

# QUEST FOR GREATNESS

A Continuing Story by Greg Shepard

## QUICK REVIEW

Chapters 1-14

Quest For Greatness is based on true stories. Coach Travis Drake is the new football coach at Hamilton High School.

The other major character is Rick Steadman, who is a Junior at Hamilton. A lot of negative things are happening in Rick's life. He comes from a one-parent family with a dad who also has problems. Rick is faltering in school and is beginning to submit to peer pressure with drinking problems. He lacks direction and is beginning to not care anymore.

However, Rick now has had two good things appear in his life. First is his girlfriend, Becky, and second is Coach Drake.

At an exciting and motivational first meeting with the players, Coach Drake has established the dream of winning a state championship. Now, at a school assembly, he is trying to psyche up everybody.

## Chapter 15 The Assembly

"In addition to players and lifters, we also need help in other areas—like managers, statisticians, record keepers, photographers, and student trainers. If you want to be involved, I'll find a place for you," Coach Drake said.

Travis smiled and drew a deep breath as he looked to his left. "You may be wondering what all this weight equipment is doing on stage. Well, it represents an obstacle. Everyone here is going to help us overcome this obstacle. People say that Hamilton High is no good, that we can't win, and that we don't have what it takes. Well, I've got news for those people. They are in for a big, big surprise. We have pride! We've got Red Lion Pride!"

Again, the band played the fight song, and the cheerleaders evoked a charged response.

Travis looked at the team below. "I'd like Rick, Buddy, Kirby, Brad, Emile, and Tim to come on stage."

Rick looked at Buddy, Buddy looked at Rick as they both wondered what Coach Drake was up to now. Slowly, the six boys made their way to the stage amidst the cheering encouragement of the crowd.

"These guys are going to lift this weight, which happens to be 505 pounds!" Coach Drake said.

Many students laughed in disbelief. Rick and his friends stood with their mouths open and looked at one

another.

Travis quickly outlined, "We need three things to accomplish this task—to overcome this obstacle. First, we need great technique. I'll teach them how to Dead Lift in just a minute. Second, we need to start a little lower in weight to build our confidence. Men, take three forty-five pound plates off each side. And third, we need everyone in this place to go absolutely crazy with encouragement. If all six of them can do it, I feel that we've got a great shot at the State Championship."

Mr. Curtis dropped his baton. Dr. Donaldson squirmed in his seat. "After all," he thought, "that's a lot of pressure to put on kids; and what if they don't win any games next year. We'd have more discipline problems than ever."

After the plates had been taken off the bar, 235 pounds remained.

"Tim," ordered Coach Drake, "use this belt and approach the bar," Timidly, Tim Adams came to the bar.

Coach Drake further directed, "Touch the bar with your shins as you stand in front. The middle of your shins should touch just where the knurling begins. Now, Tim, bend down and grab the bar just outside your shins with an alternate grip."

Coach Drake showed him an alternate grip with his hands and nodded to give Tim assurance.

"Now we need to get the back in better position. Get your butt down, look straight ahead, and spread or widen your chest. This will help you lock in your lower back and keep it in a concave position. There, that's it!

"I'll spot you to keep you in good position. I'll place one hand on your lower back and one arm in front so that the crook of my elbow is on the inside of your shoulder and my fist is in the middle of your chest. When I count to three, you lift it; and I'll pull your back so that the weight is over your heels. When the weight's on your heels, you can't get hurt. Are you ready?"

Tim nodded.

"One-Two-Up!"

The weight flew off the platform and Tim made the lift easily.

Mr. Curtis found his baton, and the cheerleaders led a cheer for Tim.

"Let's hold the applause until the rest of these guys do it. After all, this is just a warm-up!" declared a confident Coach Drake.

Rick, Buddy, Kirby, and Emile each took his turn. Each was surprised at how easily his first attempt had gone.

Travis had carefully selected these six athletes. He felt that these six had the best chance to lift 505 pounds. "Okay, everyone's looking good. Let's put on one more forty-five on each side for our last warm up." The boys did as they

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were told, and the students in the auditorium were buzzing with excitement.

Again, all six did the 325 pounds with power to spare. The noise level was increasing. The adrenalin was starting to flow.

