

QUEST FOR GREATNESS

A Continuing Novel by Greg Shepard

QUICK REVIEW

Chapters 1-33

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 been devastated by tragedy. His father and two sisters 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. The Town, School, and team are going crazy over the unbelievable turn around.

Hamilton is now in the final three minutes of the last regular season game holding on to a 14-13 lead. TJ, the QB, asks his running back, Rick Steadman, "We gotta get the first. Can you get it?"

Chapter 33

The Second Season

Rick's hair on the back of his neck bristled as he said, "I'll get it; just gimme that dang ball."

TJ did a reverse pivot and tossed the ball to Rick. Clayton played it well and had their men in position. Rick saw a slight opening and turned on the jets. He was met at the line of scrimmage but knifed through and got his left leg free and then his right. With a desperate lunge, the three yards were his, along with the first down. Rick even managed to stay inbounds.

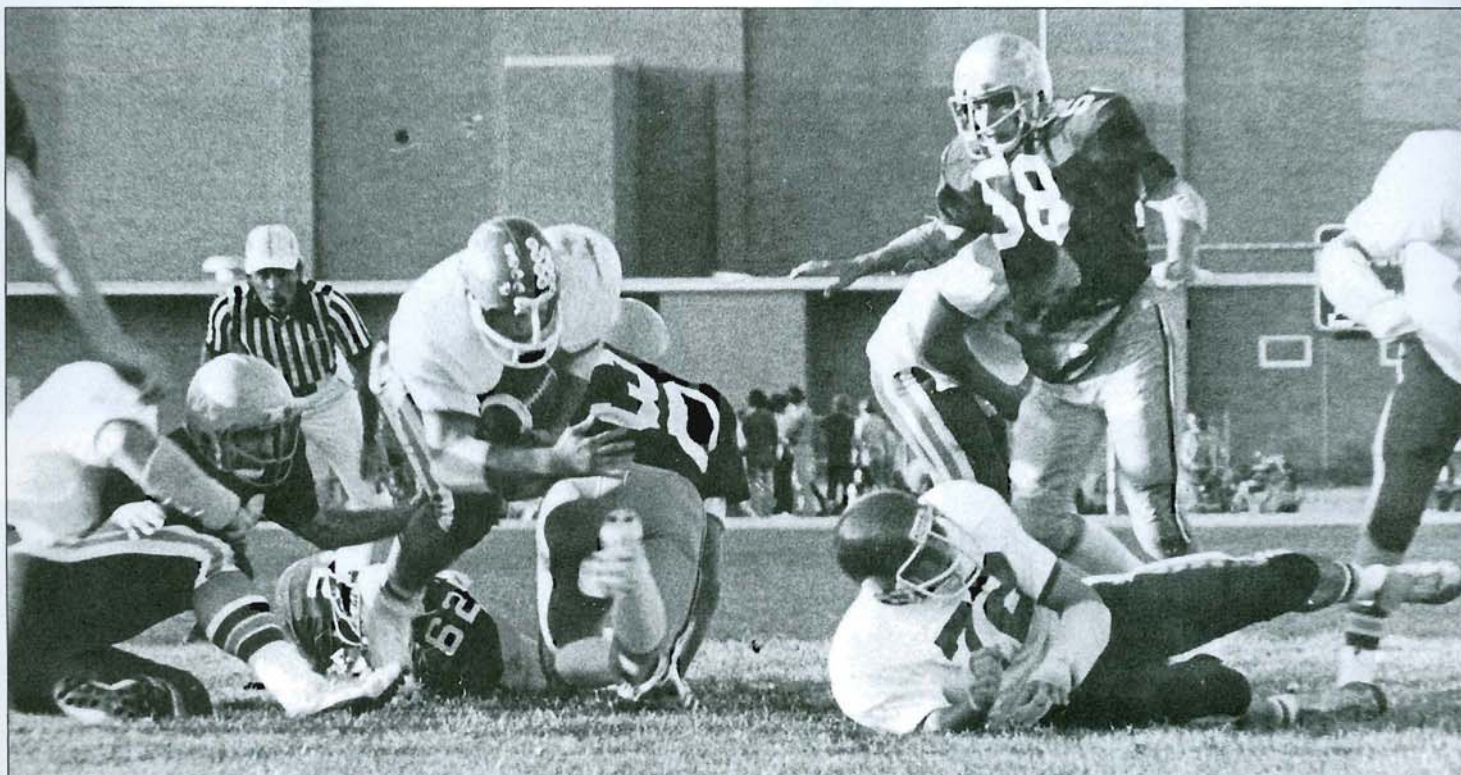
Clayton county was confused. They thought the clock stopped, but it started again when the chains were set. By the time they called time out, only 1:32 remained on the clock. TJ called a safe QB keeper. Another Clayton time out. TJ called the QB keeper again, which was followed by Clayton's last time out with only 68 seconds remaining. On third and twelve, Rick got his familiar off-tackle call and got five yards. Everyone got up slowly and walked back to the huddle. By the time the ball was set and ready, only 40 seconds were left.

