

Eddie, The Sophomore Year

Freshmen vs. Sophomore Football Game

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Eddie walks into the locker room knowing exactly what today will bring in gym class. The freshmen, however, are totally in the dark. In their special corner of the locker room reserved for those on a sports team, Johnson mentions to the group, “the freshmen look kind of weak.” Braden is quick to reply, “I noticed that. I wonder what they’re gonna look like after their ass kicking today.” Bobby B. laughs, and replies, “split pea soup.” Eddie asks his buddies, “so, what’s the plan?” Mark replies, “we’ll play football like a game of Kill the Man with the Ball, like we did last year.” Gump, who will play quarterback for the sophomores today, replies, “I’m looking forward to it.”

Once the students are seated on the bleachers, Mr. Frazier, one of the gym teachers, announces, “today we are playing football. The freshmen will compete against the sophomores! Let’s get outside, and be out on the field in three minutes. And, please have your team captain picked before you get on the field. It would also be wise for your team captain to assign positions before we get out on the field.” Eddie and the tribe are way ahead of Mr. Frazier. They had it all figured out a few minutes ago.

On the way out to the football field, a lot of discussion arises among the freshmen, who have quickly concluded that the game is not fair and that the deck is stacked against them. Braden, with unbridled enthusiasm, rants, “we’re gonna kick their ass! They’re not even gonna touch that football today!” A few of the freshmen, looking over at

Eddie and the tribe, come to the conclusion that they've already lost.

On the field, Mr. Frazier quickly instructs the team captains to pick eleven men to start, and the rest will substitute. Further giving the freshmen the impression that the deck is stacked against them, Mr. Frazier announces that the sophomores will get the ball first. Disappointing to the tribe, Mr. Frazier also announces, "this is touch football! This is not a game of tackle! There will not be a kickoff, but you will start your possession on the twenty-yard line. And, there will be no point after attempts." After all, this is gym class, not a varsity football game, not to mention that time is very limited. Mr. Chubin mentions to Mr. Frazier, "I can't begin to imagine how this game will go over." Mr. Frazier replies, "I know. It's no secret who will win. The question is by how much."

Gump, an outside linebacker on the high school's football team and a wrestler, appoints himself as the sophomore team captain. No one objects. After all, football is Gump's game and, after his freshman debut last year, everyone in the school knows he's quite good at it. The freshmen's team captain is a guy named Allen Brady who, on the surface, looks somewhat athletic. Brady, with his long blond hair and tall, muscular stature, gives the impression that he will be trying out for a sports team this year.

In the huddle, Gump asks his team, "does anyone have any ideas?" Eddie confidently replies, "hand off to me. We're scoring in one play." Mark asks, "are we playing Kill the Man with the Ball?" Eddie replies, "yeah, bro. Of course." Some guy named Ken, playing on the line, asks Gump, "which way will we be running the ball." Eddie quickly answers, "every way. All over the place." Ken doesn't quite understand Eddie's answer, but he will in just a moment.

The ball is snapped, and Gump hands off to Eddie. Eddie drops back ten yards, running in the wrong direction. Mr. Frazier knows exactly what the sophomores are up to, but the freshmen are in the dark. Seeing the defenders

approach, Eddie drops back a few more yards, waiting for the freshmen to draw near. Eddie quickly laterals the ball to Mark, who runs in circles for a while, giving the freshman quite an aerobic workout. Johnson gets into position to receive a lateral, which Mark is quick to deliver. Johnson traverses the field and runs in circles, easily evading the freshmen. Seeing an opening, Johnson rushes toward the goal. As he approaches the five-yard line, Johnson laterals the ball to Braden, who walks into the end zone for a touchdown.

Gump exclaims to his team, "way to go! Way to go!" As the sophomores exchange high-fives, Mr. Frazier, addressing the freshmen, exclaims, "get lined up! You freshmen have a lot of work to do!" Brady, the freshman captain, tells his team, "that's only one score. Now, it's our turn. We can do this." Overhearing Brady is Bobby B., who will now get his chance to shine.

The freshmen get into a huddle, where Brady, who will be the freshmen's quarterback, suggests they run a passing play. No one objects, but the truth is that, after the last play, the freshmen are too winded to object. The defense has their own huddle, where Eddie tells Gump, "I want to play on the line." Mark and Braden echo the sentiment, to which Gump agrees. Johnson will play the position of safety, but suspects he won't have much to do.

