

25. Playing a Deaf Legend

In the chapter "Playing a Deaf Legend," the narrative revolves around an upcoming game between the Cubs and the Indiana School for the Deaf, led by Coach Michael Paulone. At sixty-five years old, Paulone is a veteran coach respected within the deaf community, guiding his team to a 4-0 record despite only having fifty boys in the high school. The challenge lies in the transition from eleven-man football to the faster-paced eight-man game played by Riverside.

Paulone's journey is inspirational; he was deaf from birth yet excelled as a quarterback in his youth in Philadelphia. His experience culminated in the Philadelphia City All-Star Football Game, where he faced skepticism about his abilities due to his deafness. Paulone worked around this by employing his coach from the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf to relay plays through sign language. This ingenious solution propelled him from the fourth string to becoming the starting quarterback. Notably, during the game, his team rallied thanks to his leadership, tying the score 8-8 with Paulone earning the title of MVP, subsequently leading to a memorable encounter with NFL legend Joe Namath.

As the Cubs prepared for their encounter with Indiana, Paulone discussed his strategy, likening his team to dolphins against the perceived "shark" strength of Riverside, emphasizing physicality. Unfortunately for Paulone, the game turned out to be a blowout, with the Cubs dominating 62-18. The Cubs' impressive performance was underlined by their physical gameplay, highlighted by a memorable touchdown play.

In subsequent reflections, Paulone acknowledged the Cubs' prowess, conceding they were superior across the board. The chapter progresses to the Cubs' forthcoming match against the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind, where expectations were set for another significant victory. Florida's coach expressed hope merely to score, resulting in an overwhelming 84-8 defeat for his team. The aftermath prompted criticism regarding sportsmanship due to the sheer scoreline, with similar historical precedents highlighting such ethical dilemmas in sports.

Ultimately, Coach Adams of the Cubs maintained that winning decisively was essential despite the backlash. The team's dominating record placed them second in California's ranking for varsity teams, affirming their relentless pursuit of victory .