TJ took command. This situation had been discussed by him and Travis a number of times. TJ slapped the lineman on the side of the helmet and said "No play, no play. Draw 'em offside special. No one move. You got it?"

In unison everyone said, "We got it!"

TJ came up to the line and yelled, Blue 26, Blue 26, set

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Steadman with a desperate lunge got the first.

Hut -Go -Go-Go."

The right defensive tackle couldn't wait and charged in anticipation. The referee pulled his flag, "Offsides - Clayton."

The five yards were stepped off. The clock started and the game ended without Hamilton having to snap the ball. Hamilton was conference champs and headed for the playoffs with a 9-1 record.

TJ was the hero that night. As he was interviewed by the press, TJ gave acknowledgments that he had often practiced in his dreams. "This was a great team effort. The line blocked fantastically and the defense played fantastically; heck, everybody played fantastically. I'd like to thank the coaching staff for their great job. And I also want to thank my mom and dad for all their support."

Chapter 34 The Second Season

Billy and Travis' kids were watching Saturday morning cartoons. Travis was devouring the sports page at the breakfast table. he already knew the first playoff game would be against a good 8-2 team from Bakersville. Fortunately, the game would be played at home because of Hamilton's better record.

Rick came staggering into the kitchen. "I thought you'd sleep a little later," Travis said, looking at Rick's limp.

"Coach, my ankle hurts; I think I sprained it a little," responded Rick. Travis got up and examined Rick's ankle. It was swollen slightly, and Travis wrapped some ice around the injured area.

"You should be OK, but I don't want you cutting on it today. you can do some light jogging, and I think you can go ahead and do your weight training," instructed Travis.

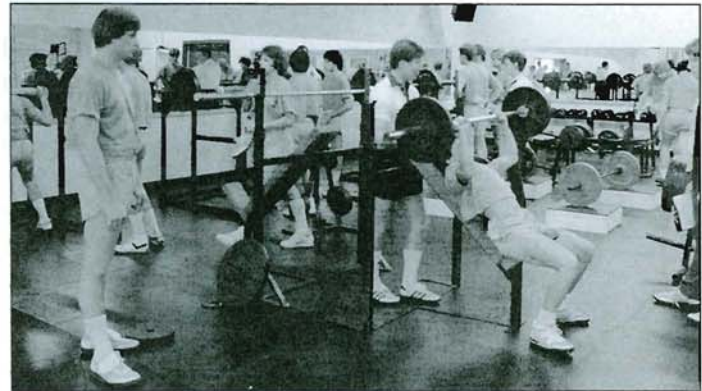
Rick nodded, feeling somewhat relieved that Coach Drake didn't feel it was too serious. Travis poured himself a bowl of cereal and said, "It'll loosen up as the day goes on. Tomorrow we'll go to hot-and-cold treatments."

Changing the subject, Travis inquired, "How's your strength, Rick?"

