

QUEST FOR GREATNESS

A Continuing Story by Greg Shepard

QUICK REVIEW

Chapters 1-18

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

The 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 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.

They have established a dream of winning a state championship. Coach Drake has psyched the whole school up and the kids are signing up. They have just raised \$15,000.00 for a new weight room with a Lift-A-Thon.

Chapter 19

The Program Begins

Travis Drake was excited. The weights and equipment had arrived! Coach Drake needed some help to get everything set up so he called about 15 of his players, including Buddy, Rick, TJ, and Kirby.

Travis was relieved that the equipment had come in. Even though it was Christmas break, everything could now be ready for classes when the students returned.

The players met Coach Drake at the school. They had it done in an hour. Every squat rack, bench, and plate was neatly in place. Of course, everyone--including Coach Drake--got in a workout. Soon every student would have an opportunity to begin a quest--a quest to become bigger, faster and stronger.

"Men," said Coach Drake as he addressed his first class, "The new year is here. Our new equipment has arrived. We will now start on a quest--a personal quest to reach our potential. To reach your potential you should all eat a great breakfast, you should all stretch and do your dot drill. We will continue to do these things every day. You will be tested on your dot drill twice a month. Your times will be recorded and charted. Skill-people should have their time under 50 seconds. Everyone else should have their time under 60 seconds. To be State Champions, we need quick feet!

"As you can see on the workout chart, we will lift three days--Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. On

Tuesdays and Thursdays, we will concentrate on plyometrics, speed training, and technique. Our core lifts on Monday are the Box Squat and Towel Bench. Wednesdays, we will concentrate on the Clean and Dead Lift. And on Fridays, we will do the Parallel Squat and Regular Bench. We will also do auxiliary exercises like neck exercises, leg extensions, leg curls, dips, shoulder presses, lunges, inclines, and hip-sled work."

Out of the corner of his eye, Coach Drake saw Fred whispering to Tim.

"Ho," Travis shouted, "Look me in the eyes men. Our success depends on one critical concept. You must understand completely everything I say; in fact, everything any coach says. You cannot be talking to a neighbor while I am talking or demonstrating. If you don't pay attention, you may make mistakes that might cost us the State Championship."

Fred swallowed hard and hoped Coach Drake hadn't seen him. His eyes and mind were now focused on what Coach was explaining.

Coach Drake continued, "We have 36 athletes enrolled in this class. I'll divide you into three groups of twelve. Each group will have three subgroups of four athletes. Group "A" will begin today on the Towel Bench. Group "B" will begin on the Box Squat. And Group "C" will start on the auxiliary exercises. Every 15 minutes I will whistle, and the three groups will rotate from area to area until they have done each lift. We want four guys (a subgroup) at each station. One lifter, two side spotters, and one principal spotter. You need to get to class as quickly as you can each day. We only have about 48 minutes of actual workout time. If you hustle, everyone can get 15 minutes per workout area. If you pay the price, you will see yourself becoming bigger, faster and stronger. You must be totally dedicated to this program to win the State Championship, period.

"Kirby, Dan and Buddy front and center," commanded Travis. "I want you men to help review the spotting techniques."

Coach Drake knew that an accident in the weight room could cause a lot of problems, especially with parents.

"Buddy, what are the three jobs of all spotters?" asked Coach Drake.

"Well, uh," began Buddy, "the first job of any spotter is to be a coach. We're supposed to correct any technique problems. We should be yelling things like, 'Good back, lock it in, eyes straight ahead, and spread the chest.' Uh, things like that. And, uh, our second job is to be a teammate. We should be yelling encouragement to get all-out intensity. And, uh, third...uh...Coach, I forget."

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"Dan, can you help him?" Travis asked.

"Is it to be a judge? Especially on the parallel squat where we gotta see if they're down low enough."

"Good job," praised Travis. "Let's hear it for Buddy and Dan!"

Everybody clapped three times. Buddy, Dan and Kirby then began to demonstrate spotting techniques as Jason Box-Squatted 235 pounds.

