

# Eddie, The Sophomore Year

## Chapter Two Indoor Track Tryouts

Copyright © 2018 by Dr. Robert E. Zee

Kathy is much faster now than she was last Summer when Eddie and Mark first timed her and Paula. Paula, likewise, is also faster than she was last Summer. Neither of them, however, really knows how fast they can run in competition. Both Kathy and Paula are in the best shape of their lives. With tryouts for the indoor track team starting during the first week of the Winter semester, they are both a bit nervous. Part of their anxiety is they don't really know how Mr. Frazier will react. The other part is that neither of them has ever tried out for a team before.

Mr. Zunde, the school's athletic director, has issued a memo informing Mr. Frazier and the other coaches that women are now allowed to try out for any of the men's teams. The memo also states that there must be no corresponding women's team and the sport must not be a contact sport. Mr. Zunde was wise enough to include an official copy of the State rule with his memo. Mr. Frazier did not pay too much attention to Mr. Zunde's memo, as he did not expect any women to try out for the track team.

The principal, Mr. Crum, has issued his own memo instructing the coaches to ignore Mr. Zunde's memo. Most of the coaches ignore Mr. Crum anyway, and his memos end up in the trash without being read. And, purely to irritate Mr. Crum, Mr. Zunde issued another memo to the coaches, which states that Mr. Crum's memo should be ignored and discarded.

As the school day comes to an end, tryouts for the Winter sports begin. Everyone trying out for a Winter team heads to the locker rooms after school. This year, Kathy, Paula, and Barbara head to the women's locker room, where they are joined by Tessa. Tessa Klement, the freshman whom they met at the pool this past Summer, has decided to try out for the track team.

As the guys are getting dressed, Mr. Zunde announces, “basketball tryouts will be in the main gym. Wrestling tryouts are in the auxiliary gym. If you are trying out for indoor track and field, please meet in the hallway right outside the locker room. If you are trying out for golf, please bring your balls back in the Spring.” Golf, for some reason, is not exactly Mr. Zunde’s favorite sport.

Eddie and the tribe congregate together in the hallway. They are joined by Hoffer, who they’ve known for a long time. As usual, many of the students look each over carefully, checking out who they will be competing against for a place on the team.

Walking down the hall is Kathy, Paula, Barbara, and Tessa. The group of four girls joins Eddie and the tribe as they await the beginning of today’s tryout session. With Braden all fired up before tryouts, it’s no secret where the center of attention now resides.

Many of the athletes wonder why the girls are even present. They apparently didn’t get the memo that women are now allowed to try out for the team. Some of the upperclassmen explain to the freshmen that the girls help out with the team, which they remember from last year. If they had remembered correctly, they would recall that the three team assistants were not present during indoor track tryouts. During the indoor season, they arrive to work with the team after the three days of indoor track tryouts are over, and not during tryouts. During the Spring season, however, the team assistants help Mr. Frazier during tryouts to quickly trim the large field of contenders vying for a place on the team.

Kathy is wearing her blue and gold shorts and new running shoes she bought at the beginning of the school year. Her hair is tightly braided so it doesn’t interfere while she runs. Paula, after seeing Kathy’s outfit over the weekend, bought a similar one, but got the same running shoes. Barbara is also dressed, and ready to compete. What is not evident is that Kathy, Paula, and Barbara are also emotionally set to run.

Mr. Frazier walks out from the locker room, and announces, “this is the meeting place for indoor track. If you are trying out for any of those other insignificant sports, you are in the wrong place.” Seeing the large turnout, Mr. Frazier remarks to the girls, “I’m glad you’re here. It looks like I’m going to need some help.” The girls do not reply to Mr. Frazier, holding their surprise for a little later. Mr. Frazier instructs the crowd to follow him, as he walks down the hallway to an unmarked door. The upperclassmen know exactly what is behind this door, but to the freshmen it is a mystery.

Mr. Frazier opens the door, and the group heads down the metal stairway. The freshmen are quite amazed at what they see. Behind the

door is a very wide and open steel staircase, which goes to the basement of the school. Underneath the classrooms is a full-sized 220-yard indoor track, a separate 75-yard track for the sprinting events, and an area for the high jump and shot-put events. To either side of the track are bleachers for the spectators. At the corners of the oval track are benches to accommodate up to four competing teams.

As the candidates walk down the staircase, Mr. Frazier sees Ambrosini, Zaino, Bell, Davis, and many of the other veterans from the last few years. Also included in the lineup today is Jimmy O'Brien, one of those guys who is always last to be picked for any sports team in gym class. O'Brien's sole qualification for being on the middle school track team years ago was that his father is a teacher in high school. In high school, however, O'Brien must perform in order to make the team. Fortunately, for everyone, Chuckie is no where to be seen.

The last to walk down the staircase is Eddie and the tribe. Mr. Frazier is glad to see that Eddie and the tribe are all present today. Last year, they were the core team members. Seeing the expansive arena, Tessa remarks, "wow!" Paula tells Tessa, "pretty cool, isn't it?" Tessa replies, "yeah! Seriously! I wasn't expecting this!" Kathy tells Tessa, "this is where we'll be working out and having most of our meets."

Mr. Zunde walks down the staircase, and stands with Mr. Frazier. Mr. Frazier has the students sit on the bleachers and, as he is looking around, is quite surprised at the large turnout this year. Last year, track and field got a lot more attention after quite a few students made it to the State invitational meets. This year, it seems like many students want their own medal in track and field. Whether they measure up to the standard required to earn a medal will become evident during the next three days.

Mr. Frazier introduces himself and Mr. Zunde to the athletes, then gets right down to business. Mr. Frazier instructs the athletes, "I want my sprinters to remain here on this set of bleachers. If you are trying out for the 440-yard dash, you are now, by the way, a sprinter. I want the field athletes and the distance men across the track on the other bleachers. If you are middle distance, today I want you with the distance men." Mr. Frazier claps his hands, telling the athletes, "okay, let's get moving!" Barbara walks over to the other side of the arena, along with Mr. Zunde and the distance runners. Kathy and Paula remain with the sprinters while Mr. Frazier addresses them further regarding today's agenda.

Mr. Zunde, anxious to see what Barbara can do, quickly arranges a one-mile run of what he considers the top seeds. Mr. Zunde announces, "I want Mitchell, Johnson, Davis, Barbara, and Tessa on the track first. If anyone dares join them, get on the track now." One other freshman, seeing Tessa among the group, joins the field of runners on the track.

Mr. Zunde then tells the runners in the first group, “everyone warm up. You will be running a mile, and I will be clocking you.”

Once the runners are warmed up, the first six runners get into position. Mr. Zunde tells the group, “where are your manners? Please allow the ladies to have the inside lanes.” Everyone obliges, and lets Barbara and Tessa have the inside positions. Mr. Zunde announces, “get ready.” All six runners are ready to run. Mr. Zunde hits the buzzer, and the runners are off.

Barbara takes off and is running as if she is running a quarter mile for time, not a mile. Barbara quickly takes the lead, giving it the best she has. This is Barbara’s moment. The moment she has been waiting for her entire life is now underway. Mitchell quickly realizes that there is a new level of competition, and picks up his pace. Barbara, meanwhile, shows no sign of slowing her pace at all. Today, Barbara has one goal, which is delivering the best time of the day and the best time of her life. The other distance runners quickly realize what is happening on the track, and pay closer attention.

While Mr. Frazier is addressing the sprinters, one of the sprinters makes the comment, “wow! Look at her run!” Mr. Frazier overhears the comment, and turns around to see what could possibly be attracting so much attention. Watching Barbara as she runs, Mr. Frazier turns around, and tells the sprinters, “just watch this race. I’ll finish what I was saying in a few minutes.” Mr. Frazier was expecting to see Barbara setting a six-minute pace in order to trim the field. Mr. Frazier watches the race, and is dead silent. Standing on the other side of the track with his arms crossed, Mr. Zunde smiles as Barbara flies around the track.

