

# Eddie, The Collegiate Freshman

## Chapter Four Winter Semester

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Eddie and Kathy arrive at the high school early on Saturday morning, since it's the first meet of the season. The meet, which is the annual four-way meet between Riverdale, Centerville, Henderson, and Northside, seems to open the indoor track season every year. Because of a serious infraction that occurred last year during the Spring State invitational meet, Centerville was sanctioned, and ineligible to participate in any State level event for one year. But, Centerville is still allowed to participate in the regular season meets. This four-way meet is where, for the last several years, Northside has walked away with nearly all the gold, silver, and bronze medals.

When Eddie and Kathy arrive at the high school, there is a slew of police cars parked in the front of the school where the busses normally load and unload the students. Among the official vehicles are the K-9 unit and a crime scene investigation vehicle. The area has been closed off to civilian vehicles. Eddie and Kathy park in the faculty parking lot, and head in through the front door rather than the side door near the gym. They are naturally curious, just like everyone else, as to what the problem could be early on a Saturday morning.

Walking into the lobby, Eddie and Kathy find Officer Hayes, and a few other officers, keeping the area secure while the detectives do their work. There are a few drug sniffing dogs walking the halls, searching the lockers with their commanding officers. With part of the lobby closed off, the athletes are quickly directed to the left, toward the entrance to the arena, when they walk in.

Officer Hayes, seeing Eddie and Kathy walk in, calls out, "hey, Eddie," as he walks over to speak with Eddie and Kathy for a moment. Eddie walks toward the yellow tape closing off the area, and is promptly

intercepted by another officer. Officer Hayes tells the other officer, “it’s okay. Let them through. This is the guy who tipped us off.”

Eddie and Kathy are permitted behind the police line. Eddie asks Officer Hayes, “what’s going on? It looks like something big.” Calling Eddie and Kathy off to the side, Officer Hayes tells Eddie, “first of all, I want to thank you for your tip. You’ve been a very big help.” Eddie and Kathy look at each other, at a loss to know what Officer Hayes is talking about. Eddie does not remember giving Officer Hayes much information about anything, other than some information about Paul Mahoney, but that was over a year ago. And, as far as any tips go, Eddie has suggested to Officer Hayes a few stocks to buy. But, stock market tips are clearly not part of today’s agenda.

Eddie naturally asks, “what tip?” Officer Hayes explains, “I suppose you know this school has had a drug problem for a long time.” Kathy replies, “you got that right.” Officer Hayes wasn’t telling them anything they didn’t already know. Officer Hayes continues, “we couldn’t find the main supply line so, over the years, we had to let a few of the minor infractions go.” Eddie asks, “like the Chuckie, Goldshit, and Mahoney?” Officer Hayes replies, “exactly. That’s why those characters got lenient sentences or probation. Most of those characters were using, but not distributing, so they were let off easy. We were hoping that they, and a few others, would lead us to the distribution point in this school.”

Officer Hayes continues, “we knew exactly where the drop off point was. We knew who dropped the drugs off, what was being dropped off, and where the drugs were ending up. And, what was being dropped off is exactly what ends up in this school. But, for years, we could never find out who was picking up the drop.” Eddie and Kathy are surprised at what they are hearing. From what they can see, the whole school is being searched for drugs.

Still not getting the picture, Eddie curiously asks, “so, how did I tip you off?” Getting to the point, Officer Hayes explains, “the drop off point for the drugs was at two of the three abandoned houses on Second Street. We had that area staked out for more than a year. We watched the train tracks and the roads, but no one ever drove in or walked in for the pick up. When you mentioned Maurice Crum lives on Second Street, I immediately put two and two together. We arrested him last night. He was the distributor.” Officer Hayes then adds, “we’re searching his office now. The K-9 crew are checking all the lockers.” Eddie and Kathy are in shock. In amazement, Kathy half whispers, “wow! Mr. Crum. Crum, the drug dealer! What a piece of shit!”

Officer Hayes finishes, by telling Eddie and Kathy, “the reason we never caught the person is because he lived right next door, right under

our noses. Once we got your tip, we moved our stakeout locations much closer in. We caught Maurice Crum at 3:00 a.m. walking from his house into the abandoned house next to his. When he came out with the package, we made the bust. Oddly, we originally thought Maurice Crum's house was unoccupied. Over the last year, we noticed that every light in that house was on a timer. That Maurice Crum character is a sly little snake."

In a moment of revelation, Eddie exclaims, "wow! No wonder Mr. Crum was always protecting the Chuckie. And, he was always protecting that Goldshit guy too!" Kathy adds, "and, don't forget Mahoney! That's why that old Crum let Mahoney back into the school during my junior year! It wasn't so that he can graduate. It was so he can sell drugs!" Officer Hayes admits, "it sounds like you guys have it all figured out." Officer Hayes adds, "and, this Andrew Goldstein character, who is a known dealer, was placed in this school in an attempt to get us closer to the distributor. And, just between you and me, we were all very happy down at the precinct when Axel Braden took him out."

Officer Hayes concludes by telling Eddie and Kathy, "again, I want to thank you for your help. And, I'm sure that, by Monday, there'll be a lot of rumors floating around the school. Oh, and by the way, the coaches already got the news. They all seemed kind of happy to hear it." The officer's comment about Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde being happy about the news is probably the understatement of the century. The proverbial thorn in their side is now gone.

