

Eddie, The Mechanic

Braden's Field Goal

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Author's Note: This outtake has been slightly modified from its original content so that the story makes a bit more sense outside of the book.

No one expected Braden's kickoff of greater than 80 yards, or his punt that unofficially broke the collegiate record, except for, perhaps, Braden himself. Coach Larry Morris, whose team is second in the division, now knows that, if he could sign Braden, the University's football team would be number one. But, there is a slight problem. Kickoffs or punts don't put points on the board. Field goals do. Coach Morris would really like to see whether Braden can kick with accuracy or just brute force.

Hearing exactly what he wanted to hear, Coach Morris is quite amused as Braden exclaims, "anybody up for another ass kicking? How about a field goal? Who's ready to get their ass kicked?" Braden then looks at Smith, exclaiming, "I'll even let you go first! Go ahead! Set the standard! We'll see how long it stands!" Coach Morris, curious of what Braden can do, looks at Smith, telling him, "what are you waiting for?" Coach Morris whispers to Coach Herndon, "do you know if he can kick a field goal?" Coach Herndon whispers back, "I've never seen him not deliver what he promises, sir. He's never let me down."

Coach Morris yells out to his team, "set up for a field goal at the 39-yard line! I want to see a 46-yard attempt! Second string will be playing defense." Coach Morris,

wanting to push Smith to his limit, knows that Smith's longest field goal of last season was 45 yards. Taking advantage of the current circumstances, the coach wants to push his kicker to the limit. As the team gets set, Braden laughs and tells Coach Morris, "I already won! But, go ahead and have him kick the ball anyway. Somebody needs to break that ball in." Coach Morris wishes that, somehow, he could instill Braden's confidence and attitude into his team.

Smith positions himself five yards behind the 46-yard line, knowing that he must deliver. As Smith gets set, Braden stands with his arms crossed, not the least bit concerned about his competition. Smith, attempting a personal best, is quite nervous. But, losing to Braden in both the kickoff and punt, Smith knows he must deliver. The coach blows his whistle, and the center prepares to snap the ball.

The ball is snapped. The holder quickly positions the ball, which is carefully watched by Braden. Smith approaches and, with perfect timing, connects with the ball. With everyone's eyes on the ball, the ball soars through the air as it approaches the uprights. Clearing the bar by just inches, Smith's attempt is the success Coach Morris was looking for. Smith, walking away with a renewed sense of confidence, is very encouraged to hear his team cheer.

Coach Morris asks Braden, "how far do you think you can kick it?" Braden energetically replies, "gimme 65 yards! I'm kicking ass today! Ain't nothing stopping me!" Making a big mistake, Coach Morris tells Braden, "you can't kick a 65-yard field goal!" Braden exclaims, "what are you talking about? I already kicked that ball through the uprights from 80 yards away!" Coach Morris, informs Braden, "this is different! This is a field goal! Accuracy matters!" Braden exclaims, "I want you to tell me something! What's the difference if that ball is in a tee or being held by somebody? There ain't no difference, except for maybe one! That tee ain't gonna flinch when it sees me coming!" Coach Morris tells his team, "okay! You heard him! Set it

up for a 65-yard attempt!” Now even more fired up, Braden tells Coach Morris, “forget that shit! Set it up for 70 yards!”

Eddie and Mark watch as the football team gets set. Again calling the play by play, Mark announces, “here we go again, Eddie. It’s fourth down and eighteen yards to go. They’re calling in the special teams unit to punt. No! Wait! What’s this? I don’t believe it! They’re calling in the field goal unit! I don’t know what the coach is thinking here Eddie, but it looks like they’re going to attempt a 70-yard field goal. This really makes no sense this early in the game. It’s only their first possession, and they’re going to attempt a 70-yard field goal! Is that crazy, or what?”

The football team gets set, with the holder positioned for a 70-yard field goal. Braden tells the holder, “I want you to hold that ball steady, and don’t you dare flinch!” The holder confidently replies, “you got it!” Braden then gets into position. Breaking standard protocol, Braden stands at the 16-yard line directly behind the ball. Fully expecting Braden to fail, Coach Morris shakes his head, wondering whether Braden even knows what he is doing.

Getting into position, Braden visualizes the ball as Mr. Crum’s ass, and the goalpost as a jail cell. Braden verbalizes, “okay! That’s Mr. Crum’s flimsy ass, and I’m sending his fat ass to prison! This is my one and only chance of putting Mr. Crum’s ass away for good! I’ll teach his ass to send me to detention!” Braden is now ready. Coach Morris blows his whistle, and the center gets ready to snap the ball.

Resuming the play by play, Mark announces, “I still don’t believe it! They’re really going for the field goal, Eddie! Braden is standing on the 16-yard line, and he looks very confident. Here we go. The ball is snapped. The holder quickly positions the ball as Braden approaches the ball like a lightning bolt. Wow! Can you even believe it? Did you hear that? It’d be a wonder if that football even survived that kick! I can’t believe it! The kick is dead center. But, does it have enough distance? And the kick is ... good! Axel Braden just delivered a 70-yard field goal! This is one for the record books!”

Braden exclaims, “what did I tell you! Seventy yards by the chief ass kicker!” Smith looks over at Braden, wondering how it is that Braden just unofficially broke the collegiate and NFL record. Braden walks over to Eddie and Mark, who both give him a high-five.

Coach Morris shakes his head and exclaims, “I just can’t believe it! Who in the world is this guy?” Coach Herndon proudly replies, “I told you, sir. That’s Axel Braden. He’s our one and only chief ass kicker.” Coach Morris repeats, “I just can’t believe it!” Coach Morris asks Coach Herndon, “is he on scholarship?” If Braden were not on scholarship, Braden would be fair game to be recruited by the football team. Coach Herndon replies, “he is. We signed him this year.” That was the last thing Coach Morris wanted to hear, but it is what it is.

Coach Herndon tells Braden, “good job! Good job!” In a military tone, Braden replies, “thank you! Thank you!” Coach Herndon tells Braden, Mark, and Eddie, “let’s go get a workout in.” Again, in a military tone, Braden replies, “yes, ma’am!” As the track stars and their coach head to the track, Coach Morris is quite disappointed that he cannot sign Braden.

Not happy that his place kicker falls a bit short, Coach Morris tells his team, “okay! We have a lot of work to do! Let’s get out there on the field and get to work!” Coach Morris, hearing of the talent that has been recruited by the track team, sincerely wishes the University could share that talent with the football team.