While the race is underway, Mr. Crum, the principal, walks halfway down the metal staircase and stops, watching the race in progress. With all eyes on Barbara, no one even noticed that Mr. Crum had walked in. Why Mr. Crum even showed up is anybody’s guess. He is certainly no fan of track and field, or any sports for that matter.

Three quarters of a mile into the race, Barbara still shows no signs of dropping her pace. In fact, much to everyone’s surprise, Barbara begins to significantly pick up the pace. Mitchell, who tries to keep pace with her, is having a very good run. To the surprise of many, Tessa is holding her own, and is in fourth place.

With a little more than one lap to go, Mr. Frazier walks around the track over to Mr. Zunde. Mr. Frazier, who appears to be in shock, asks Mr. Zunde, “what’s she clocking at?” Mr. Zunde calmly replies, “she’s on track for a 4:40, but she’s picking up the pace a little.” Mr. Frazier replies, “I can see that!” With Barbara on her last lap, she sprints to the finish line

the best she can. Mr. Zunde clicks his stopwatch as Barbara crosses the finish line.

Using another stopwatch, Mr. Zunde writes down the times of each subsequent runner. Mr. Frazier knows not to interrupt Mr. Zunde while he does this. Mr. Zunde is a human stopwatch and a one-man Timekeeper. He will be plus or minus one half of a second on the other times. When the final runner crosses the finish line, Mr. Frazier asks Mr. Zunde, "what did you clock her at?" Mr. Zunde, looking at his stopwatch, calmly replies, "she ran a 4:35.4. That is quite impressive." Mr. Frazier exclaims to the athletes, "a 4:35! She ran a 4:35! Did everyone hear that? Can you believe it?"

Barbara, who is walking off her run, overhears Mr. Frazier exclaiming her time, and a big smile comes across her face. Running a 4:35 mile, Barbara knows she has made the team. Kathy and Paula cheer from the bleachers. Hearing Barbara's time, great fear comes across many of the freshmen. The freshmen were accustomed to winning the mile with times in the six-minute range when they were in middle school. Many of them quickly realize that the competition has stepped up a few notches.

Mr. Zunde arranges the second heat, as Mr. Frazier returns to the sprinters to arrange the first heat of the 40-yard dash. Mr. Crum boldly approaches Mr. Zunde, telling him, "I told you that girls are not allowed on the track team!" Mr. Zunde calmly replies, "yes, they are." Mr. Zunde then walks away to start the second heat. Giving Mr. Crum no further attention, Mr. Zunde starts the second heat of the mile.

Approaching Mr. Zunde again, Mr. Crum yells at Mr. Zunde, telling him, "I said that girls are not permitted on the track team!" Mr. Zunde hands Mr. Crum a copy of the rule that shows that women, under certain circumstances, are permitted on a mens' team. Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Crum, "I presume that you can read. So, please familiarize yourself with this rule. If you don't agree with it, please take your issues up with the school board. I prefer not to be bothered with your childish endeavors at the moment." Mr. Zunde then sternly tells Mr. Crum, "in the meantime, Crum, get out of my arena." Mr. Crum admonishes Mr. Zunde, telling him, "you haven't heard the last of this! I'll be back!" Mr. Zunde calmly informs Mr. Crum, "I'll be looking forward to it. Now, get out of my arena."

Mr. Crum walks away, but stops halfway up the staircase, looking for more evidence to accuse Mr. Zunde. Mr. Crum watches the events for a while longer, but then leaves and goes home.

Mr. Frazier tells the sprinters, "okay, that is what I expect during tryouts," referring to Barbara's performance in the one-mile run. Mr. Frazier instructs the sprinters, "I want you to form groups of six, and you

will be running the 40-yard dash for time.” Eddie, Mark, Kathy, Paula, Johnson, and Braden all form their own group.

Mr. Frazier, looking kind of puzzled, asks Kathy, “what’s going on here?” Kathy tells him, “we’re trying out for the team.” Mr. Frazier, after seeing Barbara run the mile, replies, “okay. Fair enough.” Mr. Frazier calls Barbara over, telling her, “congratulations! You’ve made the team! Please help me out here and time the sprinters.” Barbara, happy to hear that she made the team, replies, “I’d be glad to.” Mr. Frazier tells Johnson and Braden to sit this one out. Mr. Frazier tells Barbara, “you time Kathy and Paula.”

Eddie, Mark, Kathy, and Paula set their blocks and get ready to run. Mark asks Kathy, “do you need any help setting your blocks?” Kathy replies, “no. But you might want to check that,” vaguely pointing to Mark’s blocks. They all have a little giggle over Kathy imitating Mark at the blocks, but now the fun and games are over.

Mr. Frazier announces, “on your marks.” Kathy and Paula are in the blocks, alongside their boyfriends. They have been waiting for this moment for a long time. And, they are up against the two fastest sprinters in the school. Mr. Frazier announces, “set.” The room goes silent, as the rest of the sprinters are about to learn what is expected of them. The buzzer sounds, and the two couples are out of the blocks.

As she leaves the blocks, Kathy lets out a primal scream that distracts everyone, including Mr. Frazier. After ten yards, Eddie takes a slight lead. Mark, Kathy, and Paula are all tied at ten yards. Mark begins to break away and, at twenty yards, is positioned between Eddie and the girls. At thirty yards, Eddie will clearly take first place. Mark appears like he will take second place, but Kathy and Paula are still tied. Finishing in first place is Eddie, quickly followed by Mark. Kathy and Paula, as best as can be determined, tie.

Mr. Frazier exclaims, “did you see that? Did everyone see that?” Checking Eddie’s and Mark’s times, Mr. Frazier discovers they are in the ballpark of what he expected. Mr. Frazier, however, is now more interested in Kathy’s and Paula’s times. Mr. Frazier asks Barbara, “what did you?” Before he could finish, Barbara exclaims, “5.2 seconds! They tied.” Mr. Frazier exclaims, “4.8, 4.9, and 5.2 seconds! This is the kind of performance I expect! Can you believe it? These guys are fast. Oops. These guys and girls are fast!”

Eddie gives Kathy a huge hug. Kathy exclaims, “I did it! I wanted so much to get a good time, and I did it!” Mark also gives Paula a hug. The girls then hug each other, knowing that they both will probably make the

team. Eddie and Mark sit on the bleachers together and watch the remaining heats.

Kathy and Paula temporarily resume their duties as Mr. Frazier's team assistants, and help him time the runners in the other heats. Once all the sprinters have run the 40-yard dash, the statistics reveal that Eddie, Mark, Kathy, and Paula had the fastest times of the day. Braden is heard in the background, exclaiming, "I got my ass kicked by a girl!" Braden, who ran a 5.3 today, is not about to let that happen again.

Once all of the sprinters have run, Mr. Frazier informs Kathy and Paula, "the next race we'll be running for time today will be the 440-yard dash. And, I want the blocks set so everyone stays in their lane during the entire race." Kathy asks Mr. Frazier, "how come the 220 isn't next, like last year?" Mr. Frazier explains, "between the 40-yard dash and the 440-yard dash, I think I can trim the field a little faster." Mr. Frazier points out, "that will give me more time to assign runners to each event." Kathy replies, "yeah. That makes a lot of sense. The 440 seems like a key race." Mr. Frazier, agreeing with Kathy, tells her, "if I was allowed only one race to pick the sprinting team, the 440-yard dash would be it. If you can run a good 440, you can also run a good 220 and a reasonably good 880." This is good news to Kathy, who knows she is able to break 60 seconds in the 440-yard dash.

Mr. Frazier tells the runners, "okay, I want everybody to prepare to run the 440-yard dash. You will run with the same group that you ran the 40-yard dash with, and you will run in the same order. Make sure you are warmed up before your group is called." Eddie, Mark, Kathy, and Paula will be in the first heat of four. The other heats will be groups of six, as in the 40-yard dash.

Now that all of the distance competitors have finished the mile, Mr. Zunde gives them a short break. The track is now available to run the 440-yard dash, which the distance team will also have the pleasure of running. Mr. Zunde and Barbara come over to watch Eddie, Mark, Kathy, and Paula run the 440-yard dash. So does Braden. This is Braden's race, and he is not about to lose his top seed position in this event.

