there would open and Mr. Nicholas, the board of education president, would beckon solemnly to him.

Then Irv would go in to face the wolves for the third time in three years. He removed his hand from his pocket and studied the frayed cuff. Back in college it would have been funny—Irv Looten, football star, in a tattered suit.

But now Irv could see no humor. He was wearing his Sunday best.

Irv ground his cigarette into an ash tray and sat down, crossing his long limbs. "Maybe the third time

will be a charm," he thought happily. "They can't turn down my request for a raise forever!"

The door opened abruptly and Mr. Nicholas, bald head glistening, cleared his throat. "This way, please, Mr. Looten."

The voice was coldly formal, disciplined, unsmiling. Irv walked inside the board room, his eyes squinting under the glare of bright lights. His shoes, scuffed at the toes, slid through piles of wine-colored carpet.

Irv stopped beside Mr. Nicholas at the head of the table. He surveyed his opponents for tonight's big game.

Bald heads apparently were the order of the day. Irv counted five among the eight board members.

Mr. Nicholas cleared his throat and spoke with cool authority: "Board members, this is Mr. Looten, our high-school football coach."

The members nodded. It was a friendly enough reception, Irv thought. Still he felt outnumbered.

Again Mr. Nicholas, ramrod straight and red-faced, coughed for attention. "As you know, Mr. Looten has been in the system for three seasons now. And although I'm no football fan, I must say his teams have compiled a unique record—one that probably isn't equaled anywhere in the entire state!"

Irv thought he recognized a smile from beneath one of the bare scalps. But he wasn't sure. Anyway, it was a hopeful sign.

"Now what we must weigh are the merits of that record," Mr. Nicholas said. "Some say it is giving our school a black eye. Others say it means we must shift emphasis in our athletic program."

Irv squirmed uneasily. Why didn't Nicholas let him speak?

"Now as I said before, I'm no foot-

new end paper permanent...