Eddie asks Officer Hayes, "by the way, do you remember when you came out to the track when school first started this year?" Officer Hayes replies, "yeah. Maurice Crum started an altercation with you. I remember that." Eddie informs Officer Hayes, "that's only a drop in the bucket compared to all the shit he pulled with the track team over the years." Officer Hayes assures Eddie and Kathy, "well, that explains why the coaches seemed so happy when they got the news." Officer Hayes then tells Eddie, "I probably shouldn't say this either, but you should have body slammed that character a second time." Officer Hayes, who is in charge of this investigation, goes back to work. Eddie and Kathy head to the meet, glad to hear that Mr. Crum will not be back for a very long time.

Eddie and Kathy head to the physical education office, seeing Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde more happy than ever. Playing coy, Kathy tells the two coaches, "you guys are acting like you've already won, and the meet hasn't even started yet!" Mr. Frazier exclaims, "we did win! Crum's gone!" Eddie and Kathy give Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde each a high-five, as Eddie says, "we just got the news from Richard!" Mr. Frazier, for one, is glad to see the often irate and chronically out of control principal gone. Mr.

Zunde will probably miss his free entertainment sessions when Mr. Crum attempts to discipline an athlete, but it's all for the better.

Barbara, Mark, and Paula walk in through the side entrance, and into the physical education office. Paula asks, "what's all the commotion about out front?" Kathy immediately smiles, and Paula adds, "oh, this is going to be good!" Mr. Frazier tells them, "you're not going to believe this, but Mr. Crum got arrested this morning!" Paula exclaims, "what? Are you serious? For what?" Mr. Frazier explains the short version of the story to Barbara, Paula, and Mark, and concludes by telling them, "we won't be seeing Mr. Crum around here anymore!" More high-fives and fist bumps ensue, as the coaches head down to the arena. Perhaps the track team will have some peace for a while.

Before the meet, Mr. Frazier calls the team over to their corner of the arena. For the time being, Mr. Frazier does not want the news of Mr. Crum to get out to the other teams. Instead, Mr. Frazier prefers to leave them wondering why there is such a big disturbance upstairs. He asks Eddie to quietly give the team the rundown on the deal with Mr. Crum, since Eddie apparently has the most information. Eddie explains the situation and, not unexpectedly, the team is very glad to hear the news that Eddie reports. Mr. Frazier then strictly instructs the team not to spread any news of Mr. Crum's arrest during the meet.

During the meet, the sideline conversation among the Northside athletes revolves around Mr. Crum's arrest. Now that the chronic irritant to the track team is gone, the athletes are all suddenly more energetic. During the 440-yard dash, Eddie mentions to Kathy, "can you believe that? Richard was glad that Braden took out Goldshit that day right here. If Braden knew that, he would have tackled Goldshit hard during the pursuit in my senior year." Kathy surmises, "they're probably equally as glad that you took out the Chuckie." Eddie replies, "when someone threatens my track career, they're finished. It's all over for them." Kathy comments, "well, you definitely finished off the Chuckie. I'm sure Bobby B. appreciated that. Chuckie might have dethroned Bobby B. if you didn't take him down."

When the meet is over, the Northside team takes all the gold medals, all of the silver medals, half the bronze medals, and wins all the relays. Mr. Frazier was previously concerned about the team's energy level this year. Hearing the news about Mr. Crum sitting in the county jail seems to have energized the team to an unprecedented level. As a result, everyone ran much better today than expected.

After the meet, Kathy suggests the team go out to get pizza. Half the team accepts her offer, and they all head to the pizzeria for a celebration. The celebration, however, is not only because of the victory on the track,

but because Mr. Crum has been completely taken out of the picture. With the evidence against him, it is not likely the school board would ever reinstate a drug peddling principal.

Winter semester at the University usually starts about a week after the high school is back in session. At the University, track practice starts on the first day of classes, at 7:00 a.m. sharp. Most of the athletes, however, do most of their training on their own, and have no off season, not even over Christmas break.

On the first day of practice, Eddie drives up in his MGB, followed by Kathy in her Porsche 914. Paula drives up in her Beach Patrol Jeep, followed by Mark in his pickup truck. It's getting a bit too cold outside for Kathy and Paula to drive their Dune Buggies. Bobby B. and Erika, roughing it, arrive on their motorcycles, appropriately dressed for the colder weather. And, Mitchell arrives in his Opel 1900, which has been giving him very good service.

They all head into the locker room, where many of the team members catch up on what they did over Christmas Break. Braden informs everyone that Wendy got a job as a team assistant, and will be a Timekeeper. Wendy's new job, of course, means she will have to wake up at 6:30 a.m., which is a feat in itself. Eddie comments that he will be working from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. this semester, four days a week. He is also working on Saturday mornings, unless, of course, there is a track meet. Mark mentions that he has a few jobs going on, keeping him busy for most of the day. Eavesdropping on Mark and Eddie's conversation is Leggett and McCutchen, wondering when Eddie and Mark have the time to go to class.

This semester, McCutchen returns with a full head of hair, looking like a throwback from the 1950s or 1960s. Sporting a new crew cut style, McCutchen has grown a goatee, giving the visual impression that he is a tough guy. McCutchen is fortunate to have his hair grow back. If he causes any problems again, all those long term consequences of that Prickly Sea Spider might just surface with little notice. After all, Mark still has McCutchen's nearly full bottle of shampoo at home, along with a good amount of gel hair remover left.