The ball is snapped. A few of the freshmen playing on the line get a little banged up as Bobby B., Braden, Eddie, and Mark rush the quarterback. Just as fast as he receives the ball, Brady is touched by Bobby B. and Braden. Bobby B. and Braden jokingly argue with each other about who tagged Brady first, which irritates the freshmen. Braden tells Brady, "you might as well just punt that ball right now! You ain't going nowhere!" The freshmen now know beyond a shadow of a doubt that they have their work cut out for them.

One freshman, some guy named Barry, who got leveled by Bobby B., yells out to the teachers, "I thought we were playing touch!" Answering for the physical education staff, Braden laughs, and replies, "we are playing touch. But,

there ain't no touch for you if you're on the line! How are you gonna play touch on the line, junior?" Appealing to Mr. Chubin, Barry exclaims, "did you hear him?" Mr. Chubin replies, "I did. This is a game of football, not musical chairs or duck - duck - goose. If you're on the line, your job is to block your opponent. The last time I checked, that requires physical contact." Mr. Chubin often pushes students to the edge of their athletic abilities, where performance improvement is found. Occasionally, the less athletic students get pushed to the edge of their emotional abilities.

While Mr. Chubin is giving Barry a lesson in growing up, Mr. Frazier walks over to the freshmen while they are in their huddle, advising them to use the shotgun formation where the quarterback is positioned several yards behind the center. That should give the quarterback more time to evaluate the situation. After the last play, Brady agrees, and takes Mr. Frazier's advice. The freshmen make a few changes, and get into position, ready to try again.

The ball is snapped and Brady receives the football. Eddie shoves one freshman aside, and heads straight on for Brady. Looking for an open receiver, Brady is quickly greeted by Eddie, who ends the play. Addressing the freshmen, Mr. Frazier exclaims, "you got to be faster than that! You don't have all day to get the play off! I want to see some hustling!" The freshmen now know they are in serious trouble. But, after all, the freshmen went from being the top of the food chain in middle school to being shark bait in high school.

As the freshmen plan their next play, Gump suggests to his team, "when they snap the ball, everybody just tie up their line. Don't rush their quarterback. We'll see if we can get them to pass it, and go for the interception." Someone asks Gump, "what if they run the ball?" Gump replies, "so what? It doesn't matter. They don't stand a chance of moving the ball more than a few inches." Gump then tells Eddie, Mark, Braden, Mitchell, and Johnson, "you guys cover their receivers, and go for the interception." Speaking for the group, Eddie replies, "got it." Truth is, Eddie and the tribe can run faster than Brady can throw the football.

The teams get lined up, and the ball is snapped. Five receivers sprint past the defensive line, and their every move is tracked by the sophomore track stars. Brady throws a screen pass to a receiver who is idly standing by waiting for the ball to arrive. Rushing in front of the receiver, Eddie picks off the ball. Eddie quickly laterals the ball to Mark, who is no where near any traffic. Mark runs toward the goal and, realizing that no one is pursuing him, walks right into the end zone.

In an attempt to get their energy level up, Mr. Frazier tells the freshmen, "you're the offense! You're supposed to be scoring points, not giving them away!" Brady tells Mr. Frazier and Mr. Chubin, "those guys are good! What are they, on the football team or something?" Mr. Chubin steps in, admonishing Brady, "only one of those guys are on the football team! This is high school, not elementary school! Step it up a notch!" Mr. Frazier and Mr. Chubin know that the freshmen are up against some of the fastest guys in the State and some of the most athletic students in the school. Brady, however, does not know that. But, he will find out soon enough.

As the freshmen get in their huddle, Eddie suggests to the sophomore team, "let's let them pass it again. When we intercept the ball, let's go for the record of the longest play in football." Liking the idea, Gump asks, "is everyone onboard with that?" Mark replies, "yeah," which is echoed by the rest of the team.

The teams get lined up, and the ball is snapped. Brady looks for an open receiver, something the defensive line freely allows him to do. Finding an open receiver, Brady passes the ball, which is thrown short and promptly intercepted by Braden. Braden exclaims, "I got the football! I got the football! It's time for me to kick ass!" Braden runs in circles for thirty seconds or so, and laterals the ball to Johnson. Johnson runs for a while as Eddie and Mark run alongside him. Meanwhile, Bobby B., Gump, and a few others, wear out a few freshmen, keeping them away from the ball. Johnson laterals the ball to Eddie, who, with an open field, intentionally runs in the wrong direction. Passing by Braden, Eddie tosses the ball to him. Braden

runs toward the goal line. Almost to the goal line, Braden tosses the ball to Mitchell, who runs back toward mid field. At this point in the play, Mitchell, the school's star distance runner, is unlikely to be caught by any of the fatigued freshmen.