Mr. Frazier asks Kathy and Paula which lane they would like. Kathy asks for the inside lane. Paula chooses lane two, next to Kathy. Mark is assigned lane three, and Eddie is assigned to lane four. Mr. Frazier announces, "I want the next heat to warm up. I want everyone else on the bleachers, and watch this race carefully. You are about to see the level of performance you will need to get to the State invitational meet." Mr. Frazier's announcement was not only for the benefit of the athletes on the bleachers, but also for those on the track.

Mr. Frazier announces, “on your marks.” Kathy and Paula get aligned in the blocks, knowing that this is probably the race that determines whether they will make the team or not. Feeling a little déjà vu in the air, Kathy recalls this past Autumn when she was beaten by Eddie, Mark, and Paula. Kathy ran a 57.5 second quarter mile, which is nothing to be ashamed of. Kathy, however, is not about to come in last place today. Mr. Frazier announces, “set.” All four runners are set, and the look on their faces suggests this will be a fight to the finish.

The buzzer sounds, and the runners are out of the blocks with enough speed to convince the athletes on the bleachers that this race is a short sprint. Kathy, upon leaving the blocks, lets out her primal scream, letting everyone know she means business. Kathy’s primal scream somewhat startles those sitting on the bleachers, especially the freshman, who are witnessing an entirely new level of competition.

With the staggered start, it is difficult to know who is leading. The runners, however, pay no attention to each other. They are too focused on running the fastest they can. On the back straightaway, Eddie seems to gain a little ground. Going into the curve, however, Kathy seems to have the upper hand. She seems to not slow her pace at all. Anyone who understands physics knows that the runner with less mass has a slight advantage going around a turn.

Halfway through the race, Mr. Zunde comments to Mr. Frazier, “I think Eddie is ahead, but these women are quite amazing.” Mr. Frazier smiles, and replies, “well, it looks like I just lost all of my team assistants.”

During the second lap, the athletes seated on the bleachers stand, and begin to cheer. Braden, who is on the floor warming up because he is in the next heat, is amazed at what he is seeing. The second trip into the back straightaway reveals Eddie is in the lead. It becomes quite apparent that this is still a four-person race. Around the last curve, Kathy and Paula appear to gain some ground that they’ve lost along the back straightaway. When the runners break out of the curve, they all sprint to the finish as if the world depended on it.

Eddie gains a little ground, and crosses the finish line first. Kathy, surprisingly, finishes in second place, which does not sit well with Mark. Although Mark gained on Kathy during the last few yards, Kathy edged him out by a few tenths of a second. So focused on Kathy, Mark did not realize that Paula was side by side with him. Mark and Paula cross the finish line together. Mark thinks he beat Paula. Paula, however, has a different opinion. She thinks she edged out Mark by a tiny margin.

Barbara and Mr. Frazier compile the times. Looking at the runner’s times, Mr. Frazier is literally speechless and jubilant at the same time. Mr.

Zunde, who is always quite reserved, takes a look at the times. Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Frazier, "I'll announce the times." Mr. Frazier tells him, "go ahead."

Silence falls over the room as Mr. Zunde begins to speak. Making the announcement, Mr. Zunde says, "Eddie, in first place, ran a 56.8. Kathy, in second place, ran a 57.2. Mark and Paula, tied for third place, both ran a 57.4." The crowd cheers after hearing the times. Braden gets fired up knowing he has a lot of work just ahead. Mr. Frazier is quite excited to hear those times. He is, however, nowhere near as excited as Kathy and Paula are. After hearing their times, they both know that they have earned their spot on the team.

Braden and Johnson are up next. Mr. Frazier reassigned Johnson to this heat, and told Ambrosini to run in a later heat with the distance group. Also Included in Braden's heat is Jimmy O'Brien, who Mr. Frazier assigned to Braden's group because Braden not only likes to beat O'Brien, but takes pleasure in whooping his ass twice in the same race. Mr. Frazier wants to see what the top seeded freshman in the 440-yard dash can do, so he also assigned Hoffer to this group. Filling out the field are the veterans Zaino and Bell.

With the second heat ready to begin, Braden exclaims, "I need a 55, a 55! I need a 55 to kick ass! Six asses to kick! Those four, and O'Brien's twice!" Braden can run a 55-second quarter mile but, in trying to consistently break his goal of 54 seconds, he has been hitting a brick wall. Back on the bleachers, the freshmen do not know how to react to Braden. They have never seen anything like his pre-race rants before.

Mr. Frazier assigns Braden, the top seed, to lane one. O'Brien, on the other hand, is assigned to lane six, keeping him away from the action. Mr. Frazier announces, "on your marks." Silence again comes over the arena. Mr. Frazier announces, "set." Mr. Frazier sounds the buzzer, and the second heat is underway.

Braden takes an early lead, with Johnson not too far behind. It is immediately obvious that Johnson has not sat idle over the Summer. After the first lap, Braden is in the lead, followed by Johnson and Hoffer. Jimmy O'Brien, in lane six, is still on the back straightaway, in position to deliver the worst time of the afternoon.

Braden, on his second lap, is chasing down O'Brien, who is still on his first lap. Braden intends to run 440 yards faster than O'Brien can run 220 yards. On the back straightaway, Braden sees O'Brien ahead of him, in the curve. Johnson and Hoffer are chasing down Braden, who has set the pace the entire race.

After O'Brien comes out of the curve, he drops into lane one, which is Braden's lane. Mr. Frazier has positioned the blocks so that the runners remain in their lane for the entire two-lap race. There is no dropping to the inside lane after the first lap. Mr. Frazier yells out, "O'Brien! Get off the track! Get off the track! Now!" O'Brien ignores the coach, and continues running in lane one.

Coming up behind O'Brien, Braden is very puzzled. Braden instinctively knows not to leave his lane, for doing so results in an immediate disqualification. Making a quick decision, Braden shoves O'Brien off the track, hurling him off to the side, and sprints the last five yards to the finish. O'Brien, now laying on the ground, feels as if he has been rear-ended by a runaway freight train. On the bench, Mark comments to Eddie, "well, that didn't go exactly as planned." Braden, not knowing what happened, is ticked off because he lost two or three seconds having to bulldoze his lane during the race.

As the runners cross the finish line, Mr. Frazier, Mr. Zunde, Kathy, Paula, and Barbara catch their times. Barbara records the times on paper, and notes there was a collision on the track. Everyone watches as O'Brien, who is still on the ground, very slowly comes back to life. Quite puzzled, Mr. Frazier throws his hands in the air, preparing to lecture O'Brien.

Saving Mr. Frazier the trouble and assigning himself the task of lecturing O'Brien, Braden yells out, exclaiming, "what kind of shit was that! What's the matter with you, junior? Your puny little ass was supposed to be in your lane, not mine! You're lucky I didn't kick your ass right then and there! Now, get your flimsy ass off the ground, and put some ice on it! And, the next time you're in my lane, you ain't gonna be so lucky!"

Braden did, in fact, kick O'Brien's ass during this race, in more ways than one. Mr. Frazier allows Braden to lecture O'Brien because it will save him the trouble of dealing with O'Brien later. O'Brien finally gets up, and Mr. Frazier tells him, "O'Brien! You're done for today! Hit the lockers!" O'Brien limps out of the arena, still wondering what happened to him on the track.

Mr. Frazier announces the times to the runners. Braden, who is very upset, ran a 57.4. Braden probably would have made his target of 55 seconds, or perhaps 54 seconds, had it not been for O'Brien interfering with the race. Mr. Frazier tells Braden, "don't worry about what happened. You're running the 440. You're still my number one man in this race." Braden explains to Mr. Frazier, "when I saw him, I didn't know what to do. He was supposed to be in his lane!" Mr. Frazier tells Braden, "well, it looks like you taught him a lesson. Hopefully, he's learned it."