On the first day of practice, Eddie brings three units of the new version of his training sled with him. The version he brought today is the one suitable for use on the gravel track since it worked so well at the high school. The sleds sit conspicuously on the bleachers, a few feet over from where the tribe gathers. As McCutchen walks by, a look of disdain comes over his face. McCutchen, however, says nothing. The last time he made a comment regarding Eddie's equipment, McCutchen received a stern

lecture from Eddie. But, who knows, maybe Mark and Eddie are secretly conspiring to destroy McCutchen's tendons.

Dr. Braun walks in, along with the other coaches. Stopping to take a look at the new and improved version of Eddie's training sled, Dr. Braun comments to Eddie, "this one seems a lot different. Is it a newer version?" Eddie replies, "this version is for a gravel track. I made one for the high school, since they don't have a sand track. We used it last semester, and it seemed to work really well. And, it has the added bonus of acting like a Zamboni for the track. It really smooths out the surface." Dr. Braun tells Eddie, "well, if you don't mind, a few of the hardier members of the team can go outside and give it a try today." Dr. Braun remembers Eddie's speech last year, when Eddie told McCutchen that he only functions between 68 and 72 degrees.

After hearing Eddie being interviewed on the radio again, Dean Grimsby shows up at practice, wanting to see the new team members in action. The dean asks Dr. Braun if it would be okay to observe the athletes as they practice. Dr. Braun, who has spent a lot of the University's money on scholarships this year, has no problem letting Dean Grimsby watch them run. Dean Grimsby decides to stay inside today, hoping to see a few time trials on the track.

After making his brief morning announcement to the team, Dr. Braun throws out the offer to everyone who might want to try the new training sled on the gravel track. Not to anyone's surprise, the whole tribe heads outside to give Eddie's new invention a try. A few other team members, including Stone, join them. Leggett and McCutchen stay inside to practice, along with a few sprinters and distance athletes. Mark seems to have worked McCutchen's mind over well. And, after crashing Paula and Mark's wedding last Summer, Leggett and McCutchen are on the top of the tribe's shit list.

Outside on the track, the group takes turns with the new training sled. They first begin on the 220-yard straight sprinting track, moving the sled over a bit after each run. Everyone is getting a good workout, and Dr. Braun sees how the track surface is beginning to look like it was just laid. The team, seeing how the sprinting track surface looks pristine, takes the sled over to the 440-yard distance track. They each take turns running 220 yards, also moving the sled over after each run. After an hour and a half of dragging the sled, everyone, including Dr. Braun, knows they've gotten a good workout. As an added bonus, when they are finished with their workout for the day, the track looks brand new. They all head inside, very optimistic of the upcoming season.

Hoping to see a few good time trials today, Dean Grimsby walks away very disappointed. Most of the better runners on the team were running

on the outside track. Inside, entertaining Dean Grimsby, were the second-string athletes and the alternates.

The next week on Saturday, the University team's big event arrives. The twelve-team divisional track meet is what Eddie, and the tribe, have been waiting for. Held at the coliseum that hosts the high school State invitational meet every indoor track season, the turf is very familiar to the tribe. Over the years, the tribe has run on this track many times before.

Eddie, Mark, Braden, Johnson, Mitchell, Bobby B., Hoffer, and Akinmola all wait around with the team, sitting on the bench, waiting for the meet to begin. Kathy, Paula, Barbara, and Erika, taking a little longer to get dressed, join them. Once the tribe is together, the energy level tremendously rises among the group. McCutchen and Leggett, for good reasons, keep their distance from the tribe.

The meet begins with the men's 40-yard dash preliminaries. When the call is made, all of the contestants in this event head to the starting line. Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer, all in separate heats, walk to the starting line together. Eddie gets all psyched up for the race, remembering that there is very little time between heats.

Eddie's heat is called, and he steps up to the blocks. Standing ten feet behind him is Mark, who is in the following heat. The Starter announces, "on your marks," then announces, "set." The buzzer sounds, and the runners are off. Eddie, happy that he has the lead early into the race, knows that all he is running for is a spot in the final. At the finish line, Eddie crosses first, winning his heat. After the race, Eddie then heads back to the team bench.

Mark is up next, and gets into the blocks. As Eddie is walking back to the bench, he hears the buzzer sound, and turns around to watch the race. Seeing Mark in the lead, Eddie realizes that Mark has no real competition in his heat. Mark also wins his heat, and Eddie knows he'll be running with Mark in the final. Eddie pauses on his way to the bench, waiting for Mark to catch up.

On the way to the bench, Eddie tells Mark, "it looks like you creamed them." Mark replies, "yeah, I see that. I thought college was going to have better competition. These guys are a little better, but I haven't seen much out of them yet."

The buzzer sounds again, prompting Eddie and Mark to turn around and watch. Eddie comments, "there goes Hoffer." Mark exclaims, "yeah, and that other guy's kicking his butt!" Continuing to the bench, Eddie mentions, "I wonder who that guy is." Mark replies, "from the looks of this

run, we'll find out in the final." Hoffer took second place in his heat, finishing three yards behind the winner.

After the men are finished with their preliminary heats, the women are up in the 40-yard dash. Kathy and Paula are in the first heat today. Kathy has won this event for the last two years. Now that Liz Duncan is gone, Kathy and Paula have no real competition in this race. As Kathy and Paula are headed to the starting line, Eddie and Mark are informed by Coach Herndon that they will be up against a formidable opponent in the final. His name is Major Nachlobrocklin, the guy who beat Hoffer earlier.

