

QUEST FOR GREATNESS

A Continuing Story by Greg Shepard

QUICK REVIEW

Chapters 1-26

Quest For Greatness is based on true stories. Coach Travis Drake is the new football Coach at Hamilton High School. With energy, enthusiasm, charisma and hard work, positive changes have been taking place.

The other major character Rick Steadman, who is a senior at Hamilton, has just been devastated by tragedy. His father and two sisters have just died in a fire that destroyed their home. Only his little brother Billy survived.

Coach Drake with a lot of caring has helped Rick overcome his problems and this tragedy. Billy and Rick are now part of Coach Drake's family. Coach Drake and his staff have worked hard in the off-season and summer helping each player realize his potential physically, mentally and spiritually.

The results have been dramatic. It's now time to get it on.

Chapter 27

"Two - A-Days"

Two-A-Day practices were scheduled to begin at 6:00 p.m. Seventy juniors and seniors were dressed and had stretched at least five minutes early. That was Hamilton-Lion time. Chad and Wes who finally became eligible by "fixing things" with hard work were among the seventy. Emile had to help Tyrone get his uniform on correctly. When Tyrone put his thigh pads in backwards, Emile nearly cracked up. "You owe me your life, man," Emile said laughing.

Coach Drake liked to practice at 6:00 p.m. so his players could keep their summer jobs a little longer. The later time was also cooler and cut down on heat-related problems. The first two hours were spent in pads. The next 1/2-hour was a break with water and fruit provided. The last hour of practice was in shorts and helmets, and it was devoted primarily to the kicking game and to play execution against dummies.

Coach Drake felt that most injuries occur with fatigued players. He didn't think that working out-of-conditioned players for four hours in pads made any sense. He was too well prepared to take short cuts in conditioning.

He would practice at least half an hour under the lights to help the players get used to night conditions.

Coach Myers was really getting his defense going. During the first scrimmage, he was psyching up everybody. "You men ready?"

"Yes Coach!" came the response.

"What are we going to do?" he asked.

"Attack!" everyone yelled back.

"What are we going to do?" he yelled.

"Attack!" came the same response.

"What are we going to do?" roared Coach Myers a third time.

Before the defensive team could yell "Attack" a third time, Lem Kalani went crazy. Lem began a Tongan war dance and chant. His teammates screamed the chant back to Lem. It went back and forth three or four times. The defense was like a frenzied shark feeding. The scrimmage had to be stopped after five minutes. A well-prepared scout team was getting annihilated. Coach Drake didn't want anyone to get hurt. Besides, he wanted to save some of that frenzy for Friday night's game. Travis hoped Lem could recreate the spirit that his Tongan war chant and dance caused.

"Hey Benny," yelled Brad, "You got another towel?" Benny had been accepted by the players and was doing a tremendous job keeping towels folded and ready for seventy players. The locker room was crowded. It wasn't really meant for seventy football players; but everyone was getting along well, so being crowded was Okay.

Jeff Simpson, a tight end, had his locker next to Mark Russo, the new quarterback. He told Mark, "Man, these practices are a lot different than last year." Mark asked, "What do you mean?" "Well, last year, I never got a word from the coaches unless I screwed up. Then they were all over me like flies on garbage. This year, the coaches are commenting when good things happen. I made a mistake yesterday, and I thought the coach would jump down my throat. But it didn't go down that way. Instead, Coach Littlewood just explained to me how to do it right. What a difference it makes when coaches treat us like they care."

Then Mark added, "Things are goin' good for us too. I'm gettin' the hang of quarterbacking. I hope I can get in the game Friday."

"You will," encouraged Jeff, "You're doin' great for your first year. I wish my first year could have been like this."

Chapter 28

"Evaluation"

The Thursday morning before the opening game was set aside for evaluations and to determine the starting line-ups. Coach Drake started the evaluations. He said he couldn't be more pleased with the summer program and with Two-A-Days. Over 80% of the team had attended the

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University's one-week camp in June. Emile and Tyrone both ran 4.5's. But Rick Steadman's performance raised some eyebrows. He blazed to a 4.55 and was up to 195 pounds. Dan Porter, because of his height, was virtually guaranteed a scholarship if he had a good season. Fifty-one players lifted weights at least three times a week during the summer. Coach Drake noted that was super considering family vacations and jobs.

Coach Myers couldn't believe that no one dropped out during two-a-days. In his day, ten to twenty percent would quit within two or three days. Coach Drake explained that when kids spend hundreds of hours preparing, they aren't going to quit just because of some two-a-day pain and soreness.

The Offensive Line Coach, Tom Miller, evaluated his line first. "Buddy Harris is really developing as a leader and his quickness is greatly improved. Buddy is our best lineman and will play right guard. At center, Pete Henderson has come on strong. In spite of his inexperience, he should be a great center. For left guard, I've picked junior Andy Sartori. He was the best lineman on the sophomore team last year and really explodes off the ball. In fact, it's pretty close between him and Buddy for best lineman. Our right tackle of course will be Dan Porter. It's been a year since he's played, and it's been tough adjusting to all that height. But I'm sure he'll improve even more as the season progresses. Our left tackle, Brad Emery, is only 170 pounds, but I'll stack him up against anybody—including Buddy. That's our starting five unless you give me Lem."

"No way!" Coach Myers gruffly quipped. "You can't have him!" Travis had the final decision, but Lem was developing into a leader and held the up-front players together from his linebacker position. Travis wanted Coach Myers to be able to talk to Lem in between the offensive and defensive series so he probably wouldn't go both ways. However, Lem would play at left or right tackle on goal line situations.

