

# QUEST FOR GREATNESS

by Greg Shepard

## QUICK REVIEW

Chapters 1-10

Quest for Greatness is based on true stories. Coach Travis Drake is in his first day as the new head football coach at Halmilton High School. He is meeting with the principal, Mr. Donaldson.

He has established the dream of winning a state championship at an exciting motivational first meeting.

The other major character is Rick Steadman who is a junior at Hamilton. It is November and he wishes he had gone out for football. 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 pressures 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. In the first meeting, Rick did way more than he thought he could do and help establish the dream by doing 395 pounds on the box squat for 14 reps!

## Chapter 11 That Night

"How 'bout this guy with the long hair?"

TJ answered, "Coach, he's a loner. Bart gets into fights and is in trouble all the time. Nobody wants to mess with him."

"Tell you what. Let me take him," offered Travis.

An hour later, twenty-two prospects had been identified as potential players. Coach Drake was very, very pleased. However, the direction of the conversation changed abruptly when Coach Drake asked, "What's the drinking and drugs like at Hamilton? Is it a big problem?"

Buddy had always had a hard time hiding things. He blushed slightly. All four boys dropped their eyes. Their uneasiness was obvious. One of Coach Drake's abilities was to help people through uneasy moments. He looked directly at them as he said in a non-threatening tone, "Men, this is your special year. Your leadership is vitally important in making our dream a reality. Why work your butts off by running, stretching, lifting, and eating properly to reach your physical potential if you turn around and tear your body down by getting drunk or stoned all the time. It just doesn't make sense. If you work together and stick together, you can be a great influence for good among your friends. You know what's right, so I'm not going to lay out a bunch of rules. Just remember that your success rests a lot more on your shoulders than on mine."

"Yes sir," everyone echoed in unison.

"What a great day this has been. We got off to a great start. Thanks men," said Travis, getting up and walking toward the door.

"Hey TJ, who's your barber anyway? He missed a spot in the back," chuckled Travis, knowing full well about this teenage hairstyle. Everybody laughed, even TJ.

"Now drive safely. See you tomorrow."

Travis shook each hand as he walked the four of them out to their car. Travis stretched his big arms, arched his back and yawned in the brisk night air as he watched Buddy's old car head down the street.

Travis glanced down at his watch. "Oops, hope it's not too late. I got to call Diana and the kids," thought Travis out loud as he ran back into the house and quickly dialed his number. He was hoping Diana would answer the phone.

"Hi honey. I miss you. How are things?" They talked for a few minutes and then Travis said, "Let me speak to the kids." Travis spoke to his children: first Andrea, then Matt, and finally Shauna. Travis felt it was important to tell his children that he loved them every night.

"Diana honey, I can't wait until you get here. I've got an agent looking for a house. I sure hope we can get settled in soon."

"So do I, Travis," Diana answered. "How'd it go today?"

"Wonderful, just wonderful. These kids are just great," related Travis. They talked for nearly 30 minutes as Travis recounted the excitement of the team meeting and was brought up-to-date on Diana's day, and then they exchanged, "I love you's" and said good night.

Coach Drake turned on the late evening news as he prepared his "Do It" list. He fell exhausted in the E-Z chair and was soon asleep. The television stayed on all night.

"Multiplying fractions is easy Billy," instructed Rick to his younger brother. "All you gotta do is multiply the top numbers and then multiply the bottom numbers. So, two-thirds times three-fourths is six-twelfths." Rick demonstrated the procedure on paper and then asked Billy, "Can six-twelfths be reduced?"

Billy looked up at his big brother, and in a not-too-sure voice stammered, "Is it one-half?"

"Right on, Billy. Hey, you know someday you're going to be a genius."

Billy just glowed. He had always idolized Rick. He sensed that Rick was somehow different tonight – more at ease with himself.

"Hey Bobby and Sharon, it's bedtime for you two. Hurry up and brush your teeth," called Rick to them as they watched television.

"Ricky," Sharon said with a pleading voice, "Can you read us a story?"

"We'll see kids, how fast can you get ready for bed?"

## QUEST FOR GREATNESS

Continued from page 26

challenged Rick.

Mr. Steadman was watching television with Bobby and Sharon. He gave them a hug as they left to put on their pajamas.

"Rick, can you come in here for a minute?" Mr. Steadman said. Rick came in and sat down in a chair by the sofa where Mr. Steadman was lying. Rick was relieved that his father hadn't had anything to drink yet. He was a completely different person when he wasn't drinking.

"Rick, thanks for looking after the kids," said Mr. Steadman. "I've been thinking about the other night. I said some things I shouldn't have said."

"Dad, it was partly my fault. I acted like a real jerk. Everything was sort of, like, well, all coming down on me at once," apologized Rick.