The Starter announces, "on your marks." The women get into the blocks. The Starter announces, "set," and the runners get in the "set" position. The buzzer sounds, and Kathy and Paula both let out their primal scream as they leave the blocks. Kathy's primal scream startles one of her opponents, causing her to lose a few precious tenths of a second. At the finish line, with a repeat performance of last year, Kathy crosses the finish line first, with Paula finishing second, one step behind her. As they head back to the bench, Kathy and Paula both know they have made the final.

After a few more events, the call is made for the men's 440-yard dash. This is the event that Braden has been waiting for since last semester. Braden, an unseeded runner, is in the third heat. Although he is unseeded, Braden has quickly become the favorite in this event. Leggett is also running in the 440-yard dash and, fortunate for Braden, Leggett is in the same heat. Even though Leggett is on the same team as Braden, Braden fully intends to kick Leggett's ass. And, when the race is over, Braden will let Leggett know how badly his ass has been kicked.

After the first two heats have been completed, Braden walks up to the blocks with a well-choreographed dance, exclaiming, "440 yards, and I won't let down my guard! Gonna kick your ass, and land it in the grass! This race I'm gonna win, and then I'm gonna grin!" No one around knows what to make of Braden. They have not heard anything like his rants before. And, from what Braden saw of last year's meets, he knows he is going to win.

Getting behind the blocks, Braden then exclaims, "okay, let's get this ass kicking over with!" The Starter makes the requisite announcements and, once the runners are set, the buzzer sounds. Braden takes off, out to deliver exactly what he promised, which is the ass kicking of the day. Braden approaches the halfway point, and Coach Herndon exclaims, "that was a 22.5 split," which is very good news.

Also, at the midway point in the race, laughter comes over the arena. One of the runners mistakenly thought the race was one lap around the



track, not two. The runner quickly realizes his mistake, and promptly starts running again. That runner was none other than Leggett. At the bench, Mark comments to Eddie, "I've got to hear this one when it comes down." Eddie comments, "lug nut. Geesh. He can't even count to two! What's he going to do in the 4 by 880 relay? That's four laps per leg."

Back on the track, coming around the final turn, Braden is having a great run. Crossing the finish line, Braden delivers a time of 45.3 seconds, winning the heat, and likely the event, setting a personal record in official competition. The tribe cheers for Braden, knowing he had a good run. Finishing in last place is Leggett, delivering a time of 75.3 seconds, after stopping to take a coffee break midway through the race.

Returning to his bench and hearing his time, Braden exclaims, "the chief ass kicker is back!" Braden receives high-fives and fist bumps from the tribe and some of the other team members. Dr. Braun and Coach Herndon know that Braden has secured the gold medal in this event. Fortunately for Leggett, Braden's win attracted so much attention, that Leggett's failure goes relatively unnoticed for now. The focus, however, now shifts toward the team placing in the men's 40-yard dash final.

The call is made for the 40-yard dash final, and the eight contestants head to the starting line. In the final, Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer are up against Major Nachlobrocklin, who recently transferred to one of the universities in the division. The other finalists, while good, will not likely beat Eddie or Mark. After the preliminaries, with eight finalists, the race is expected to be a six-way fight for third place.

Nachlobrocklin, receiving a full scholarship and other benefits from the university he now attends, could not turn down the offer. At his other school, Nachlobrocklin won the gold medal in every short sprint in his division last year. This year, Nachlobrocklin is a newcomer to the scene in this division, just like Eddie and Mark. And, like Eddie and Mark, Nachlobrocklin is not used to losing.

At the starting line, Mark asks Nachlobrocklin, "hey! Are you like a Major in the military, or something?" Upset at Mark's question, Nachlobrocklin replies, "no! That's my name! Major. Major is my name! Major Nachlobrocklin. And, don't you forget it!" Pointing to his face, Nachlobrocklin adds, "and, this is my face. Don't you forget that either!" Mark quickly learns that Nachlobrocklin has a very firm and abrasive personality, which is all for the better. It will be easier for Mark to mess with him.

Mark tells Nachlobrocklin, "and, my name is Mark Svoboda." Pointing to his ass, Mark adds, "and, this is my ass. Don't you forget it. You'll have a good view of it during the whole race." Eddie laughs at Mark's

verbal exchange with Nachlobrocklin, and comments, “Nachlobrocklin. That must be really hard to spell,” further irritating Nachlobrocklin. Major Nachlobrocklin finally learned how to spell his last name correctly early in the second grade. It’s not like Bogenskaya is much easier to spell.

The Starter announces, “on your marks.” Nachlobrocklin looks over at Mark, huffing over having to answer a question he’s had to answer a thousand times in his life. With seven finalists ready to run, and one not quite as ready, adrenaline levels are off the charts. The Starter announces, “set.” The buzzer is sounded, and the runners are off.

Eddie, Mark, and Nachlobrocklin are in the lead right out of the blocks, with Hoffer slightly behind. After ten yards, Eddie and Mark break away. Nachlobrocklin is getting a good view of Mark’s ass, just as Mark promised. At twenty yards, the view gets even better. Nachlobrocklin watches as Mark’s ass fades away down the track, along with Nachlobrocklin’s hope of winning this race. At the finish line, Eddie crosses first, taking the gold medal. Mark, taking second place, finishes right behind Eddie. Nachlobrocklin, settling for third place, is not at all happy.