The Starting Lion Lineman

Yr.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Squat	Bench	Clean	D. Lift	40	VJ
Sr.	Brad Emery	LT	5-11	170	360	270	250	500	4.8	26
Jr.	Andy Sartori	LG	5-10	210	435	310	240	500	5.0	24
Sr.	Pete Henderson	C	5-11	202	400	305	255	500	5.1	23
Sr.	Buddy Harris	RG	6-1	245	525	365	285	600	5.0	25
Sr.	Dan Porter	RT	6-5	228	375	260	260	600	5.0	24

Coach Littlewood discussed his receivers. "Our tight end will be Jeff Simpson. He's blocking well lately, and he's got great hands. Fred Johnson hasn't played for a couple of years, but you couldn't tell it. His quickness is going to make him a real threat. His big problem is his confidence, and sometimes, he hears footsteps. Anyway, Fred will be our flanker-back. The wide receivers will rotate in and out with plays. They will be Kirby Lewis and Skip Hunter. However, Coach Drake, Emile can go in any time. He wants to go both ways and he certainly has the speed and hands. Another asset is Tyrone, in fact, all our QB's know the pass patterns. So we are really deep at flanker and wide receiver."

The Starting Lion Receivers

Yr.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Squat	Bench	Clean	D. Lift	40	VJ
Jr.	Jeff Simpson	TE	6-2	185	375	210	250	500	4.8	26
Sr.	Fred Johnson	FL	5-9	160	330	205	185	400	4.6	27
Sr.	Kirby Lewis	WR	5-9	160	350	260	215	500	4.6	26
Jr.	Skip Hunter	WR	5-10	165	325	225	205	400	4.55	29

The running backs and quarterbacks were Coach Drake's area. "Our fullback is a little freight train," enthused Travis. "Dave Pruitt is a catcher on the baseball team and has great hands. He can get three yards anytime, and I'm working on a play or two to take advantage of his hands. His biggest attribute is his blocking ability. Dave can put "the hurt" on you. You all know that Rick's a potential All-State running back. He may get the ball over twenty times a game. Our quarterback position will be filled by TJ. He's done a wonderful job in his leadership role and knows the plays as well as I do. I will try to play Russo at QB as much as possible Friday to get him much needed experience.

The Starting Lion Backfield

Yr.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Squat	Bench	Clean	D. Lift	40	VJ
Sr.	Dave Pruitt	FB	5-10	195	440	325	265	600	4.7	28
Sr.	Rick Steadman	RB	6-1	198	445	325	285	600	4.55	30
Sr.	TJ Carter	QB	5-10	170	360	255	235	500	4.8	29

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"Coach Drake," began Brian Masters, "I'm sure glad we got Chad at safety. He really holds things together." "I'm glad also," answered Travis. "Watch him close as far as attitude. I think he's learned some valuable lessons but if he gives you any problems I want him yanked." Brian continued, "Our defensive backs have been doin' super. The only problem is Emile sometimes gambles and comes up fast on the run. He just loves to hit. Tyrone is just a great athlete and he's catching on fast."

The Starting Lion Defensive Backs

Yr.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Squat	Bench	Clean	D. Lift	40	VJ
Sr.	Chad Arrington	S	5-11	188	360	265	250	500	4.7	28
Jr.	Tyrone Johnson	DB	5-10	165	310	215	195	550	4.5	32
Sr.	Emile Martinez	DB	5-8	158	400	300	250	500	4.5	26

John Myers talked about the defense. "I don't know guys. We've got some problems. We're going to have to play some boys both ways and I think we'll have to watch 'em close. They're gonna get real tired, especially in this heat. Our linebackers are Anthony Green and Lem Kalani. They might be Okay. The defensive guards are Tim Adams and Buddy Harris. Buddy's like me, a lard butt, and he's going to run out of gas, if we don't spell him. Andy Sartori and Chuck Willis will be the defensive tackles. Again, we're gonna have to watch Andy like a hawk. Now, Brad, I don't worry about, he'll be fine at defensive end and Wes Jackson will be our boy at the right defensive end. Travis, I've already talked to Wes about attitude. He knows he'll have to answer to me. Right now he's doin' okay."

The Starting Lion Defensive Front

Yr.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Squat	Bench	Clean	D. Lift	40	VJ
Jr.	Anthony Green	LB	6-1	205	415	330	300	630	4.7	29
Sr.	Lem Kalani	LB	6-1	212	515	375	280	600	4.8	28
Sr.	Tim Adams	DG	5-10	165	400	240	225	500	4.8	24
Sr.	Buddy Harris	DG	6-1	245	525	365	285	600	5.0	25
Jr.	Andy Sartori	DT	5-10	210	435	310	240	500	5.0	23
Sr.	Chuck Willis	DT	6-0	200	405	280	255	550	5.0	23
Sr.	Brad Emery	DE	5-11	170	360	270	250	500	4.8	26
Sr.	Wes Jackson	DE	6-2	190	380	260	265	550	4.7	28

Coach Littlewood designated Mark Russo as extra point and field goal holder. Emile would do the kicking. Skip Hunter would be the punter and Rob Hammer, a reserve QB, would be the deep snapper. Travis liked those choices because Mark could throw on a fake point and Skip had the ability to run or throw from the punt formation.

The time was getting close. Everyone was just itching to get it on.

Dear Greg, 2-1-90

I just finished your book Quest For Greatness. I read it in one day. It was super! I just wish I had read it a year ago.

Sincerely,
Ed Crafton, FB Coach
Eastside Catholic H.S.
Bellvue, Washington

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GREATNESS"**

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