

4. A Taste of Victory

In Chapter 4 of "The Boys of Riverside," titled "A Taste of Victory," the intense preparation leading up to the Cubs' first game of the season is vividly depicted. Following a grueling Hell Week, the team finds itself ready to face off against Noli Indian, a small but formidable opponent from the Soboba Indian reservation. Dressed in scarlet uniforms, the Cubs enter the game under the guidance of senior players who have eagerly chosen their jersey numbers—Felix Gonzales in No. 1, Enos Zornoza in No. 2, Jory Valencia in No. 3, and quarterback Trevin Adams in No. 4.

Noli Indian's team, coached by Jesse Aguilar, consists mainly of inexperienced freshmen and sophomores, making expectations low as they face the Cubs. Historically, their last encounter saw Noli triumph, but this time, the game quickly turns into a showcase for the Cubs. They dominate from the outset, with Zornoza returning the opening kickoff for a touchdown, quickly followed by a fumble recovery leading to another touchdown from Trevin Adams to Enos Zornoza.

The game continues with the Cubs scoring on every possession and executing a pick-six, leading to a final score of 68–0. The sheer magnitude of this victory surprises everyone, raising questions among the players about their capability. Key players, especially Trevin and Enos, shine throughout the game, but new player Phillip Castaneda steals the spotlight when he scores a touchdown on a notable play despite some initial confusion.

Following the game, Coach Aguilar praises the discipline of the Cubs, emphasizing the importance of their teamwork to his young players. The narrative underscores the excitement and unpredictability of eight-man football, a fast-paced and dynamic style that has captivated fans since its inception in California's small schools. The chapter wraps up with reflections on the nature of the game and the dedication required to succeed in such a high-energy environment.

This thrilling chapter effectively illustrates the exhilarating beginning of the season for the Cubs, as well as the challenges and growth opportunities for the Noli Indian team against their more experienced rivals.