As the finalists are walking back to their benches, Mark comments to Eddie, “that was a major ass kicking.” Eddie laugh and replies, “yeah. In more ways than one.” Nachlobrocklin, overhearing Eddie and Mark’s conversation that was meant to be overheard, exclaims, “are you saying that you kicked my ass?” Mark turns around, and tells Nachlobrocklin, “no. The clock is telling you that you got your ass kicked.” Nachlobrocklin is flustered, not used to being messed with. Nachlobrocklin may try to argue with Mark, but he certainly can’t argue with the clock.

After the men’s 40-yard dash final is over, the call is made for the women’s 40-yard dash final. Kathy and Paula have the best qualifying times, and have no real competition in this event. Like in the men’s final, with eight finalists, six women will be battling it out for third place. Kathy and Paula are eager to get this race over with so they can move on to the 220-yard dash.

As the women get positioned behind the blocks, no small disturbance arises between two of the contestants. The contestant wearing the number 734 gets into a serious argument with the contestant wearing number 1231. The woman wearing number 734 insists to the woman wearing number 1231, “I’m in lane three! Get out of my lane!” Countering the argument, the woman wearing number 1231 tells her, “take a hike, bitch.” The comment made by number 1231 does not sit well with number 734. The Starter comes over to settle the dispute, but some minor pushing and shoving ensues between the runners. The

Starter, blowing his whistle, tells the two finalists, “one more word out of either of you, and you’ll both be disqualified.” That certainly shut the runners’ mouths and put an end to the spat. The Starter, conferring with the Head Timekeeper, settles the dispute.

Now that the race can get underway, Paula tells Kathy, “now that the babies are done with their little temper tantrum, we can get on with this.” Kathy replies, “yeah, really. They’re not going to place anyway, so what’s the big deal?” Paula adds, “maybe their coach should put them down for their nap.” Paula’s comments further throws number 734 and number 1231 off base, insuring they will lose the race. Number 734 and number 1231 know better not to return any further verbiage. Doing so will likely cause one or both of them to be disqualified.

The Starter announces, “finally! On your marks,” followed by, “set.” The buzzer sounds, and Kathy’s and Paula’s primal scream echoes through the arena, announcing to everyone who is boss. In a repeat performance of last year, Kathy takes first place and Paula takes second place. Finishing at the end of the pack is number 734 and number 1231, who continue their verbal wrestling match at the finish line. A familiar face from last year, wearing number 902, is Adrianna, taking third place. Kathy and Paula give each other a victory hug, and head toward the bench.

With the 40-yard dash now over, it’s on to the men’s one-mile run. On the track, in the first heat, are Stone, Mitchell, and Akinmola. Stone expects to win this event. So does Mitchell. And, so does Akinmola. Even though Akinmola is a long shot for the gold, he is likely to place. To complicate matters, a guy wearing number 194 returns this year. Last year, number 194 pushed Stone to his limit. Stone marginally won the event, but it could have been any man’s race. Mitchell, however, has the race down to a science. With both brains and brawn, Mitchell is today’s favorite. Dr. Paxton, expecting his three top notch distance men to all place in this event, has saved Johnson for the 880-yard run, which will be up shortly.

The buzzer sounds and the one-mile run begins. Stone, as expected, sprints the first few yards to secure the leading position. After the first lap, now that the lane assignments have expired, Mitchell drops in right behind Stone. Mitchell, running in perfect cadence with Stone, is conserving his energy. Stone knows exactly what Mitchell is up to, and doesn’t like it. But, they’re on the same team, and it’s likely that one of them will take first place, and the other will take second place. Mitchell and Stone, however, both want to win. Akinmola is right behind Mitchell, with number 194 trailing Akinmola by a few yards.

During the second quarter-mile, the field spreads tremendously, which is to be expected. Mitchell, still in second place, has not yet made a move, which concerns Stone. Stone is doing all the work, as Mitchell drafts off of him. During the third quarter-mile, Mitchell quickly breaks away from Stone. Akinmola, seeing an opening, sprints to take Mitchell's place right behind Stone. Number 194 barely manages to keep pace with Akinmola, and slowly loses ground.

The last quarter-mile is the proverbial fight to the finish. Stone can still win this race, but he will need the best performance of his life. Akinmola can still take second place, but Stone is not very willing to let that happen. Entering the last lap, in the final 220 yards, Mitchell has the race wrapped up. The fight is now for second place. Akinmola, knowing he has a chance to take second place, gives it all he has. With 50 yards to go, Stone and Akinmola are head to head as they watch Mitchell cross the finish line. In a battle for second place, Akinmola beats out Stone by a yard, if by that much. Stone takes third place, something he is certainly not accustomed to. Number 194 gets a participation trophy this year, wondering who the two new guys are.

Mitchell, Akinmola, and Stone return to the bench, receiving congratulations from the coaches and the team. Akinmola receives the news that it was the best run of his life. That news certainly gives him some encouragement and confidence. Mitchell, breaking the four-minute mark again, is only getting better. Mitchell could have run a bit faster, but beating Stone and Number 194 assures him of taking the gold medal. It is not likely anyone in the other heats will surpass him.

Immediately after the mile, the call is made for the men's mile medley relay. Eddie, Mark, Braden, and Johnson, in the first heat, wait at the starting line. Mark encounters Nachlobrocklin again, who is holding the baton. Mark tells Eddie, "give me the baton. I want to lead off." Eddie asks, "what's up, bro?" Braden interjects, "he wants to lead off because there's someone's ass he wants to kick." Mark replies, "yeah. Nachlobrocklin's ass."