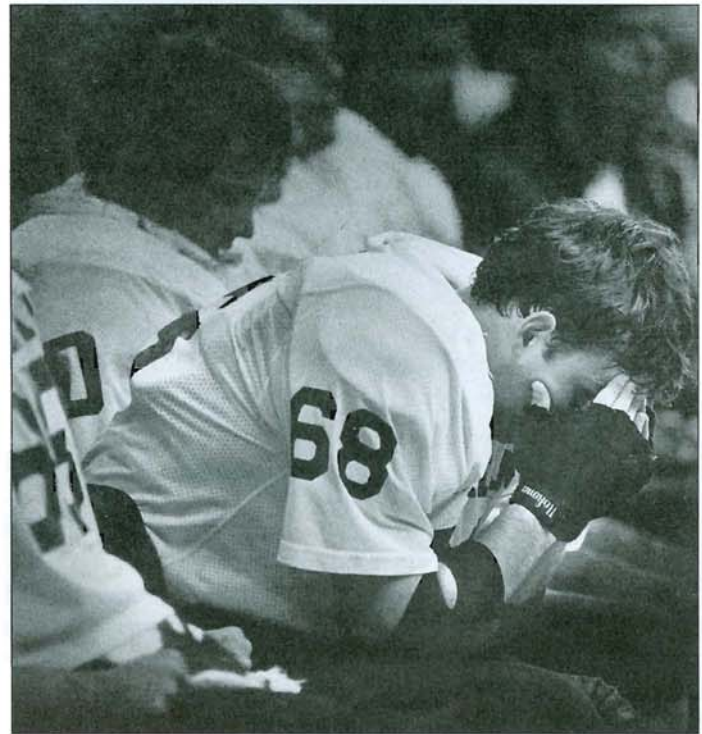
"All my lifts are going great. I'm stronger now than I was in the summer. I think everybody's lifts are better. My Bench is up ten, and my Squats up twenty. I know all the guys think our lifting is why we haven't had any serious injuries this year," explained Rick.

"We have been really fortunate, haven't we? But the weights made a lot of our good fortune happen. Well, I'm outa here. See you at ten o'clock," said Travis as he left for the coaches' meeting.

The whole school was buzzing with excitement. Mr. Curtis was preparing the band for special playoff performances. Miss Johnson was giving the cheerleaders all the possibilities of the playoff games. Even the possibility of going to the Dome. Other teachers were



Hamilton proved to be stronger for the playoffs than they were in the Summer.



Emotions ran up and down for Hamilton during the Wild Semi-Final Game especially for Buddy #68 trying to carry on their normal schedules.

Mrs. Stockman declared, "Playoffs or no playoffs, students will turn in their term papers on time. Buddy, is yours ready?"

Buddy scooted up in his chair and was thankful for once for Coach McMasters. Part of Saturday's meeting time was spent on homework and class responsibilities. "Yes, Mrs. Stockman, I have it right here," said Buddy as he handed her his paper.

Mrs. Stockman tried not to change her expression, but an ever-so-slight smile came across her face as she whispered, "You played a fine game, Buddy."

Shocked, Buddy gulped, "You mean, you were there?"

"Of course I was there, now finish your reading assignment."

QUEST FOR GREATNESS

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Buddy smiled and said, "Yes Ma'am."

Travis had a letter waiting for him in his school mailbox. It was from the superintendent's office. As Travis read the letter, it made him feel like all the sacrifice was worthwhile. It was signed by Dr. Kowalski and the school board members, including Sam Carter and Mary Putnam. They praised the coaching staff and team, not only for making it to the playoffs but for their exemplary conduct both on and off the field. They also noted the contributions the football program had made to the improvement in attitude among the entire student body.

"Oh, Coach," said Mr. Donaldson as Travis was reading the letter, "Nice game. You're doing a bang-up job."

"Thank you, sir," replied Travis, as he thought, "Amazing, even Donaldson is jumping on the band wagon."

Rick and Becky were watching TV in the Wilson's family room. All their assignments were finished, and it was time to relax. Becky was acting like something was really bothering her. Rick tried to make Becky feel better by being extra nice. It only seemed to make things worse. When Rick put his arm around Becky, she was all rigid.

"OK Becky, I guess I'd better leave. You're actin' like I'm sort of a reject. Have you got somebody else you wanna see?" demanded Rick.

"No, no, Rick, cried Becky. "You don't understand."

Rick was totally perplexed as he asked, "What don't I understand?"

By now, Becky was sobbing. Rick came to her and held her tightly. "Tell me, Becky. What is it?"

"You got 1327 yards and 6.7 yards per carry," Becky blurted out with big tears in her pretty blue eyes.

For a second, Rick almost laughed. He remembered what Coach Drake had told him about women: "The one thing you can count on about women is their unpredictability. They can cry at the strangest times and about the strangest things."

Rick held Becky even tighter and tenderly said, "Go on, Becky."