Mr. Zunde, referring to O'Brien, asks Mr. Frazier, "who was that guy?" Mr. Frazier replies, "Jimmy O'Brien, the teacher's kid. He tried out last year too." Mr. Zunde instructs Mr. Frazier, "he's too dangerous. Cut him." Mr. Frazier replies, "I was planning to, but I had to give him the same chance as everyone else." Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Frazier exactly what he wants to hear, "no, you don't. In order to participate in a sport, the student must first understand the rules. He presents a danger to himself and everyone else. Keep him off the track." Mr. Frazier feels as if a huge weight was lifted off his shoulders.

After the other heats are completed, Mr. Frazier has everyone sit on the bleachers. He explains to the athletes that the list of successful candidates will be posted on the window of the administration office tomorrow morning. He also mentions that another cut will take place after tomorrow's practice. This is different from what Mr. Frazier has done in the previous years. Because of the large turnout, he has to trim the field faster this year, beginning with O'Brien. Everyone heads up the staircase to the locker room, hoping that they are invited to return tomorrow.

Following tryouts, Eddie and the rest of the tribe meet in front of the school. Kathy exclaims to Eddie, "I'm going to make it! I'm going to make it!" Kathy has worked hard for her place on the team. Alongside her are Paula and Barbara, also deserving of a place on the team.

Braden walks up, and is still upset from O'Brien getting in his lane. Braden mentions, "can you believe that shit? O'Brien messing with my lane and my race!" Mark points out to Braden, "the problem is you have to sit in front of his father tomorrow morning." Braden becomes silent, and replies, "oh yeah. I forgot about that. Shit!" Eddie tells Braden, "don't worry about Mr. O'Brien. Jimmy didn't follow the rules." Braden replies, "yeah. I guess you're right." They all then head home to get some good rest before the tryouts continue tomorrow.

The next day, when the track candidates arrive at school, they head directly to the roster posted on the window of the administration area. Mr. Frazier has divided the list into two groups, which are those who have made the team, and those who are still contending for a place on the team. Eddie and Kathy, who walk to school together, head straight for the list when they arrive. Eddie sees his name on the list of those who have made the team. Looking at the list, Eddie and Kathy see that, although Kathy's name is on the list of those who have made the team, a red line has been drawn through her name. Now very upset, Kathy tells Eddie, "I thought I made the team."

Eddie examines the list of athletes who have made the team, and sees that Paula's and Barbara's names also have a red line through them.

Looking at the list of athletes who are still contending for a place on the team, Kathy notices that Tessa's name has a red line drawn through it as well. Eddie tells Kathy, "let's go see Mr. Frazier now and see what this is about." Kathy, with a tear rolling down her cheek, replies, "yeah. I really want to know. I ran better than almost everyone. I don't understand this." Since they have a few minutes before class starts, Eddie and Kathy go hunt down Mr. Frazier to see what's up.

Eddie and Kathy find Mr. Frazier in the athletic office where he is working on forming potential relay teams. Eddie knocks on the open door. Mr. Frazier asks Eddie, "what's up?" Eddie replies, "Kathy has a question for you." Mr. Frazier takes a sip of his morning coffee, and asks Kathy, "what's the question?" Kathy, still very upset, asks, "I saw the list, and how is there a red line through my name?" Mr. Frazier replies, "a red line? What are you talking about? You made the team!" Kathy asks Mr. Frazier, "then, who drew a red line through my name?" Without saying anything further, Mr. Frazier gets up out of his seat, and runs out of the office to the administrative area. Kathy and Eddie follow him, barely able to keep up.

Eddie, Kathy, and Mr. Frazier arrive at the administrative area. Mr. Frazier sees Barbara, who is crying. Looking at the list, Mr. Frazier sees first hand the line that Kathy described. Mr. Frazier tells Barbara, "you made the team. I don't know who drew that line through your name, but you're on the team." Kathy tells Barbara, "yeah, someone scratched off all the girls." Barbara replies, "yeah, it was Mr. Crum! That's who did it! It's no wonder that someone gave Mr. Crum screwdrivers for Christmas. He's using them to screw people." Barbara, without realizing it, just alerted Mr. Frazier as to whom the perpetrator might be.

Mr. Frazier walks into the administrative office and takes down his list from the window. He gets a piece of paper, and writes on it, "The location for the track and field results has been changed. The results from yesterday's tryouts can be found in the window of the PE office." He then tapes the newly written sign to the window.

Mr. Frazier asks Barbara and Kathy, "do you know where Paula's home room is?" Kathy tells Mr. Frazier, "yeah. She's in mine." Mr. Frazier instructs Kathy, "make sure Paula knows that she's on the team too." Kathy happily replies, "will do!" Mr. Frazier then asks, "how about Tessa? Does anyone know where her home room is?" Eddie replies, "she's a freshman. I don't know." Just then, Tessa walks up and Mr. Frazier tells her, "I'm moving the location of the list. Congratulations! We'll see you at tryouts this afternoon." Tessa is very happy that she made it to the second day of tryouts, and goes to her class.

Mr. Frazier returns to his office, retrieves the original list, and posts it on the window to the athletic office. A few minutes later Mr. Zunde walks in. After they say good morning, Mr. Frazier explains to Mr. Zunde, "I have a problem. Someone drew a red line through the women's names. So, I'm posting the list here instead." Mr. Frazier shows Mr. Zunde the list. Mr. Zunde laughs, and asks Mr. Frazier, "you know who did this, don't you?" Mr. Frazier replies, "Barbara was certain that it was Mr. Crum." Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Frazier, "of course it was. I'll take care of that pencil pusher myself when the time comes."

Mr. Zunde then explains to Mr. Frazier, "but, since we don't know who did this for sure, our official position will be that we suspect a student vandalized the list. So, we will be posting any future lists for all of the sports teams on the window of the athletic office, exactly as you did." Mr. Crum would not dare enter the physical education office, so the list will be safe there.

Mr. Frazier was about to throw away the altered list with the lines drawn through the girl's names, but Mr. Zunde stops him. Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Frazier, "wait! Don't throw that away!" Mr. Zunde asks Mr. Frazier, "do you mind if I keep this paper?" Mr. Frazier tells him, "no. Why?" Mr. Zunde explains, "when the school board hired me as the athletic director, Crum was supposed to keep his hands off all sports activities." Mr. Frazier puts his feet up on his desk, and reminisces, "yeah, I remember that. He was always interfering with sports, and all of our teams were in the basement. And, when John Davies lost his scholarship because of Crum, Mr. Davies took it to the school board. That's when you got here. And, Mr. Crum has been relatively quiet since. I hope he's not back to his same old bullshit again."

Mr. Zunde explains to Mr. Frazier, "what you probably don't know is the school board told that pencil-pushing Crum that, if he ever interfered again, they would strongly consider firing or demoting him. This paper, and that crap he pulled during tryouts yesterday is evidence that he's starting to interfere again. I don't know why he's decided to begin interfering again this year, but I suspect it's the girls trying out for the team. Last year, he was relatively quiet. The year before that, he tried to pull a few stunts. But, I'll just add this to my collection of evidence against Mr. Crum." Mr. Frazier is now feeling a lot more confident that Mr. Crum will not be getting in the way any longer.

What Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier do not know, however, is that Mr. O'Brien spoke with Mr. Crum, the principal, early this morning. Mr. O'Brien explained to Mr. Crum how Jimmy was knocked off the track by Braden during tryouts yesterday. This led Mr. Crum to believe that track and field is a contact sport after all. Mr. Crum's faulty logic leads him to the conclusion that the girls should therefore not be allowed to

participate. So, as a result, Mr. Crum took it upon himself to cut the girls from the team. Mr. O'Brien also notified Mr. Crum that Jimmy will be absent for a few days due to the severe injuries he sustained during track tryouts.

Before first period begins, Eddie and Mark remind Braden that Mr. O'Brien may have something to say about what happened during yesterday's tryouts. Braden tells them, "let him bring it on! It's Jimmy that caused that mess!" Mitchell reminds Braden, "remember, he's the one who's giving you your grade." Braden tells Mitchell, "he ain't giving me anything. I'm earning my grade, just like I earned my place on the team." Johnson remarks, "it sounds like today is really going to be fun."