Eddie tosses the baton to Mark, who tosses it into the air a few times, pointing at Nachlobrocklin. Nachlobrocklin sees Mark's gestures, not quite sure how to respond. Mark then points to his ass, telling Nachlobrocklin again what he will have a good view of during the race.

Mark, and the other lead off men, get on the track. Once the Starter gets the runners set, the buzzer sounds, and the men are off. A second buzzer sounds, indicating one of the runners incurred a false start. The guilty runner is Nachlobrocklin. Knowing that Mark beat him in the 40-yard dash earlier today, Nachlobrocklin was trying to gain an advantage by anticipating the gun.

Nachlobrocklin, hopelessly distracted, glances over at Mark. Taking full advantage of the situation, Mark issues a referee's signal for a false start in football. Nachlobrocklin, fully understanding Mark's hand signals, flips Mark a bird. Mark quickly responds by issuing a referee's hand signal for illegal motion. One of the Lane Judges, who is quite amused, catches Mark's hand signals, and whispers to Mark, "that's pretty slick." The Lane Judge apparently fully understood Mark's hand signals. Unfortunately, the Lane Judge understood Nachlobrocklin's hand signals as well.

Once the runners are set again, the buzzer sounds, and the men are off. This time, it is a fair start. Eddie gets on the track as the Lane Judges remove the blocks. Gazing over at the other side of the track, Eddie sees that Mark has the lead, but Nachlobrocklin is not too far behind. This is good news for Eddie, who will be up against Nachlobrocklin in the 220-yard dash with Mark shortly. Mark hands off to Eddie, who inherits a three-second lead.

During his leg, Eddie improves upon the lead. Off to the side watching is Nachlobrocklin, who is becoming a bit disappointed today. Braden gets on the track, and exclaims, "rock on! Here comes my baton! Let's get this ass kicking over with!" As if Mark is not enough for Nachlobrocklin to deal with, Braden is the icing on the cake. Eddie hands off to Braden, who takes off like a madman.

Eddie and Mark watch as Braden takes full control of the race. Widening the lead over his opponents, Braden is out to make a name for himself in the first big meet of his college career. Nachlobrocklin has his eyes on Braden, fully understanding the work ahead of him if he will expect to win something in the years ahead. Braden, delivering another mid forty-second 440-yard performance, hands off to Johnson.

After walking off his run, Braden joins Eddie and Mark, as Johnson is on the way to victory. Before Johnson finishes his leg, Eddie, Mark, and Braden exchange high-fives, celebrating their victory. Mark points out Nachlobrocklin to Eddie and Braden, and tells them, "after Johnson crosses the finish line, when that guy looks over here, give the football touchdown signal." Eddie and Braden agree, as Mark further explains why.

Johnson crosses the finish line first, with no one remotely near him. Mark, catching Nachlobrocklin glancing over, tells Eddie and Braden, "okay, give the signal." They all give the touchdown signal, indicating to Nachlobrocklin that you can't answer gold medals with bronze medals. Mark has worked Nachlobrocklin over well today, preparing him to lose the next race as well.

After the men's mile medley relay is over, the call is made for the women's event, giving the men a rest before the 220-yard dash. Kathy, Paula, Erika, and Barbara, in the first heat, head to the starting line. Also at the starting line is number 1231, who had a shit fit earlier today. Looking over at Paula, number 1231 gives Paula a dirty look. Paula pretends to wipe tears from her eyes, reinforcing that she thinks number 1231 is a baby. Paula then turns away, ignoring any other comeback number 1231 might return.

The Starter announces, "on your marks," followed by, "set." The buzzer sounds, and Paula takes off, again demonstrating to the other runners who's the boss today. Having a great run, Paula hands off to Kathy, who leaves the transition zone letting out a primal scream that echoes through the arena. Kathy takes off, widening the lead that Paula was nice enough to hand her. Kathy, also having a great run, hands off to Erika. In her first big college meet, Erika makes a statement, delivering a 55-second quarter-mile before she hands off to Barbara. Receiving the baton fifteen seconds before the closest competition receives theirs, Barbara knows that she has the race wrapped up.

While Barbara is running her leg, Mark announces, "wow! Will you just look at that?" Eddie asks, "what?" Mark points up into the stands, and asks Eddie, "do you see it?" Eddie asks, "what am I looking for?" Mark reveals, "look at about the tenth row up, near the Section 104 sign. There's the Chuckie, along with that Goldshit guy." Eddie replies, "wow! The Chuckie must be studying Bobby B's shot-put technique! He's going to make a comeback." Mark comments, "we'd better inform Bobby B. He could have some competition on the horizon." Eddie suggests, "we'd better break it to him gently." It's anybody's guess why Chuckie and Goldstein are in the stands today.

On her last lap, Barbara sprints toward the finish line, taking first place in their heat, and likely winning the event. The relay team members exchange hugs, and head to the team bench as the second, and last, heat begins.

After another event, the call for the 220-yard dash is made. Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer head to the starting line. Hoffer was informed earlier by Mrs. Owens that Nachlobrocklin's 220-yard leg in the mile medley relay was right on par with Hoffer's best. If Hoffer is expected to place, he must meet or exceed his best personal time. Hoffer, not a fan of taking fourth place, is up for the challenge.

