

15. Battered

In this chapter titled "Battered," the Cubs football team has reached the championship game of the California Interscholastic Federation, Southern Section—the first deaf football team to do so in California's history. Following a physically demanding game in Avalon, Trevin Adams feels the effects of his injuries as he boards the ferry to Long Beach with his family. Though filled with adrenaline from their victory, he struggles with pain and fatigue, evidenced by his difficulty walking down the gangplank.

The match in Avalon was notably rough, resulting in turf burns for many players. Trevin is among the most severely affected, shuffling through his home for three days, gingerly placing one foot in front of the other. Felix further complicates matters with an aggravated hip injury, while teammate Jory is still battling a stomach illness. With the championship game only a week away and Thanksgiving break approaching, the team disperses, focusing on recovery and family discussions instead of football.

Coaches Keith Adams and Kaveh Angoorani decide against on-field practices during the week leading up to the game. They learn that their championship opponent, Faith Baptist, is a dominant force in eight-man football, having participated in the title match nineteen times and claiming nine victories. As Keith and Kaveh prepare a strategy by reviewing film and formulating a game plan, they acknowledge the unprecedented challenge ahead.

The coaching duo comes from diverse backgrounds—Keith being of Scotch-Irish heritage from Oklahoma and Kaveh an immigrant from Iran, who attended the oldest deaf school in Hartford. Their mutual connection lies in deafness and football, creating a strong bond. Keith had earnestly recruited Kaveh to return as defensive coordinator, but Kaveh has indicated that this will be his last season, ready to retire after a fulfilling career in deaf education. The chapter sets the stage for the culmination of their efforts, as the Cubs prepare for a historic championship game.