Mr. O'Brien walks in and takes attendance, staring over at Braden occasionally. He then moves on to today's lesson topic, which is social injustice, and is a flagrant departure from the syllabus. After lecturing for a while, Mr. O'Brien asks the class, "can anyone think of any social injustice that occurs right here in this school?" One student suggests, "it's not fair that one teacher is harder than another teacher when they are teaching the same class." Mr. O'Brien answers the student, telling her, "that's a good one." The class agrees, with many students saying, "yeah," or "tell me about it."

Mr. O'Brien asks, "can anyone else think of an example?" Chuckie, always having an ulterior motive, suggests, "the same students always get to be on all the sports teams." Chuckie could not earn a spot on a pee wee baseball team. He only brought this topic up to irritate the athletes. Eddie laughs at Chuckie's comment, which is clearly noticed by Chuckie. Mr. O'Brien responds, "very good, Charles. I think a lot of us have noticed that one." If Chuckie had not brought up the topic, Mr. O'Brien certainly would have one way or another.

Mark is not willing to allow Chuckie's comment to remain unchallenged. Mark comments, "wait! How is that an injustice?" Mr. O'Brien replies, "it is an injustice because everyone does not get a fair chance to participate." Mark replies to Mr. O'Brien's comment, stating, "I don't agree with that at all. If you show up for tryouts, you'll get your fair chance." Mr. O'Brien, with a sarcastic come back, tells Mark, "you don't really believe that, do you?" Mark tells Mr. O'Brien, "actually, I do. I've never seen anyone not get a fair chance."

Eddie raises his hand, and Mr. O'Brien asks, "yes, Edward?" Eddie suggests, "everyone does have a fair chance to compete. That's what tryouts are for. Tryouts are to find the best members for the team." Mr. O'Brien, who is treading on thin ice, asks Eddie, "wouldn't you agree that, in many cases, the team is decided well ahead of the tryouts?" Eddie contends, "not at all. Why would a coach intentionally pick less skilled

athletes over more skilled ones? The goal is to win, and you're not going to win if you pick the losers for the team." Mark whispers to Johnson, "I think Eddie just called Jimmy O'Brien a loser." Mr. O'Brien replies, "now Edward, you know as well as I do that certain people are given the red carpet treatment, and others are just shoved aside." Mr. O'Brien was clearly referring to Braden pushing Jimmy aside yesterday on the track.

Braden, knowing that today's subject matter directly involves him, brashly replies to Mr. O'Brien, "that's a bunch of bullshit!" Mr. O'Brien, who is actually hoping to pick a fight with Braden, replies, "excuse me?" Repeating himself, Braden exclaims, "I said, that's a bunch of bullshit! I work my ass off for a position on the team and, when I get out there, I give it my best every time! If I don't, I won't make the team. No one can make a team by sitting on their ass!" Mark, again whispering to Johnson, tells him, "now, Braden just told everyone that Jimmy O'Brien sits on his ass."

Mr. O'Brien raises his voice, and asks Braden a loaded question, "so, you don't think everyone should have a fair chance to compete?" Braden firmly replies, "only the best should compete. That's why you ain't on a professional basketball team. Because you ain't no good at it. Instead you're sitting in a classroom complaining about other people's success. Nobody is giving you a job that you ain't worth shit at. So, why are sports teams any different?" The class laughs at Mr. O'Brien, who just got buried by Braden, Eddie, and Mark. Mr. O'Brien, unable to dig himself out of the hole he dug, changes the subject and moves on. Today's class could not have ended soon enough for Mr. O'Brien.

Mark's, Eddie's, and Braden's comments infuriated Chuckie. Chuckie, the school bully, tries to pick a fight with anyone he can. Being no physical match for the athletes, Chuckie took a different approach this time. Chuckie tried to pick a verbal fight with the athletes on the stage of a classroom. Chuckie, who even had the teacher on his side, was buried along with Mr. O'Brien.

After the class lets out, one student tells Chuckie, "you can't beat them on the field, and you can't beat them off the field either." The student's statement shattered Chuckie's fragile ego. Chuckie responds to the student, telling her, "yeah, well, I'll get them back. Just wait. You'll see."

The end of the day finally arrives, and it's back to the locker room for the athletes. Meeting the athletes in the hallway, Mr. Frazier takes them down to the arena. Mr. Frazier instructs the candidates to sit on the bleachers as he goes over today's agenda. Mr. Zunde walks in during Mr. Frazier's meeting, and takes a seat with the students. Mr. Frazier informs the students that, today, they will be running a 220-yard dash and an

880-yard run for time. He also mentions that, tomorrow morning, the final team roster will be posted on the window of the athletic office. Mr. Frazier makes it a point to inform everyone that the list will not be posted on the window of the administrative offices any longer.

During the discussion, Mr. Crum walks down the staircase into the arena. Mr. Crum approaches Mr. Frazier, but Mr. Frazier tries to ignore him. Knowing exactly why Mr. Crum is interrupting the tryouts, Mr. Zunde walks up and joins Mr. Frazier and Mr. Crum. Usurping Mr. Frazier's authority, Mr. Crum, addressing the candidates, announces, "Barbara Wyngate, Paula Giovani, Katarina Karakova, and Tessa Klement, please see me over here immediately," as he points to a corner of the arena. The girls reluctantly stand up and follow Mr. Crum. Mr. Zunde whispers to Mr. Frazier, "don't worry about this. Just continue. I'll take care of Crum." Mr. Zunde follows Mr. Crum and the girls to the corner of the arena. Mr. Frazier continues addressing today's agenda.

Mr. Crum tells the girls, "it has come to my attention that track is a contact sport, so you are therefore not allowed on the team." The girls are shocked at Mr. Crum's ridiculous edict. They look at Mr. Zunde, who responds, "Crum, you are full of more shit than an overfed elephant. Get out of my arena." Mr. Crum exclaims to Mr. Zunde, "you can't talk to me that way!" Mr. Zunde, pointing out the obvious, tells Mr. Crum, "I just did. So, apparently I can talk to you that way." The girls try not to laugh at Mr. Crum after Mr. Zunde's last comment. Not being able to contain themselves, they laugh anyway. They are well aware of Mr. Zunde's witty sense of humor. Mr. Zunde tells the girls, "you are all on the team, including Tessa. Get back on the bleachers with your other teammates."

Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Crum in private, "Crum, the next time you're in my arena, I'm going to tell Bobby Bradshaw to toss the shot-put to you. You'd better be prepared to catch it. At least, then you'll have one ball. Now, get your pencil pushing ass out of my arena." Mr. Crum tries to respond, but Mr. Zunde raises his voice and exclaims, "now!" Mr. Crum leaves the arena, but he now has a score to settle with Mr. Zunde.

The tryouts get underway, with the 220-yard dash event being first on the agenda. Mr. Frazier informs Kathy, Paula, and Tessa that they will run in the first heat, and tells them they will be running with Johnson, Braden and Bell. Mr. Frazier starts the race, and turns to talk with Mr. Zunde.

Mr. Frazier asks Mr. Zunde, "what was that all about?" Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Frazier, "that pencil pushing moron now thinks track is a contact sport." Mr. Frazier laughs, and says, "that's the most ridiculous thing I've heard out of him yet." Mr. Zunde informs Mr. Frazier, "I'm afraid there's a lot more where that came from." Mr. Zunde also tells Mr. Frazier, "oh, and by the way, I told Tessa she's on the team." Mr. Frazier replies, "good."

The fact that there are four girls here seems to be making the guys run a lot faster.”

Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier turn their attention back to the track as the 220-yard dash heat is about to finish. Mr. Frazier looks at the field of runners, and cannot believe what he is seeing. Mr. Frazier, Mr. Zunde, and Barbara catch the times of the runners. Much to everyone’s surprise, this was a very close race. Tessa, delivering what will be known as the upset of the year, actually beat Bell.

Barbara gives the girls a high-five after they return to the finish line. Johnson, who won, walks away to find some water. Tessa asks Barbara, “did I do good?” Barbara tells her, “honey, you did awesome!” Barbara whispers to Tessa, “the guy you beat is a senior.” Tessa exclaims, “wow!”