Appearing again at the starting line is Nachlobrocklin, who suspects he will have another tough race. Mark gives Eddie a fist bump and, reviving an old strategy, asks Eddie quite loudly, "whose turn is it to win this time? Mine or yours?" Eddie replies, "I won the 40, so I guess it's

your turn.” Nachlobrocklin has just put on notice that he is not on the list to win this race. To make matters worse, Eddie tells Mark, “it might be Hoffer’s turn to win, but he’s in the other heat.” Mark replies, “we’ll let him take third then, and apologize later.”

The Starter announces, “on your marks.” Nachlobrocklin looks over at Mark and Eddie, wondering how they could decide the winner in advance. It would take enormous skill, speed, and confidence to make that determination before the race even starts. Catching Nachlobrocklin’s eye, Mark points to his ass, reminding Nachlobrocklin of his view during the race. The Starter announces, “set.” The buzzer sounds, and the runners are out of the blocks.

Up to top speed a few steps out of the blocks, Eddie and Mark are head to head. Either one can win this race. If it is Mark’s turn to win, Eddie is definitely making him earn it. Halfway through the race, Eddie and Mark, still head to head, appear to have the race wrapped up. Nachlobrocklin, several yards behind, is in fourth place. Ahead of him is a guy wearing number 138. As they approach the finish, Eddie and Mark cross the finish line together. The winner will be determined by a photograph. Eddie and Mark head back to the bench, each wondering who won.

The long-awaited call is made for the final event of the day, which is the 4 by 440 relay. With twelve teams, and two heats, the winner will quickly be decided. The first heat brings the undefeated team of Eddie, Mark, Braden, and Johnson. Leggett and McCutchen ran this race last year, and have been replaced. Stone, a distance man, also ran this race last year, and is glad to have been reassigned to the 4 by 880 relay.

The group decides that Eddie will lead off, as Mark insists on taking the third leg. The third leg in this race is formerly McCutchen’s leg, so it’s no secret why Mark wants that position. Behind the blocks with the baton, Eddie recognizes a few people he’s run against in high school. They also recognize Eddie, and the rest of the 4 by 440 relay team that they’ve lost to over the years, not giving them a warm fuzzy feeling about this race. Once the Starter has the runners set, the buzzer sounds, and the runners are out of the blocks.

Eddie takes no time to acquire the lead. Running his 440-yard leg in a time comparable to Braden’s, Eddie seamlessly hands off to Johnson, who widens the lead. Mark gets on the track, glancing over at Paula and the rest of the tribe, who are cheering for them. Johnson delivers the baton to Mark, who wants to show the coaches and McCutchen how this race should be run. After Mark’s first lap, Braden gets on the track, ready to wrap up the day. Mark, far in the lead, hands off to Braden. Out to set a record for the relay team in this event, Braden takes off like a maniac. On

Braden's second lap of his leg, he passes the last place runner, having his sights on passing yet a few more runners. Braden crosses the finish line, passing the three last place teams on the way to victory. With a composite winning time of 3:03.1, and setting a new divisional record, the undefeated 4 by 440 yard relay team has set yet another personal record.

The end of the meet brings the awards ceremony. The twelve divisional teams experience a new level of competition this year, which came as quite the surprise today. The Meet Announcer introduces today's officials, and recognizes the coaches and athletes for their participation today. Moving on to the main event, the presentation of the awards begins.

In the women's events, within the tribe, Kathy is called to the stage to receive the gold medal in the women's 40-yard dash. Next to her is Paula, who takes the silver medal in that event. Paula takes the gold medal in the 220-yard dash, and Kathy takes the silver medal. Erika, who was quite the surprise today, won the gold medal in the 440-yard dash. As expected, Barbara again wins the gold medal in the mile and in the half mile this year. In the women's relay events, Kathy, Paula, Erika, and Barbara are again called to the stage to receive the gold medal in the women's mile medley relay.

In the men's events, Eddie is called to the stage, winning the gold medal in the 40-yard dash. Standing beside him is Mark, winning the silver medal. In the 220-yard dash, Mark beat Eddie by a fraction of a second, taking the gold medal. Eddie takes the silver medal, and Hoffer, in the upset of the day, walks away with the bronze medal. Braden takes the gold medal in the 440-yard dash, setting a divisional record. Johnson claims the gold medal in the half mile, just edging out Mitchell, who ended up with the silver medal. Akinmola, taking the bronze medal in the half mile, is not at all disappointed. Mitchell, running a brilliant race, earned the gold medal in the mile. Akinmola, in another upset, claims the silver medal, with Stone settling for the bronze. In the men's relay events, Eddie, Mark, Braden, and Johnson won the gold medal in both the mile medley relay and the 4 by 440 relay. A few other team members placed in their events, adding to the medal count.

And, while everyone was paying attention to the track events, over in the field area, Bobby B. earned the gold medal in the shot-put. Winning the competition with his first toss, no one remotely came close to the shot doc's performance today. It appears that Bobby B's. only competition is himself.

After the ceremony, the tribe decides to head to the pizzeria for dinner. Although, for many of them, this is their first big college meet, everyone walked away with at least one medal. After this meet, as they



head out of the arena, they are all happy with the results of their first college meet together. Looking forward, they now are confident that they are competitive at the college level.