"I know the feeling. Are things getting any better?" Mr. Steadman questioned.

"They sure are, Dad. I even signed up for football, and I think we're going to win next season. Becky and I are back together. She's helping me with my school work. Hey, how's this. All my assignments are done!" exclaimed Rick excitedly.

Mr. Steadman's eyes flickered as he smiled slightly and whispered, "That's great Rick," and as he thought about how much better he felt about himself and about Rick, he slowly fell asleep.

"... And the Papa Bear said, 'Who's been sleeping in my bed?' Rick closed the book as both Sharon and Bobby were fast asleep. Rick gazed out his window; and as he looked up at the wintry stars, he quietly smiled.

## Chapter 12 The Assistants

"Glory be," shouted Mr. Maddox as he fumbled for his keys. At least twenty guys were already waiting for Mr. Maddox – twenty minutes before first period.

"What brings you here so early in the morning?"

Brent, who was first in line, quickly answered, "Coach Drake told us to come down here to sign up for weight training."

Maddox crossed his arms and looked at everyone standing in line.

"Does that go for everyone?"

Everyone nodded affirmatively.

"Well glory be," Mr. Maddox snarled, yet still managing to be inoffensive. "Well, all right, don't just stand there boy, come on in' let's get you signed up."

The copy machine was first on Coach Drake's "Do It" list. He ran several hundred copies of the Lift-A-Thon information. He checked off "Lift-A-Thon Info" on his "Do It" list. Still on his "Do It" list were the following items:

- (1) Talk to all possible assistant coaches.
- (2) Distribute Lift-A-Thon information.
- (3) Order the weight room equipment.
- (4) Continue recruiting players.

- (5) Fix-up the new weight room.

Coach Drake knew he had a lot to do; but he was confident that if he stuck to his "Do It" list, he'd get it done in time.

Coach Drake left notes in the teachers' mail boxes for Coaches Tanselli, McMasters, Littlewood, and Myers. He would see Tim Miller in the gym. Travis had only ten minutes before 1st period as he made his way to the attendance office.

"Could you tell me what period the student body officers and cheerleaders meet?" asked Coach Drake.

"They meet first period in room 32."

Coach Drake said thank you and walked briskly down the hall hoping to find Becky.

"Hi men!" Travis greeted a group of players standing in the hall. "You too Brad." Travis looked right at Brad and grinned as he passed out the fundraising info. Everyone laughed. It was Travis' little joke. From past experience, he knew that it would always bring a laugh and that the players would take it the right way. Each time he'd pick out a different player because he knew they liked to be singled out.

"Hello, Miss Johnson, I'm Travis Drake the new football coach. How goes the battle?"

"Well just fine. I'm glad to meet you coach. How can I help you?"

"I understand you're in charge of the Student Body Officers and the Cheerleaders."

"Yes I am," responded Miss Johnson.

"Do you have Becky this period?"

"Sure do! You mean Becky Wilson I assume. She should be here any minute."

Travis smiled politely. "Thanks, I wanted to talk to Becky, the Cheerleaders, and the other student body officers about being in our Lift-A-Thon."

"Your Lift-A-What?" asked Miss Johnson.

"A Lift-A-Thon," laughed Coach Drake, "It's a great way to make money, and it can be a lot of fun for the students. Here's how it works." Students were filing into the classroom by now, including Becky Wilson. Travis sort of spoke to Miss Johnson and to the class at the same time.

"You see we have a noble cause. We want to have a larger weight room so that all our students have the opportunity to reach their potential. The superintendent has given us ten thousand dollars, but we need to raise another ten. And guess what? We've got an unbelievable weight room already down at the lower level. We've already started working on it.

"Now, all we do in a Lift-A-Thon is bench press. Varsity football players can show you the proper way to bench press. When you cheerleaders go to people's doors to get pledges for the number of pounds you lift, you'll blow their minds. First of all, most people don't think girls can lift weights, which is ridiculous. Therefore, most people will give you more money per pound than they will give our football players. If someone gives you fifty cents a pound and you bench press only 50 pounds you earned twenty five dollars for Hamilton High's new weight room.

"If you get a hold of your aunts, uncles, grandparents and other relatives, we can really raise a lot of money. The

## QUEST FOR GREATNESS

Continued from Page 41

Lift-A-Thon is in two weeks in the gym. You can plan on it being fun with lots of food and a dance afterwards. What do you say? I've got your pledge forms right here. Raise your hand if you can help us out and have a little fun to boot."

Nearly every hand went up. Even Miss Johnson said she'd do it.

Travis thanked everyone and then dashed off to the lower level. He was hoping two or three kids might be waiting for him.

Travis was surprised. Nine kids were already waiting for him by the new weight room. He was starting to put the names to faces as he recognized Chad, Wes, and Dave.