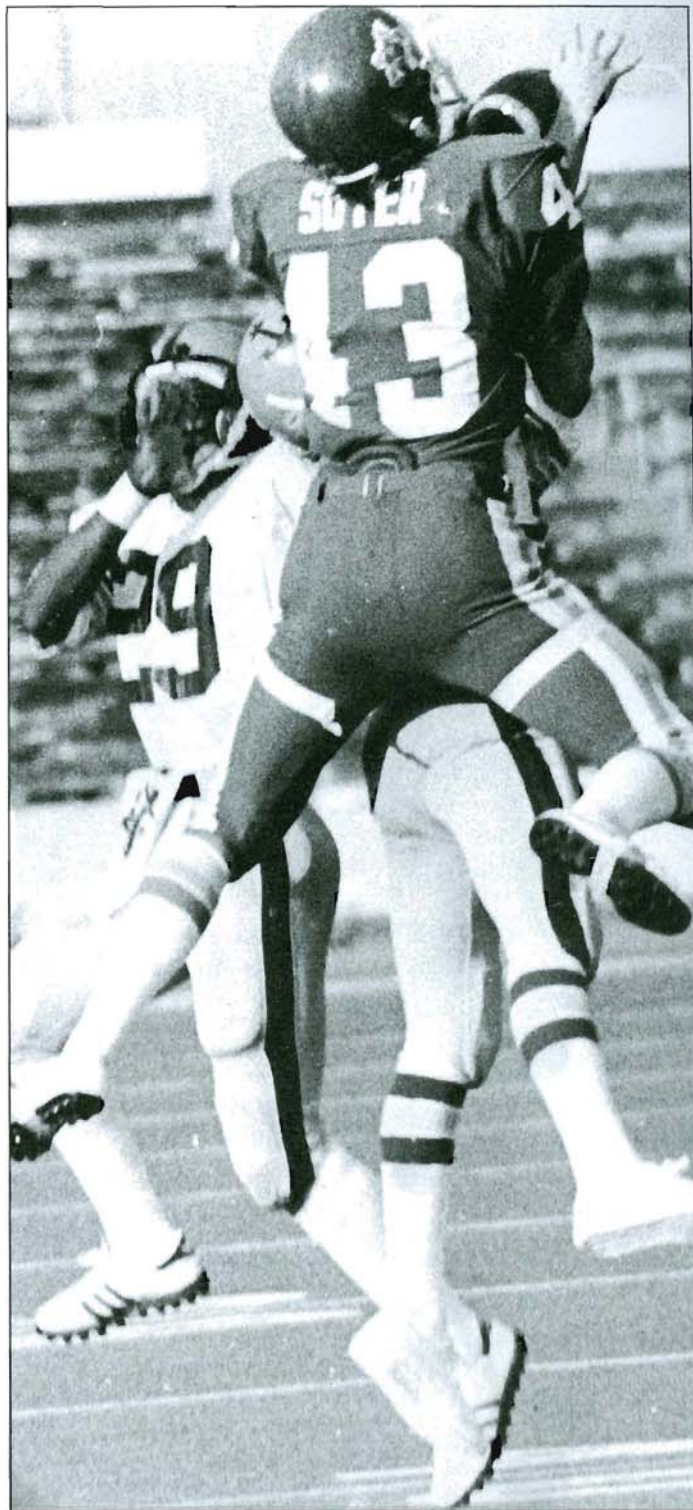
"Well, you've got all these letters from colleges, and I'm going to lose you. You're going to go far away to school, and I'll never see you again," Becky said, almost whimpering.

Rick was silent for a long time while he searched for the right words.

"Becky, I love you. We've been through too much not to realize we have something special. I've got an idea. Why don't we just plan college out together. Besides, those letters are just for information. I don't even know if I'll get a scholarship. Anyway, we'll decide together."

Quickly, the tenseness left Becky as she squeezed Rick tightly.

"Oh Rick, I love you so," she cooed.



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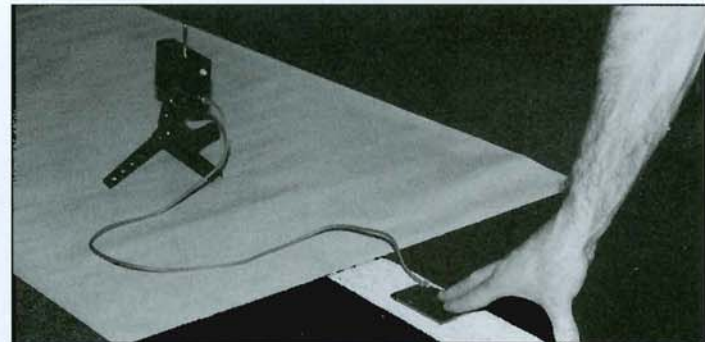
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