Five minutes into the play, many of the freshmen are walking on the field to where the action is. Mr. Frazier exclaims, "get moving! Someone, tag him!" Mitchell runs all over the field and, for the next five or six minutes, racks up about a mile. By now, the freshman offense turned defense is completely worn out. Mitchell, however, is just getting warmed up.

Mr. Chubin, the cross country coach, mentions to Mr. Frazier, "Mitchell is expected to be my best cross country runner this year." Mr. Frazier replies, "Mitchell is my best distance guy. He's really giving the freshmen a workout out there." Mr. Frazier and Mr. Chubin watch, as Mitchell singlehandedly drains the freshmen's energy level.

Seeing that the freshmen have given up, Mitchell heads toward the goal line. Mitchell laterals the ball to Bobby B., giving the shot doc the pleasure of scoring the touchdown. Standing a yard or so from the goal line, Bobby B., however, is not so quick to score, but rather taunts the opponents. Waving the freshmen on to come and get him, Bobby B's gesture does not escape notice. As one freshman approaches, Bobby B. crosses the goal line, scoring a touchdown. Mr. Chubin blows his whistle, announcing, "touchdown!" Then, announcing the bad news, Mr. Chubin announces, "taunting the opponent. Fifteen-yard penalty. The freshmen will take possession on the 35-yard line." The sophomores do not care that their team was penalized. And, it's not likely that the fifteen-yard penalty will help the freshmen.

Mr. Chubin announces, "that's eighteen to nothing! The freshmen are up again." As the students return to the line of scrimmage, Mark mentions to Eddie, "well, that play didn't go exactly as planned." Eddie replies, "they have no plan, bro." Mark replies, "yeah. I see that."

Seeing such a lopsided game, Mr. Chubin asks Mr. Frazier, "do you want to let this go on? Or, do you want to make a few changes?" Mr. Frazier suggests, "we'll just let them play. It's their initiation into the real world. They'd better get used to it." Mr. Frazier announces to the students, "okay! Line up! Let's get moving. The freshmen have the ball, again." As the teams get into position, Mr. Frazier mentions to Mr. Chubin, "I can't wait until the weightlifting competition this year." Mr. Chubin replies, "last year, if I remember correctly, some of these guys were quite strong for their age." Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Chubin, "Bradshaw has been lifting over the Summer. So have the other guys. You can see it." Referring to Eddie and the tribe, Mr. Chubin replies, "I wish the rest of the students in this school would take physical fitness as seriously as these guys."

The game goes on, which is more of the same. By the end of gym class, the score is thirty-six to nothing. The sophomores could have scored more points, but they spent a lot of time running aimlessly around on the field before deciding to score. All in all, the track team members got in at least three or four miles apiece. Mr. Frazier is happy, seeing his track athletes certainly have great endurance. Mr. Chubin is now confident that Mitchell is at the top of his game, and will be a serious contender this year in cross country.

On the way to the locker room, Brady, clearly a sore loser, sarcastically tells Braden, "I hope you guys are proud of yourself." Still fired up from the game, Braden replies, "what are you talking about, junior? We ain't playing down to you! You gotta play up to us! If that's the best you got, your ass is in deep shit for the rest of this year! You just wait until the weightlifting competition! We're gonna kick your ass in that too!" Some freshman named Phil asks, "we're having a weightlifting competition?" Braden assures the freshmen, specifically Phil, "yeah, junior! In high school, everything in gym class is a competition! We're having a weightlifting competition, and you're getting your ass kicked!" Braden is not the least bit restrained in expressing his emotion, leaving many of the freshmen wondering who Braden is.

Overhearing Braden lecturing the freshmen, Mr. Frazier laughs, and tells Mr. Chubin, “now, I’m really looking forward to the weightlifting competition later this semester.” Mr. Chubin replies, “so am I. I just hope these freshmen grow up. They were really whiny out there today.” As they walk inside, Mr. Frazier comments, “that only means we have a lot of work to do this year.”