

The Singing Fullback

Lincoln Uni.
Beats Howard
7-6

Barney Reid Turned Down a \$1,000 Offer to Throw the Annual Howard Football Game to Lincoln. Lincoln Won, 7-6. Barney Had a Chance to Stop the Lincoln Score. He Missed. He Had a Chance to Tie the Score with a Kick After Touchdown. He Missed Again. Did Barney Throw the Game to Lincoln After All?

SYNOPSIS

Barney Reid and Duke Hart are rivals, both in love and on the gridiron. Both go to Howard University, and both are in love with Sally Martin, a member of Duke's class. Barney had had to work in an iron mill for a year, and so is one class behind Hart in school.

Barney, at first unable to play football because he had to work his way through college, finally finds a job singing in a choir. He makes the freshman team, and later goes out for the varsity. Hart is injured, so Barney becomes first-string fullback. But his father, the Rev. Mr. Reid, has died, and Barney is worried about money.

Just before the game with Lincoln, Bert Ellis, a gambler, visits Barney and offers him a thousand dollars to throw the game. Although he refuses, he is tempted. How easy it would be to lose that game! All of his difficulties would be solved.

CHAPTER IX

Barney slept little that night. There was much to worry him. Ellis's proposition, for one thing. The next day he awoke to find a note tucked beneath his door. He tore the envelope open and read it quickly. It was from Ellis:

"Barney: The offer still stands, if you want to take me up on it. One thousand berries for you, if Lincoln wins."

He crumpled the envelope and put the note in his pocket. Then he went out to his classes, and final practice.

There was no scrimmage that day—only a long, stiff signal drill. Sally stood on the sidelines and watched for a few moments. Barney saw her later on the library steps. She was talking to a tall freshman, a fellow he knew only slightly.

"Let's see you put up a good game tomorrow, Barney," she called.

"O. K.," Barney grinned up at her.

The next morning dragged slowly. It was Thanksgiving. The day was brisk and fair, one to call people out into the open, whether or not there was a football game. The campus was alive—knots of college men, girls in furs flaunting the colors of Howard and Lincoln, sedate fathers and mothers, and old grads, grouped together, discussing football.



He caught the ball, juggled it and it slipped out of his arms. A Lincoln man dived for it ahead of him.

Barney dressed listlessly for the game. Some of the other fellows were already in uniform. Coach Verdell was walking up and down, talking to them.

Lincoln's team was good, he told them, comparative scores might show that they were better than Howard; but comparative scores didn't mean everything. Lincoln had a splendid defense, that much was sure. Howard's offense was weakened because of Hart's injury. Still, Howard had a chance. They had to make the best of that chance. And they would, if only they kept their minds alert every minute. They must fight—fight.

Barney listened with dull deadness. He wanted the game to start, and yet he dreaded it. He'd fight—you'd bet he'd fight; but it was with his brain he felt it, not his emotions. For the moment he was emotionally numb.

Verdell was talking on. Barney heard him as if the sound came from a long way off, clear yet distinct.

"You've got to win—go to," he said, and then he stopped. Suddenly Barney felt that this game meant a lot to the head coach. He hadn't thought of it that way before.

It seemed almost unbelievable, now that he was in his uniform and ready to go out on the field, that he could have once thought of throwing the game. Ellis had offered him a lot of money, and he needed money badly. But not that badly. Everyone was rooting for him to come through. Sally and Verdell and the whole student body. He couldn't go in there consciously to lose. It wouldn't be right. All the money in the world couldn't make it right.

Hart came in and said a few words to the team. He was sorry he couldn't play this year, he said, but he would be out again next fall. Meanwhile, he wanted to see his boys go out there and whip Lincoln. "Fight—fight—"

His words trailed off. Moss, sterling right halfback and captain of the Bison team, got up. "Come on, fellows," he said, and they trooped out of the dressing room and down the runway that led to the field. Moss started on a trot out into the field, and the team followed.

A cheer swept outward from the stands as the team went automatically through its signal drill. Barney went down to one end of the field by himself and practiced punting.

The teams spread out across the field. Lincoln had the kickoff. Barney took his place in a far corner to the left. He watched the Lincoln man place the ball, saw with vivid clearness everything that was happening; but yet there was that numbness of body, that feeling of being so far away, yet there in the midst of it all.

Then came the whistle. The two lines started toward each other. The ball was kicked. Up it went, high into the air. Straight as an arrow—

goal. The Bison eleven was on its toes now, and its line was holding well. Lincoln tried another line plunge, this time through right tackle. Three yards was all it netted.

The next was a forward pass. Barney came in fast to ground it. Lincoln's third down. Her fullback punted. The ball dropped on Howard's three-yard line.

Howard decided to return the punt, rather than take the chance of losing the ball so near its goal. Barney kicked. The ball went high but dropped short, carrying only a bit beyond midfield. A line play carried it to Lincoln's 47-yard line, and then the Lincoln fullback dropped back and let go with a long, flat pass which sailed down the middle of the field to a waiting end.

The player was uncovered and alone when he caught the ball on Howard's 32-yard line, but Barney moved in fast to make the tackle and for the time being, Lincoln was stopped right there.

Continued on page 4

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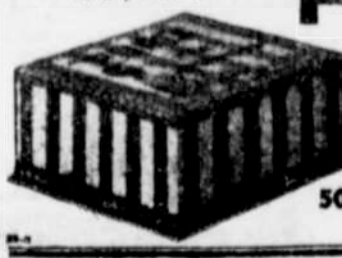
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