

SERIAL STORY

GOAL TO GO

BY W. H. PEARS

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CHAPTER I

AT three minutes of 10, Bill Mentor stripped off his white apron and dashed for the door of the drug store. Old Julius Peskin darted from the back room like a spider after a fly.

"So now, Mentor, you pick your own quitting 'me?' His dry, thin voice quivered. "You're paid to work from 4 until 10, not when the spirit moves you."

"But tonight's the first game of the season, Mr. Peskin. I'd like to see a few minutes of the last quarter." From nearly six feet up Bill watched the putty-colored bald spot on the little man's head turn crimson. "I've swept out and—"

"Slap things up in a hurry," Peskin grumbled. "If it wasn't for the ill-will I'd gain around the school, I'd yank my son Walton off the team and put him in your place here."

"Yes, sir," Bill said, edging toward the door. "It's 10 o'clock now, Mr. Peskin."

Peskin looked satisfied at having gained his rightful time, even in talk. "Go ahead," he snapped.

BILL was on his bicycle before the door slammed. He streaked through the clear autumn night, broad shoulders hunched over the handlebars, legs driving like pistons. Crossing Market street he saw a wide halo of light against the sky. He heard distant cheering and his heart leaped in response. The game was still on!

Bill sliced between parked cars, skidded to a stop. Inside City Stadium he could hear the rising chant of a "Yea-a, team!" Applause splattered, followed by the abrupt silence that precedes play.

Running up the ramp, Bill caught a black glimpse of the scoreboard: VISITORS, 6; WEST 9.

Down on the chest-chewed sward the West boys were in a huddle, their jerseys making a huge crimson blossom against the green turf.

"Bill, here I am!" Helen Welch ran toward him, waving. Her chestnut curls were windblown and adorned with a crimson ribbon to match her short skirt. Slim, eager, she said, "I was afraid you wouldn't get here."

"Me, too," Bill said with a grin. "Jumpers, Helen, there goes a pass!"

It was a wobbly, erratic heave from Peskin. A Benton man charged in to bat it aside, but with a desperate lunge the West end grabbed it. He was knocked out of bounds on the Benton 25.

A deafening roar went up from the crowd. The band crashed forth in pagan triumph. Crimson-shirted cheerleaders spun around like dervishes, pounding the air with their fists, chanting, "We want a touchdown!"

"Oh, Bill!" Helen's eyes shone as she joined her voice to the pandemonium. She danced up and down, grabbed Bill impulsively and kissed him. "Bill, Bill, they're going to do it!"

"Gee...," Bill stared at Helen, touching his fingers to his lips. "You... kissed me."

"Oh...," Helen's cheeks flamed. "I didn't mean to, Bill. Honestly. I—I was excited and..."

Her voice was lost in wild cheering as Hart, West's fullback, bucked the line for five. The timekeeper signaled three minutes to play. The Benton boys looked tired. Straight, hard smashes would do it, Bill thought, trembling.

"Drive!" he prayed. The mild fall wind struck feebly across his hot forehead. He could almost feel the hard, taut leather in his big hands. If he could only be down there now, carrying the ball, or even running interference. Throwing himself into a sweet roll block, clearing the way for a West man to score. Boy!

The Benton line held. It was last down with three to go. Landis replaced Peskin with Calvert. Hart took the pass from center, faked a thrust at the line and gave the ball to Calvert, who flipped it backward to the left halfback. Instead of racing to the right for a clear shot at the end, the halfback hurried the pass away and it went straight into the hands of a Benton man.

A low moan swept the stands. The band was silent, the cheerleader wilted and mute. Boos were heard as Benton froze to the ball for three plays, then punted out of danger. A moment later the timekeeper's pistol exploded.

AS Bill and Helen pushed slowly through the disconsolate crowd they recognized Pat Hurly, sports editor of the Daily Clarion, and heard him grumble, "That wouldn't have happened if Buck Mentor'd been coaching. What a time for razzle-dazzle!"

Wheeling his bicycle, Bill walked by Helen's side in silence. He thought of his father, sitting alone by the radio, and it made him unhappy. Why, Buck had forgotten more football than Coach Landis ever knew!

Helen said shyly, "I'm sorry, Bill."

"About the game?" She shook her head, blushing. "About what I did..."

"Gee, why, Helen? I—I—I—I mean I didn't mind."

Embarrassed, they said no more until they reached home. Bill hesitated at the Welch's front porch. "Well, goodnight!"

"Goodnight, Bill!" He started across the yard to his house, then stopped. "Helen..."

"Yes, Bill?" He fumbled for words. "Maybe... well, I didn't ought to say this, but I'm kinda low tonight. Would you want to—to..."

Helen's feet pattered down the steps. Her lips brushed his tense.

young mouth. "Was that what you wanted, Bill?" she asked softly. Before Bill could reply she was gone. He turned thoughtfully homeward.

BUCK MENTOR sat in his invalid chair by the radio. On the table was his football notebook. A smile touched his gray eyes as he greeted his son.

"Tough one, huh, fellow?" "Plenty," Bill agreed. "Buck, what do you think?"

Buck Mentor hunched big shoulders that seemed cramped by the invalid's chair, considered the question. Like Bill's, his hair was tar-black and cut crew fashion. His face was youthful, charged with suppressed energy. Only the shadowed, deep-set eyes told of his brooding. He was "Buck" to everyone, young or old.

"Bill, are you asking me to second-guess?" "You can tell me, Buck."

He nodded, thumbing the bowl of his pipe. "Look, Bill, somebody used bad judgment tonight."

"Coach?" Buck shrugged. "If he ordered that play... which I doubt. That was a big-time razzle-dazzle. With plenty of practice a high school team might click it off, but..."

"That's what I thought." "Bill, I wouldn't say this to another human soul. It would sound pretty bad coming from a man who was refused the job of coaching West. But if that play had gone off, the whole west side would be raving about Landis tonight."

Bill frowned. "You mean he was grandstanding?"

Buck shrugged. "If he ordered that play... which I doubt. That was a big-time razzle-dazzle. With plenty of practice a high school team might click it off, but..."

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THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson



AIRPLANES USE ABOUT FIFTEEN PER CENT MORE GAS TRAVELING FROM NEW YORK TO CALIFORNIA THAN FROM CALIFORNIA TO NEW YORK... DUE TO PREVAILING WESTERLY WINDS.

THE LETTER "E" IS USED MORE FREQUENTLY THAN ANY OTHER LETTER IN WRITING ENGLISH.



ANSWER: Because the first pair of such twins to gain world-wide prominence were Siamese.



WHY ARE CONJOINED TWINS CALLED "SIAMESE"?

CONCERT VIOLINIST

HORIZONTAL

1 Pictured violinist.

12 Decorative mesh.

13 Electrified particle.

14 Officer's assistant.

15 To prevent.

16 To spread.

17 To moisten with dew.

19 Fish.

20 Billiard rod.

22 Epoch.

23 Stir.

24 Guarded.

26 Jeers.

28 Plural (abbr.).

30 Jol.

31 To eject.

34 Natural power.

35 Dove's call.

36 Cessation.

37 Southwest (abbr.).

38 Above.

39 Pistols.

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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