As Barbara is talking with Tessa, Mr. Frazier asks Bell, “what happened on that track?” Bell, not knowing how to answer, tells Mr. Frazier, “it was me. I guess I saw the girls, and thought it was going to be an easy race.” Mr. Frazier alerts Bell, telling him, “guess again. Don’t let your guard down anymore.” Bell, taking last place, knows he is going to have to step up his game.

While the rest of the heats are underway, Mr. Zunde goes over to work with the field athletes. New to the shot-put this year is John Beck, known around the school as No Neck Beck. Beck figured that, if the track athletes could play football, he could try out for track and field. Beck gives the shot-put a try, and does reasonably well for a novice. Mr. Zunde is helping Beck with his form.

In high school competition, the shot-put is usually twelve pounds. Today, however, they are tossing the sixteen-pound shot. Strength alone will not move the shot-put too far. Developing the skill is of utmost importance. Mr. Zunde watches as they make a few tosses. Mr. Zunde notices Bobby B. is doing well using the sixteen-pound shot-put. Mr. Zunde informs Bobby B. that he is on track to break the school record this year.

Back on the track, the 880-yard run time trials are about to begin. All sprinters and distance runners will be running in this event. Sprinters hate this race, and so do distance runners. The half mile is neither a sprint nor distance race. Mr. Frazier informs the runners to form groups of six, preferably of the same skill level. He asks the group, “do any of you dare to run with Barbara?” Johnson, who trains with Barbara, and Mitchell are the only two who volunteer. Since Johnson and Barbara have been together as a couple, Johnson has preferred running distance races versus the sprints. With no one else stepping up, Mr. Frazier tells Kathy, Paula, and Tessa, “you will be running with Barbara in her heat.”

Mr. Frazier, looking over the field of athletes on the bleachers, mentions, “so, none of you guys want to run against Barbara?” The room remains silent. Mr. Frazier has made his point, which is that many of the guys need to train a little harder.

Eddie and Mark are not interested in the half mile. Braden is only interested in running this race if there is a specific ass that he wants to kick, otherwise he prefers the 220-yard dash or the 440-yard dash. Last year, the tribe intentionally delivered a substandard performance so Mahoney will be stuck with the half mile. Their plan worked well. This year will be different. Mr. Frazier knows Eddie’s, Mark’s, and Braden’s capabilities, so they must run a race congruent with their ability. Even if they perform well, Mr. Frazier is likely to assign them to the race they prefer. Truth be told, the core group of ten athletes will excel at any event assigned to them.

With the first heat ready to run, Mr. Zunde steps away from the field athletes to watch. During tryouts, the runners in the first heat usually set the standard that everyone else must strive to meet. After Barbara’s performance in the mile, Mr. Zunde certainly would not want to miss this race. Kathy and Paula have never run a half mile for time, and they are not too familiar with the race strategy. Tessa, who has never run competitively before, has no conception of what her skill level is. Mitchell and Johnson are very familiar with this distance, for they run it and run it well.

Mr. Frazier has set the starting positions for this event so that the runners can drop to the inside lane after the first lap of the four-lap race. This will allow the runners to pace themselves with each other. Once everyone is ready, Mr. Frazier gives the command, “set.” Once the runners are set, he sounds the buzzer, and the runners are off. All eyes are on Barbara, especially Mitchell’s, who lost to Barbara in the mile yesterday. It would appear to the casual observer that the girls are stealing the show this year.

After the first lap, the runners drop to the inside lane. Barbara is in first place, with Mitchell right on her heels. Kathy, Paula, and Tessa try to keep pace with Barbara, and thus far are doing a splendid job. Johnson is in last place, but his strength is during the last half of the race. During lap two, Barbara’s lead widens over the pack. Mitchell, however, is still following her very closely. Halfway through lap two, Barbara slows her pace for a moment, hoping that Mitchell will pass her. This will allow Barbara to draft off of Mitchell for a while. Barbara has no such luck. Mitchell, a brilliant runner, maintains his pace right behind her.

During lap three, Barbara resumes her previous pace. Mitchell tracks every move she makes. Barbara knows exactly what Mitchell is up to. If

Mitchell can maintain Barbara's pace, he stands a good chance of winning by making a move during the last 100 yards. Johnson moves into third place during the third lap. Kathy and Barbara are running at a good pace, with Tessa right behind them.

The final lap reveals the skill level of the runners. Barbara and Mitchell both pick up the pace, and sprint the last lap. Johnson is gaining on the leaders, but is not likely to catch them. Kathy, Paula, and Tessa, although they are having a good run, cannot keep pace with the distance stars. Around the last curve, Barbara widens her lead over Mitchell.

Barbara crosses the finish line first, with Mitchell finishing right behind her. Johnson crosses third, right behind Mitchell. Tessa, Kathy, and Paula follow Johnson, in that order. Although they ran a good race, Kathy and Paula learn quickly that they do not want to run the half mile. After today, they have no doubt they prefer the sprints.

Once they are recovered, Kathy asks Tessa, "how much do you run, girl?" Tessa replies, "not much. But, I swim a lot." Kathy then asks, "how much do you swim?" Tessa tells Kathy, "I swam for an hour or two, five or six times a week, all last Summer." Tessa also informs Kathy, "my parents got me a membership to a swim club so I can also swim over the Winter." That would certainly explain Tessa's endurance. Anyone who swims as much as Tessa does will be bound to have superior endurance, both in the pool and out.

As the results of the rest of the heats unfold, it is clear that the runners of the first heat delivered the best times. Eddie, Mark, and Braden, who also delivered respectable times, could not sandbag too much. Mr. Frazier knows their ability, and that they can beat Kathy and Paula in the half mile. Overall, Mr. Frazier is much more pleased with this year's performance compared with last year's, especially in the half mile. Only a few team members understand exactly why the times for the half mile last year were so disappointing.

After the tryouts, Mr. Frazier instructs everyone to have a seat on the bleachers. He begins by telling everyone, "this year, it looks like we're going to have the best team that I can remember." He informs the students, "the final team roster will be posted on the window of the physical education office tomorrow morning. Please check the list. If you are on the list, you have made the team." Addressing tomorrow's agenda, Mr. Frazier announces, "tomorrow, we will be running relay drills. You will not be running for time. I will be looking at how well you handoff and receive the baton. Mr. Zunde will be watching for any break in your cadence, which is evidence of how well the transition went."

Mr. Frazier then makes an unusual announcement, telling the team, "Barbara, Kathy, and Paula helped me manage the team in the past. They are now part of the team, so I must relieve them of those duties. If any of you know of anyone who would like to help out with the team, please have them see me." He then dismisses the team, and everyone heads to the locker room.

The next day, the candidates head straight for the physical education office to see if they've made the team. Eddie and Kathy, who have already made the team, check the list to see whom else they will be running with. Kathy looks at the list, not letting Eddie see. Kathy tells Eddie, "oh no! I'm so sorry, sweetie." Eddie replies, "about what? Let me see." Kathy, while Eddie is looking at the list, tells him, "I'm running against you! And, you'd better make sure your laces are tied!" Eddie remarks, "I wonder why Mr. Frazier did that." Kathy replies, "hmm. I don't know." Eddie and Kathy are both running the 40-yard dash.

Kathy and Eddie look through the list, and see that the tribe got all the events they wanted. They also notice Mark and Paula will be running the 220-yard dash together. Seeing this, Kathy tells Eddie, "look! He put Mark and Paula together too! He's trying to make us run faster!" Looking over the list, Eddie remarks, "yeah! You're right! And, look at this! There's Barbara in the half mile with Johnson. It looks like Mitchell's in the half mile too."

Eddie and Kathy hang out around the physical education office for a while and talk. Barbara walks up, and Kathy tells her, "you got good news and bad news." Kathy is laughing, so Barbara knows Kathy is up to something. Looking at the list, Barbara remarks, "the mile and the half mile! Awesome!" Kathy mentions to Barbara, "you're running against Johnson in the half mile." Barbara remarks, "good! It will make him run faster!" Kathy exclaims, "see that! I knew it! I knew it!" Barbara asks, "knew what?" Kathy explains to Barbara how Mr. Frazier matched her up with Eddie, and matched Mark up with Paula. Barbara looks over the list, and agrees with Kathy's assessment of the assignments.