Travis beamed. "Very good, men. That's the way it should be done. Now, help me pass out these record books. Put your name on them. You are responsible for filling them out correctly. You will record your lifts in them, as well as your 40's, dot drill, vertical jump, and standing long jump."

Each group of four had a captain, and Travis made it known that the record books were to be filled out properly. The players knew they'd flunk the class and wouldn't get a uniform if they didn't do it. Travis felt if a guy wasn't responsible enough to keep his records, he would let people down on the field.

"Now men, on Tuesdays and Thursdays," continued Travis, "we will concentrate on plyometrics or jumping drills, speed work, and techniques of individual sports. I will also check on how your flexibility and dot drill are progressing. We will also use these days to test these areas."

Travis wanted everyone working on the techniques of his or her sport. He wanted them to be throwing, kicking, snapping, pulling or pass rushing. Travis also wanted those involved in other sports to be doing things like takedowns, hurdling, pitching, or putting the shot. Travis felt this was important to help athletes adjust to the increases in size and strength, not to mention learning the various skills. A side benefit was to help the other coaches and to improve relations between different sports.

Travis turned to TJ. "You have a good football at home, TJ?"

"Yes sir, it's pretty good, I guess."

"That's good," Travis responded. "I want you to be throwing at least 50 times a day, three days per week. Get a receiver and throw. You, Ryan, and Bob will be competing for the quarterback position. Next fall, our goal is to complete at least 50% of our passes. But it won't happen by accident. You have to make it happen. If any receiver, snapper or kicker does not have a good football, let me know and I'll get you one."

As Travis finished talking to TJ, he grabbed a chair and straddled it backwards. He faced the group. They were sitting in front of him on the new lifting mats.

Travis said, "Men, I want to speak to you about character. It's more important than speed or strength. Another word for character could be pride. I want to be proud of you, and I want you to be proud of yourselves. I expect great things of you. I expect you to attend every class. I expect you to hand in every assignment on time. You should do this for two reasons. First, to keep

yourself eligible. You can't play if you flunk a class or have less than a 2.0 grade point average. Second, it's the right thing to do. It's part of becoming and doing your best. I've assigned Coach McMasters to keep track of everybody weekly. If you need help, we'll help you. We'll have a special study hall for those who have a 2.0 or lower G.P.A.

"We will NOT chew. Men, it can really cause a health problem for you, and I don't want that to happen. I'm asking you not to swear. I'm hoping you can control yourselves. When we get on the playing field, I don't want a 15-yard penalty for something stupid like cussing out somebody. Besides that, it's just not right. Men, discipline and control will win a lot of ball games.

"Lastly, take pride in your weight room. Take pride in your school. If you see some garbage lying around, pick it up. That's called being an upper-limit person. An upper-limit person is a person who has character."

With only ten minutes left in the period, each student had enough time to experience one light set of each exercise. Every class went smoothly and the program was "off and running."

Chapter 20 The Best Offer

Wes was thirty minutes early for 1st period. As he was getting dressed in his workout clothes, he glanced in the mirror. Wes looked around to make sure he was alone as he ambled across to the full length mirror. Wes flexed a little and puffed out his chest. He soon became oblivious to everything except the mirror. Wes turned sideways and flexed his biceps. He'd only been on the program five weeks and already he'd gained twelve pounds. "Wow," Wes smiled as he thought, "I'm really comin' on!"

Chad, Dave and Tim were laughing.

Wes stopped his posing routine and stammered, "How long you guys been standin' there?"

"Long enough," chimed in all three.

Chad remarked, "Next time I'll bring a camera."

"Hey, gimme a large break," countered Wes as he put on his Lion shirt. "Did you guys hear about Troutman's party next week? It's supposed to be big. You gonna go?"

"Yeah, I heard about it," Chad murmured. "In addition to the usual kegs, I hear some pretty heavy drugs will be available."

"I might drink a little, but I ain't doin' no drugs," Wes declared.

"What if Coach Drake finds out?" cautioned Chad. "Maybe we should stick together as a team like he said and just have a good time without it."

Dave replied, "Hey, it's still the off-season, partying now's OK. Just be cool."

