

## 22. “Be Hungry for It! Be Angry!”

In the preseason leading up to the new football season, it was evident that the team had transformed from the previous year's performance. Notably, under the guidance of strength coach Galvin Drake, the players had collectively increased their strength by forty pounds. This newfound seriousness followed their loss in the championship, leading them to approach their training with greater maturity and focus.

California law dictated the structure of their practice, especially with strict regulations regarding full-contact sessions due to increasing concussion concerns. Limited to two full-contact practices per week, the rules specified that only appropriate equipment could be used during the conditioning period. The intention behind these laws was clear: to ensure player safety while promoting the sport's integrity.

As the team prepared for their first session wearing full pads, they elected their captains: Trevin, Jory, Felix, and Kaden. The players participated in energetic drills led by Michael Mabashov, who instilled a hungry and aggressive spirit, urging them to "be hungry for it! Be angry!" Felix Gonzales stood out during a two-on-two drill for his impressive leap to evade a tackle, inspiring excitement from his teammates who celebrated his athleticism.

Alongside this competitive atmosphere, senior player Andrei Voinea put in efforts to refine his skills as the backup center. Despite not being a starter, his physical presence at six feet, four inches made him a key asset. Voinea's background included transitioning from a hearing school with no sports teams, which fueled his determination to excel with the Cubs. Not only was he a dedicated football player, but he also excelled as a video game programmer and aspired to work for Disney.

Navigating his life as a deaf individual, Voinea faced challenges in communication, especially in school settings where interactions were often filtered through interpreters. At the California School for the Deaf, Riverside (CSDR), he found camaraderie and deeper friendships, fueling his passion for football. Despite his talent, coaches encouraged him to embrace a more aggressive disposition on the field.

As preseason wrapped up, Coach Keith Adams prepared his team for a challenging opener against Chadwick School. He emphasized the importance of studying game film and maintaining physical aggression. Strength coach Galvin Drake challenged the players to improve their eating habits, while Mabashov praised their dedication during the rigorous drills. With the preseason concluded, the team looked ahead, eager for another shot at the championship.