Barbara suggests, "you know, I bet you guys, and Mark and Paula will be on the 4 by 440 relay team." Kathy asks, "what about Johnson and Braden?" They think about this for a while, and they all come to the conclusion that Barbara, Johnson, Mitchell, and Braden will be running the mile medley relay. They reasoned that this combination would give Mr. Frazier two relay teams capable of winning gold medals at the State invitational meet. Kathy and Barbara have both worked with Mr. Frazier for a long time. They are able to figure out his strategy. Tomorrow, they will find out if they are right.

Bobby B. arrives to check out the roster, already knowing that he is on the team. Eddie informs Bobby B., “yo, bro! It looks like you made the high jump!” Bobby B. replies, “yeah, right! And, No Neck Beck is running the 40.” Eddie and Kathy both laugh, as Bobby B. looks over the roster. Bobby B. remarks, “wow! No Neck Beck made it! Good!”

They all head down the hall to class, crossing paths with Mark and Paula who are walking to the physical education office to check out the list. Kathy tells Paula, “it looks like you guys are running down lovers’ lane together.” Not understanding, Paula replies, “what?” Kathy tells her, “go look.” Mark and Paula race down the hall, and find out the news that they are running the 220-yard dash together.

Walking into chemistry class together, Paula asks Kathy, “I wonder what we’re doing today.” Kathy replies, “I think we’re running relay drills and a few time trials so Mr. Frazier can assign the relay teams.” Paula interrupts, and tells Kathy, “no. I mean in chemistry class.” Kathy replies, “sleeping.” Paula replies, “really? What’s gotten into you, girl?” Kathy replies, “I want to be all rested for track practice today. So, I’m going to sleep.” Paula informs Kathy, “you know that you’re not getting away with that.” Kathy replies, “yeah. I know. But, it’s a nice thought.” Excited that she made the track team, Kathy is apparently not too excited with chemistry class today.

Kathy and Paula take their seat, wondering what’s up as Mr. Madre, the chemistry teacher, brings out some interesting looking glassware from the storage room. Paula asks Kathy, “I wonder what all that stuff is for.” With quite a serious tone, Kathy replies, “Mr. Madre is going to demonstrate how to make earthquake seeds.” Paula exclaims, “he is not! There’s no such thing as earthquake seeds!” Kathy replies, “sure there is. Wile E. Coyote on Road Runner orders earthquake seeds from Acme all the time.” Paula rolls her eyes, knowing that today will be an interesting day.

Mr. Madre tells one of the students, “Leslie, will you please hand these out for me. One to each student, please.” Mr. Madre hands Leslie a stack of handouts, and she begins passing them out to the students. Kathy and Paula receive their handouts, not at all happy with what they see. Kathy whispers to Paula, “oh, wonderful. We’re having lab today.” A chemistry lab experiment means that a lab report will be due tomorrow. Writing a lab report is not exactly on the top of Kathy’s list. Kathy has much more important things to do after school other than doing homework, such as securing a spot on a relay team.

Mr. Madre announces, “today, I will demonstrate the procedure to titrate a hydrochloric acid solution with a sodium hydroxide solution. I will be using a pH sensor to monitor the changes in the pH as I add the sodium hydroxide solution to the hydrochloric acid solution. While I am

performing the titration, I will plot a graph of pH versus the volume of sodium hydroxide added. I will then use the graph to determine the equivalence point of the titration and use these results to calculate the concentration of the hydrochloric acid solution. After my demonstration, all of you will be doing the same experiment at your lab stations.”

As Mr. Madre is discussing the experiment, Kathy points to a line on the lab handout that reads, “credit will be deducted for both superfluous information and verbose detail”. Kathy whispers to Paula, “there’s a serious problem with this sentence. The word ‘both’ is completely unneeded, and doesn’t really add any unique and useful information. So, that makes the word ‘both’ superfluous.” Paula looks at the sentence, and replies, “I totally disagree. I think the word ‘both’ makes the sentence wordy, so it’s verbose.” Kathy whispers, “seriously? I still say it’s superfluous.” Paula whispers back, “nope. It’s verbose because there’s too many words.”

Interrupting Kathy and Paula’s comical debate, Mr. Madre announces, “Kathy and Paula. I presume you are discussing today’s experiment among yourselves. Would you care to enlighten myself and the class with whatever it is that you are discussing?” Kathy replies, “sure,” as Paula kicks Kathy’s foot under the table. Kathy explains, “on the lab handout, there’s a sentence that reads, ‘credit will be deducted for both superfluous information and verbose detail.’ The word ‘both’ in that sentence is completely unnecessary. So, me and Paula were discussing whether the word ‘both’ is superfluous or verbose. I think the word ‘both’ is superfluous because it is totally unneeded, and doesn’t convey any valuable information. Paula says that extra word in there makes the sentence wordy, and so the word makes the sentence verbose.” The class laughs hysterically, as Mr. Madre is at a loss of how to respond.

Mr. Madre, annoyed that the class finds Kathy and Paula’s interpretation of the lab handout comical, tells Kathy and Paula, “this is chemistry class, not English class. So, let’s move on to today’s experiment, and leave English to the grammarians. And, if there is any more talking in class, both of you will be looking at detention. Am I understood?” Kathy replies, “yes.” Mr. Madre then looks at Paula, waiting for her answer. Paula replies, “yeah.” Mr. Madre informs Paula, “proper use of English would require the word ‘yes’, not the word ‘yeah.’” Not wanting detention, Paula replies, “yes, sir.”

As Mr. Madre is demonstrating the experiment, Kathy whispers to Paula, “when he called us out, he said, ‘I presume you are discussing today’s experiment among yourselves.’ The proper phrase is ‘between yourselves’ since there are only two of us. The word ‘among’ refers to three or more people.” Paula whispers back, “girl, you’re going to get us

in more trouble. We can't afford to miss track practice today." Quickly realizing that Paula is right, Kathy is immediately on her best behavior.

The lab experiment goes rather well. The bell rings, and Kathy and Paula escape without any disciplinary action. As they are walking out of the classroom, Kathy mentions to Paula, "I still think the word 'both' is superfluous." Paula quickly replies, "nope. You got it all wrong, girl. It's verbose." Kathy replies, "superfluous." Paula returns the volley, stating, "verbose." As they walk down the hall, Kathy suggests, "we'll get Miss Starr to settle this."

After school, the team heads to the locker room, gets dressed, and waits in the hallway for Mr. Frazier. While they are waiting, Kathy tells Eddie, "you'll be proud of me. I got in big trouble today for talking in class." Eddie asks, "oh yeah? Really? What were you saying that was so bad?" Kathy tells Eddie, "okay, so Paula is my lab partner in chemistry, and the teacher, Mr. Madre, was going over the lab assignment." Paula and Mark then walk up in mid conversation. Paula, hearing part of what Kathy is telling Eddie, tells Mark, "listen to this crap! This is really good!"

Kathy explains what happened, telling them, "on the lab handout, there was a sentence that read, 'credit will be deducted for both superfluous information and verbose detail.' So, me and Paula were discussing whether the word 'both' in that sentence is superfluous or verbose. I think it was superfluous because the word 'both' was totally unneeded, and didn't convey any useful information. Paula thinks to have that extra word in there makes it verbose." Kathy points out, "the word 'both' in that sentence is totally unnecessary." Paula remarks, "yeah, but if it's an unnecessary word, that makes the sentence wordy, so it's verbose."

Eddie exclaims, "you guys got in trouble for that? Seriously?" Mark comments, "you've got to be kidding." Paula mentions, "nope. He told us that if we disrupt the class again, we're going to detention." Eddie and Mark both laugh, but have no words. Kathy tells Paula, "we're definitely bringing this up in English class tomorrow." Mark mentions, "yeah. Do that. I want to hear how that goes."