Coach Drake asked for an additional ninety pounds. He turned to the audience. "We now have 415 pounds on the bar. At this weight, they have to use some lifting chalk. Men, the chalk is in a box on the table. I want you to put massive amounts of chalk on your hands, especially in the thumb-joint area. I don't want your hands to slip.

"Now, students and faculty, here's where they need your help. We've got to have everyone clap in unison—like this."

Then, Coach Drake looked at each athlete on stage with a challenging eye. "Men, tighten your belt and charge the bar when it's your turn. I want one man right after another. I'll count one-two-three, then we'll get it."

Coach Drake looked at the audience and began clapping in a slow, rhythmic pulse. The audience responded. Coach Drake looked at the bass drummer in the band and motioned for him to join in. "Men, let's do it!" Coach Drake suddenly barked.

"Rick! One-two-up!"

"Buddy! One-two-up!"

Kirby, Brad, Emile, and Tim all followed the same charge, and were successful.

Now, all anyone could hear was the clang of steel as another 45-pound plate was eased onto each side to reach the predicted level of 505 pounds. Everyone was nearly crazy. Buddy was pounding the other five on the back.

Buddy asked, "Can you get it, Kirby?"

Kirby shouted, "I can do it; I can do it!"

Everyone was willing to give it a shot.

Coach Drake pleaded, "Now, all of you, and I mean everyone, has to give all the encouragement you can muster. Let's go for it!"

The clapping sequence began again.

Rick was going first. He thought: "Is Coach Drake crazy? Buddy and I may have a shot at this, but the others? How can a group of guys who have never really lifted before do this?"

As he looked around, everyone seemed ready. No one was going to back down.

Rick tightened his belt and began to chalk up with nervous anticipation. The adrenalin rush was amazing. Rick was scared and yet confident at the same time.

As Coach Drake roared out "One," Rick Steadman charged the bar. The bar passed above his knees with surprising ease and, with a loud groan, he completed the lift.

The audience was going wild and made even more noise as Buddy now charged the bar. Rick's example must have helped because Buddy completed the lift even more easily.

Kirby and Brad just barely made it, but Emile had

power to spare. Tim was the last one. The crowd was going absolutely berserk.

Travis wasn't sure about Tim. He didn't have an easy time with 415 pounds.

"One-two-up!"

Tim strained while the bar stalled two inches above his knees. Coach Drake yelled, "Put it down!" The bar crashed with a thunder to the platform. The auditorium was silent—dead silent. Some of the cheerleaders were actually wiping away tears. They felt really bad for Tim. He was the last man.

Coach Drake shouted to the crowd, "How many want to see Tim make this weight?"

Everyone seemed to vote in the affirmative.

"Well," proclaimed Coach Drake, "We just have to go even more berserk. Tim's going to try it again. This time we're going to chant his name as we all clap in unison."

"TIM! TIM! TIM!"

Everyone began yelling Tim's name until it sounded like the roof would fly off. Tim's eyes were glazed. Coach Drake had picked Tim because he perceived that Tim had the unique ability to excel, even though he wasn't very big.

Tim furiously began chalking up. Buddy and Emile were shaking Tim into a frenzy.

"TIM! TIM! TIM! TIM!"

The kid on the bass drum was about to destroy it. Dr. Donaldson was on the edge of his seat. Superintendent Kowalski was grinning from ear to ear as he, too, chanted Tim's name. Mrs. Stockman was in the teacher's lounge. The football team members stood, and then everyone else followed their example.

"One-two-up!"

Every fiber of Tim's being was being tested to the utmost limit. The bar inched slowly upward. Every muscle was straining beyond its accepted capacity. The bar was three inches above his knees.

The crowd was screaming in a tumultuous, united roar: "TIM! TIM! TIM!"

Coach Drake and the other five were screaming encouragement.

The lift seemed to take an eternity. Tim roared as he neared the point of absolute exhaustion. Then he gave one last heave.

He did it! He did it! It was bedlam. Tim's teammates rushed the stage. They threw Tim into the air.

The band members scrambled for their instruments. The audience roared. The band began the fight song in an anti-climactic response. The cheerleaders led everyone in a continuous, wild approval.

When Coach Drake felt the time was appropriate, he held up his hand for quiet and began an emotional address to a totally attentive audience.