"Would you three go to the janitor and get some mops, Pine Sol, and pails of hot water. We've got to clean this place," directed Coach Drake. He turned to the other boys. "Would you three take my keys and bring down our one bench, the squat rack, and all the weights you can find. Would you other three get some dust pans and brooms."

And so they worked throughout the day. The new weight room was cleaned, cleared, and organized. The existing equipment was in place for the Lift-A-Thon. During the day, the fundraising program had been explained to forty-three players. One of the boys said his father might donate some paint. Travis made a note to check that out ASAP.

Coach Drake crossed his feet on his new desk and tilted his chair back slightly. He reflected on the day's events as he went over his "Do It" list. He was quite pleased as he thought about #3 – order weight equipment. He had called several companies, and Travis felt he had negotiated a good deal on the new weight equipment. He had ordered four new squat racks, four olympic benches, two leg curl and extension machines, one hip-sled, eight plate holders, twelve 310-pound Olympic sets with collars, two dumbbell racks, dumbbells from ten to one hundred pounds in five pound increments, two two-man dip stations, a plate-loaded lat press, a dozen weight belts, three dip belts, four neck harnesses, two chalk bins, a case of chalk, and heavy rubber, weight-room flooring to cover 3200 square feet.

He chuckled to himself as he thought about how he talked the equipment company into shipping everything freight-free. Travis was very pleased. The bill came to just under twenty thousand dollars, and they promised delivery before Christmas. "Now all I have to do," mused Travis, "is raise enough money to pay for it."

As Coach Drake looked at #1 on his "Do It" list, he doodled on his note pad. He pondered his conversations with each assistant coach. He felt good that everyone but Jerry Littlewood had come to the weight room to talk. Now the problem was to find a niche for everyone. A niche each would enjoy and where each could contribute to the total program in the best possible way.

Lou Tanselli had been very supportive and cooperative. Coach Tanselli had a fairly competitive track program, and Travis pledged his support to the track program. Travis had always wanted his football players to go out for either baseball or track. He felt that they helped develop his athletes in a variety of ways. Coach Tanselli did not have a

great desire to be a varsity assistant but wanted to remain the head sophomore football coach. Travis tentatively agreed.

Coach Drake stressed to Lou that being positive was imperative and that making football fun was critical in keeping the players in the program. In the past, too many players had dropped out. He did not want to point fingers or place blame. He just wanted to avoid future dropouts from the program. They both agreed that a coach could be tough and strict, yet still be positive and have fun. There was a fine line to be sure, but it was critical to maintain it nonetheless. Overall, Travis felt very fortunate to have Lou Tanselli as an assistant.

Travis got out of his chair still thinking about the day's events. He was ready for a little break as he made his way down the hall to get a Diet-Pepsi. He made a mental note to talk to the administration about installing a fruit-juice machine. He smiled as he thought about how well Tom Miller was going to fit in. He was young and inexperienced, but he was positive and enthusiastic. Right now those traits were important. The position that Tom was best suited for was obvious to Travis. It was the offensive line. If everything worked out, he would have a great staff. However, that would depend a lot on John Myers. Travis had felt that talking over dinner about this matter with John would be more productive. They were going to a local restaurant at 6:30 p.m. So John's role as an assistant was still uncertain. Brian McMasters was a different story.

Brian McMasters was a feisty little guy. He stood only five feet five. Brian had played some small-college ball and had been coaching at Hamilton for the past five years. Travis hoped he could channel him in the right direction. Brian was a fierce competitor and hated in the worst way to lose. Travis had told Brian that that trait was very good. However, as the conversation progressed, Travis perceived five years of losing had taken its toll. Brian had felt frustrated. And being an assistant coach, he had felt limited as to what he could do to help Hamilton win. Brian admitted that he probable took out his frustrations on the players. But, Brian also said that he felt a new surge of life after the football meeting and that he really wanted to be part of the new program – a winning program.

Travis carried a white, round pin with the word "PRIDE" printed in red in the middle. He had given it to Brian and instructed him to wear it every day. The pin was to symbolize a new way of thinking, of being positive, and of looking at each prospective player. Travis had been very pleased as Brian put the pin on his shirt immediately. Travis didn't mind Brian being short; in fact, he thought his size was an asset. Brian must have had great skills and must have overcome a lot of obstacles to play even small-college ball. Hopefully, he could instruct the defensive backs in the same way. Brian had seemed all fired up at working with the defense.

As Travis came back into the new weight room, he was quite surprised. Jerry Littlewood was waiting for him.

"Coach Drake," said Jerry in a soft voice, "I'm Jerry Littlewood."

"Hello Jerry. How are you doing?"

"OK."

**More Next Issue!**