Monday, at the usual 7:00 a.m. practice, the tribe continues to celebrate. Braden arrives at practice wearing the medals he won over the weekend. In addition, Braden wears his special medal given to him by Mr. Zunde, depicting the high-relief image of a runner's ass, with a leg and foot kicking the ass. What will now be known as Braden's ass kicking gold medal, is shown by Braden to everyone who wants to see it. The inscription on the back, which reads "Axel Braden, Ass Kicker in Chief" gives credence to the validity of Braden's claim.

The coaches walk in, and the athletes take a seat on the bleachers. Dr. Braun energetically addresses the team, announcing, "every single one of you are to be congratulated for your part in the team's victory this weekend. This has been, by far, the best showing this team has ever delivered at any divisional meet. In addition, it is clear that, over the last semester, most of you have seen your individual performance improve. So, we will continue with the same workouts we've been doing as a team over the last few months." Dr. Braun announces again to the team who the medalists are, and what event they won. Once he is finished, the team begins today's workout.

Even though the weather is cold outside, Dr. Braun and Coach Herndon take the sprinting team members out to the sand track to use the training sleds. This leaves the indoor track open for the distance team to get in a good interval training workout. Tomorrow, the plan is the distance team will be outside using the training sled, and the sprinters will be inside running the interval training drill.

As the sprinters walk out to the track, Braden is still wearing his special medal given to him by his high school coaches. Braden, proud of his medal, tells Coach Herndon, "let me show you what my high school coaches gave me!" Braden hands Coach Herndon the medal, who takes a close look at it. Coach Herndon laughs hysterically, as she sees the high relief image of a foot kicking an ass. Coach Herndon exclaims, "this is great! And, they gave this to you?" Braden replies, "yeah," and tells her, "look at the back, too." Coach Herndon looks at the back, and sees the inscription, "Axel Braden, Ass Kicker in Chief". The coach tells Braden, "get out there and kick some ass!"

Outside, at the sand track, the drill moves along well. Almost everyone sees the value in the new training protocols. Two clear exceptions are McCutchen and Leggett. A few other athletes are not too crazy about the training sled, but that would be their problem. McCutchen, still deathly afraid of tearing his tendons because of the

Prickly Sea Spider bite he incurred some time ago, avoids using the training sled. Leggett, who seems to demonstrate some signs of having a screw loose, also avoids using the sled, but takes a few runs. It would seem that McCutchen and Leggett attend practice only to get credit for attendance, which counts for nothing.

Coach Herndon, becoming aware of McCutchen's laziness, makes the runners form a line, ensuring everyone takes part in the training. When McCutchen's turn comes around, Mark points to McCutchen's legs, reminding McCutchen that his tendons are at risk. McCutchen takes a lazy stroll down the sand track, being passed by Hoffer, who is using another sled. When McCutchen returns, Coach Herndon tells him, "McCutchen, take another run! And, this time, put some energy behind it!" McCutchen's deficiencies are not only becoming clear to the coaches, but to everyone.

At the end of the workout, as they are walking back to the arena, Kathy asks Eddie, "so, what are you doing for the rest of the day?" Eddie explains, "after work, I might see if Mark can go down to Kurt's so I can pick up the Dune Buggy frames. Kurt has three more finished for me, and I'll need Mark's trailer to get them back. If I have time, I'll stop by Vinnie's to see if that wrecked 911 he told me about is available." Kathy tells Eddie, "wow! It sounds like you'll be busy today." Overhearing Eddie and Kathy's conversation is McCutchen, who is again wondering when Eddie and Mark have the time to go to class.

The University track team has finally broken through a barrier. In the past few years, the team was mediocre, at best. Formerly a team with marginal athletes with erratic performances, this year, a few powerhouses have made a big difference in the team's overall performance. Bringing home more than 30 total medals in the divisional meet, and placing in nearly half the events, it is safe to say the University team not only had a record number of individual victories, but is also the undisputed winner of the meet. Now, with something to look forward to all year, the team is more fired up than ever.

The next few meets go well for the University track team. After the great victory at the divisional meet, the University team has made a name for itself. The team, as a whole, improves tremendously as the season progresses. In a few meets outside of their division, the team does equally as well. The word has gotten around that the University's team is no easy pushover. In fact, for the entire indoor season, the team is undefeated.

Over the semester break, the antiquated outdoor gravel track at the University will be replaced with an all-weather track. The track is being converted to the international metric standard. The new track will also

have an electronic scoreboard, reporting the runner's times immediately upon crossing the finish line.

The new track brings good news, bad news, and interesting news. Runners will no longer be allowed to run with spikes. Instead, they will have to find suitable lightweight running shoes. Times delivered on the new track will be more consistent within a meet, and over time. Anticipating the gun will be a thing of the past, as electronic sensors in the starting blocks will detect any false start.

Other interesting news is that there will no longer be any gravel on the track that can be loosened up before a race. Eddie, Mark, and Johnson have done that in the past to several competitors, most notably John Brady of Riverdale during Eddie's freshman year in high school. By loosening the gravel in Brady's lane before the 100-yard dash, Brady could not gain any traction. Coming in fourth place in that race, Brady, the alleged fastest guy in the State, was beaten by Eddie, Mark, and Johnson.

The bad news is that Eddie's training sled designed for the gravel track is now obsolete. But, the University still has the sand track, prompting Eddie to modify the units he designed for the gravel track for use on the sand track. Eddie is also modifying one unit for use on grass. The unit for the grass will have a smoother bottom as not to destroy the grass, and the capacity for a larger weight stack.