Mr. Frazier arrives and takes the team downstairs to the arena. He has everyone sit on the bleachers, and tells them, "congratulations everyone! Look around. This is our team this year." With tryouts over, practice technically now begins. Mr. Frazier goes over a few other things and then explains, "today, we are doing nothing but running relay drills. I will be looking at only one thing, which is how well you handoff and receive the baton. Mr. Zunde will be watching for any break in your cadence. Eddie and Braden, please come up here. They will demonstrate to you a proper handoff. And O'Brien, you have been cut! Head to the

locker room now!" Jimmy O'Brien, who is not on the team roster, still had the nerve to show up to practice today.

While Mr. Frazier is talking, Kathy tells Paula, "did you hear that? He said 'I will be looking at only one thing.' He could have said, 'I will be looking at one thing.' So, is the word 'only' in that sentence superfluous or verbose?" Paula laughs, telling Kathy, "hey now! Let's not get in trouble here too!" Mark comments, "O'Brien is superfluous. Chuckie is superfluous and verbose." Kathy and Paula laugh at Mark's comment, leaving Mr. Frazier wondering what could possibly be so funny.

Back on the track, Mr. Frazier hands Eddie the baton. Braden stands in the transition zone, and Eddie jogs to the curve in the track. Eddie runs with the baton and, as he approaches the transition zone at full speed, Braden takes off. The seamless transition occurs very fast, with no break in cadence. Eddie and Braden make the transition look ridiculously easy. Mr. Frazier announces, "that is the way it is done!" He then goes over the technical details on how to transfer the baton. Mr. Frazier then instructs the runners to get on the track and explains how the drill will be carried out.

When Kathy gets on the track, she tells Eddie, "I've seen this done a thousand times before, but I've never actually done it." Eddie tells Kathy, "don't worry. You'll get the hang of it." Kathy points out, "you guys have been doing this for years." Eddie explains to Kathy what she already knows, "yeah. I know. But, on a relay team, you are always receiving the baton from the same person and handing off to the same person. You'll get it down pretty quickly."

Mr. Frazier, explaining how the drill will be performed, announces, "you will all line up. When it is your turn, you will get on the track, and receive the baton. You will then run 220 yards, hand it off, and get back in line." Mr. Frazier takes a seat with Mr. Zunde, both with their clipboards in hand.

The relay drill begins with the seasoned athletes running first, running in a single lane. After everyone sees how the drill is performed, Mr. Frazier tells the team to start two more lanes. As expected, some transitions go well, and others do not. After a few transitions, Kathy gets the hang of it. Paula and Barbara also learn very quickly.

After a half hour of running drills, Mr. Frazier gives the team a short break. Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde arrange a few specific transitions, suggestive of potential relay teams. Mr. Frazier makes the announcement for the runners to line up in a specific order. Based upon the lineup, it appears that Mark will hand off to Paula, followed by Paula handing off to Kathy, and Kathy handing off to Eddie. It also appears that, in another

lane, Johnson will be handing off to Braden, who will be handing off to Mitchell, who will then deliver the baton to Barbara, suggestive of a mile medley relay team.

The drill starts, and Mark runs around the track and hands off to Paula. The transition goes well, and Paula runs 220 yards, handing off to Kathy. That transition also goes well, much to Kathy's surprise. Kathy now gets to hand off to Eddie, the fastest guy in the school. As she approaches the transition zone, Eddie is able to accurately gauge Kathy's speed, and takes off at the right moment. The transfer of the baton occurs seamlessly, giving Kathy the confidence she needs for this event.

Kathy knows exactly what Mr. Frazier is doing. For the last two years, Kathy helped Mr. Frazier arrange these drills. The next transition that Kathy will do is receive from Mark and hand off to Paula. It is not hard for Kathy, Paula, and Barbara to see where this is going. Barbara appears to have been correct this morning when she made the assessment that Mr. Frazier is planning to have Eddie, Kathy, Mark, and Paula on the same relay team.

After practice is over, Mr. Frazier informs everyone, "check the list again tomorrow morning at the physical education office. Some of the relay events will be posted. I did say 'some', which means not all of them will be decided by tomorrow."

Mr. Frazier has a challenging task ahead of him. He must assign events to win as many meets as possible and, at the same time, to get as many athletes as he can to the State level competition. With so many good runners this year, that task is more difficult than it sounds. Fortunately, he does have the option of reassigning events as the season progresses.

The next morning, Eddie meets Kathy at her house and they walk to school together. On the way, Kathy asks, "hey! What if we're on the same relay team?" Eddie replies, "well, that would be good, as long as you don't get suspended for talking in class." Kathy bumps Eddie's hip with hers, telling him, "I still say it's superfluous, and not verbose." Kathy adds, "and besides, they only give detention for talking in class. They don't suspend you for that." Getting back to the original question, Eddie tells Kathy, "if we're on the same team with Mark and Paula, that would be really cool."

Kathy tells Eddie, "you know, the times will be close to what they would be if Braden and Johnson were on the relay team." Eddie mentions, "then, sweetie, you'll be winning your very own medal." Kathy suddenly stops walking. Eddie takes two more steps and, not seeing Kathy beside him, turns around. Kathy, suddenly feeling great power, expresses, "that

is what I am going to do, Edward Bogenskaya! I am going to win my own medal this year!" They continue walking, with Kathy feeling empowered. No one is going to stop her now.

When they arrive at school, they head straight for the physical education office. Mark, Paula, Braden, Mitchell, Johnson, Barbara, and a few others are all standing around discussing the relay event teams. Barbara winks at Kathy as she walks up. Kathy knows exactly what Barbara's wink means. Eddie and Kathy look at the roster, and see the 4 by 440 relay team members are Mark, Paula, Kathy, and Eddie. In the mile medley are Braden, Johnson, Mitchell, and Barbara. Hoffer and Tessa are slated for the 4 by 220 relay, which is sometimes known as the sprint relay. The other team members for the sprint relay event have not been chosen yet.

Everyone seems pleased with Mr. Frazier's assignments. Barbara mentions to Kathy, Paula, and Tessa, "he certainly spread us girls all around." Paula mentions, "this is going to be an interesting year." Tessa mentions, "I'm really happy that he put me and Jimmy in the same race." Barbara asks Tessa, "you know why he did that, don't you?" Tessa replies, "no. Why?" Barbara, explaining the reality of the situation to Tessa, tells her, "he knows you and Jimmy are tight. If you and Jimmy are in the same race, both of you will run faster." Tessa, who thought Mr. Frazier was just being nice to her, just saw the light. Eddie, taking one last look at the roster, tells everyone, "hey, look! Kathy's throwing the discus!" A few who know the inside joke about the discus and pizza laugh, then everyone heads to class. There is no discus event in high school indoor track.

Eddie, Kathy, Mark and Paula walk down the hall together. Kathy expresses her wish to everyone, "I really want us to win. I'm going to do my best." Paula also expresses the same wish, saying, "yeah, me too. I'm going to have to work hard." Eddie reassures Kathy and Paula, "your times are awesome. You'll do well." Once they all arrive in the lobby, Kathy and Paula head to their classroom, and Eddie and Mark to theirs. On the way to Mr. O'Brien's class, Eddie mentions to Mark, "Kathy really wants her own medal." Mark assures Eddie, "we'll get them one."

Braden and Johnson catch up with Eddie and Mark, and they enter the classroom together, albeit a little late. Mr. O'Brien greets their tardy entrance by announcing, "we're so glad that you can join the rest of us for class today." Braden replies, "no problem, boss. We were just walking down that red carpet you talk about." Braden takes his seat, and the class laughs at Braden's witty comeback to Mr. O'Brien's sarcasm. It appears that Braden is clearly winning the fight with Mr. O'Brien, a fight that Braden didn't even know he was engaged in. Braden is just being himself.

Now that the team has been selected, they practice together every day after school. Mr. Frazier focuses on developing flawless handoff skills with the newer athletes. In a relay race, a seamless handoff could be the difference between first and second place. Mr. Frazier describes to the team what happened last year, during the State invitational meet, when there were many pathetic handoffs by a few other teams. Mr. Frazier also reminds the team that he is searching for a few new assistants to help him with the team. With the first meet not too far away, everyone is beginning to get excited.