"My original instincts were right. This is a special school, and you are special people. Tim Adams, your effort was as courageous as any effort I've ever seen. You gave us everything, absolutely everything; and we are proud of



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you. Hamilton High School students and faculty, you gave Tim all the encouragement and enthusiasm you had to give. I think that's what life is all about. I encourage you to be the best you can be. Do your best in the classroom, in your activities, for your families, and for yourself. I pledge my support to this school and to each of you. If any one of you ever need someone to talk to, or some help, I'll be around. Thank you for making this such a special day for me. God bless each of you."

The football team, led by Buddy and Rick, stood up to applaud their new coach. The rest of the student body quickly did the same. Everyone felt good inside. The assembly was over and school was out five minutes early.

Some of the players, including Rick, remained behind to help carry equipment back to the weight room. Travis received compliments from everyone, including Superintendent Kowalski and Mr. Donaldson. Travis met briefly with his staff, and they headed down to the weight room. The weights were stacked as neat as a pin. Travis thanked all the players that had helped.

"Hey Rick, that was a great lift today. I think you might have had a shot at 600 pounds had we gone on," stated Coach Drake.

An embarrassed Rick replied, "Thanks, Coach. I think maybe I could have lifted a little more, but 600 pounds? You think so?"

Well, look what Tim did. I'm locking up now. If you need a lift, I'll be glad to drop you off."

"Thanks, Coach, but I'm used to walkin'."

"Nonsense. It'll be no trouble. Let's go."

Rick nodded. He and Travis made their way toward the car. Travis spoke first.

"What do your parents do, Rick?"

"My mother died several years ago, and my dad works at the mill."

"Rick, I'm sorry about your mother. How about the rest of your family?"

Rick replied, "I've got two younger brothers, Billy and Bobby, and a little sister, Sharon."

"That's fine, Rick, real fine."

"Turn left at the next intersection, Coach."

"How's school going, Rick?"

"It's going a lot better, Coach. I'm studying with Becky."

"Rick, I want you to do real well in school. A great goal to shoot for is a 3.0 or higher. Go after the grades just like you go after sports or weights."

"Yes sir, I will."

Rick looked straight ahead. "Rick Steadman on the honor roll with a B average," he thought, almost laughing. "Heck, why not?"

"Left or right, Rick?"

"Uh, sorry, Coach. Turn right."

"Rick, what's the best thing you can tell me about your dad?"

Coach Drake's question really caught Rick by surprise.

He didn't know quite what to say. Finally, Rick answered, "Well, Coach, Dad is a hard worker. He's really been down since Mom died. He wants me to do well and to have a better life than his. He told me the other day that he might be made foreman soon and get a raise."

"That's great, Rick. I hope he gets it."

"Slow down, Coach. It's the next place on the left. Thanks for the ride."

"Anytime, Rick. Congratulations on the 505 Dead Lift. That was a very studly effort. Take care. We'll see you tomorrow."

As Rick approached the front door of the mobile home, he marvelled about how rapidly his life was changing for the better. He hoped this new success would continue.

### Chapter 16 The Response

As Travis walked toward Hamilton High the following morning, he wondered what effect the assembly had had on the students and faculty members. Travis headed straight for the counselor's office. It was thirty minutes before first period.

"Good morning, Coach!" came a greeting from several of the students standing by Fred Maddox's door.

"Hi, men!"

Chuck was the first to speak. "Uh, Coach Drake, what would be the best hour for weight training? I want to try out for football again."

Smiling, Travis shook the boy's hand. "Hey, that's great. What's your name?"

"Chuck Willis."

"Well, Chuck, any period would be fine; but if you can, sign up for first or second period. Make sure with Mr. Maddox that you meet graduation requirements. What's your weight now?"

"About 160 pounds," replied Chuck.

"What position do you play?"

"Well, Coach, I like to catch the ball."

"That's great, Chuck! We're going to make a stallion out of you, that's for sure," winked Coach Drake assuringly.

Six other young men were waiting to sign up, and Travis took time to talk to each one.

Just then, Fred Maddox poked his head through the doorway, the door being slightly ajar.

"Coach, is that you? Glory be, I'm having a heckuva time here. I'll tell you one thing, boy, you'd better win with all this changin' I'm a doin'."

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