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By this time, a few more players were getting ready, including Rick. Rick had quietly listened to most of what had been said. He sat on the bench as he carefully pulled on his white socks. As Rick began to lace his shoes, he proclaimed, "Troutman ought to have his butt kicked. You guys can do what you want, but not me; I'm not doin' that shit anymore. I like gettin' better, and I don't want some stupid-ass jerk like Troutman holdin' me back."

No one had expected that from Rick. No one had really said something like that before. No one had ever taken a leadership position before. They all followed Rick to the weight room but no one said anything.

"Hi men," greeted Travis. "Let's do it!"

After class, Becky was waiting for Rick. "Hi ya Beck," greeted Rick.

"How'd the weights go today?" asked Becky as she slipped her arm around Rick's arm.

"I broke six records today and got four reps at 280 on the bench," said Rick enthusiastically. "And you know what that means don't you Becky?"

"You're getting stronger."

"No, no. Well, I mean it sure does, but what it really means is that I've got a 300-pound bench coming to me any day," beamed Rick proudly.

Becky didn't really know why it was so important to Rick; but nevertheless, she squeezed Rick's arm a little harder.

At choir, Rick and Becky received all their semester grades. Becky quickly opened her envelope and saw all A's, except for one B. Rick just sat there staring at the envelope.

"C'mon open it," Becky urged. "It'll be fine."

Slowly Rick edged the computerized grade sheet from the envelope and peeked ever so slowly.

"Rick, what'd you get?" Becky said impatiently.

The numbers at the bottom told the whole story. It was the grade point average. The numbers loomed large as Rick sat mesmerized--2.80!

Rick breathed a great sigh. He had worked very hard. Rick turned to Becky, managed a smile, and winked at her saying, "Today a 2.8, tomorrow a 3.0 honor student." They both sang very well that day.

Coach Drake was making his way down the hall when Fred Maddox spotted him. "Coach Drake, come to my office. I gotta ask you something." It was characteristic for Fred to be direct and still be eternally likable.

"Yes Counselor, what is it?" asked Travis.

"Well, glory be," muttered Mr. Maddox glaring at his computer. "I never thought you'd do it, but you've got four of five classes filled with thirty-six. What do you want me to do with the rest of these crazy kids that want hernias?"

Travis couldn't help but laugh. "Well, Fred, I could

perhaps handle one or two more. Put the rest on a waiting list."

"Glory be, a waiting list!" exclaimed Mr. Maddox. "You must be doin' somethin' down there." As Travis left for his coaches' meeting, Fred Maddox grinned at his clipboard which said, "Future-Hernia List!"

Travis began dispersing notebooks and handouts to each coach. Coaches McMasters, Littlewood, Myers and Miller sat around a rectangular table with paper and pen ready to go.

Travis was just whistling away. "How come you're so happy?" John asked.

"Well Coach Myers, I've got a surprise for you," explained Travis. "You see this box? It finally came." Coach Drake began opening the box. "Brian, these are for you. Jerry, here are yours. And John, believe it or not, we got things in your size." Travis had money left over from the Lift-A-Thon and got everyone coaching shoes, shirts, pants, and hats. The shirt and hat were red with the Hamilton Lion logo. They really looked sharp.

"You may have seen some of the players in workout shirts. They look good, so I figured we should look good too," rationalized Travis.

"Brian, give us the players' status on grades."

Coach McMasters came to the chalkboard and faced the staff.

"With the computer, tabulating the exact semester grades was easy. Here is the printout." Brian went through almost a ream of paper. "As you can see, I circled in red those players who fall below a 2.0. We have 58 varsity players signed up. That's more than double from last year. However, we have seventeen of those fifty-eight below the 2.0."

"Thanks Brian," Travis replied. As he started talking, a knock came at the door. Coach Miller got up to see who it was.

"It's some kid, coach," said Tom.

"Ask him to see me tomorrow Coach. We're going to be another hour or so."

Coach Miller returned to his chair and Travis continued, "We will have a study period before school for those 17 players. We'll take turns handling this period, and Brian will keep us informed weekly as to their progress. When their grades get to the two-point level, then they'll be excused from study hall."

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