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and packed my gear, and there was nothing to do but wait. I had no lectures on Saturday morning and I couldn't settle down to swot. The weather began to clear, and a watery sun showed through the clouds, so Bob and I went for a stroll. The town would be full of football talk and trams placarded "Big Game To-day, Carisbrook, 3.0 p.m., Varsity A, v. Southern," so to get away from it we went down to Logan Park and climbed up above the quarry. It wasn't cold in the sun, and the harbour looked glassy. There was no one about. We threw stones down into the quarry. It was good watching them. They dropped away from us, slowly getting smaller and smaller, then suddenly they struck the bottom and exploded, shooting fragments out sideways, starlike.

At 12 we went back to the digs for an early lunch. I didn't feel very hungry, and while we were waiting for the food, Bob kept tapping with the knife on the table. We caught the quarter past one tram out to the ground. It was better to watch the curtain-raiser than hang about the digs. The tram was packed, and rows of cars were already making for the ground. Everybody looked very jolly and expectant. We saw Buck and Mac on the tram, and that cheered us up a bit. It was good to realise that there were others who had to go through with it, too. Buck didn't care a hoot about it all.

"Think you can win?" an old man said to him.

"Win?" Buck seized the old fellow's hand. "Be the first to congratulate us on winning the championship. Get in early. Do it now. Be the very first."

The old chap pulled his hand away looking a bit silly.

AT Carisbrook we joined the crowd around the gates and pushed through to the players' entrance. I could see people nudging one another and nodding towards Mac. We showed our passes, and went in along behind the stand and in underneath to the dressing rooms. Most of the boys were early; there were other bags lying on the seats.

"Shall we go up for a while?" said Mac. We went out in front of the stand to see the final of the Junior Competition. The stand was packed, and the bank opposite was dark with people. We stood about watching the boys playing, with a sort of detached interest, and then at half-time we went underneath to change. The strain was getting to me a little—I'd take things off and then forget where I'd put them. Most of the chaps were pretty quiet, but Buck kept going, and we were pleased we had him to listen to. Mac was roaming round in his underpants looking for his glasses.

"Like to make a statement before the match?" I asked him.

He just looked at me. "I can't find my bloody glasses. I suppose some lout will tread on them."

"Just a picture of quiet confidence," said Bob. My face felt very tight when I tried to grin.

SOON the trainer came in and started to rub us down. The room was filled with the smell of eucalyptus and the rapid slap, slap, slap of his hands. It was a great feeling being done; he made us feel nice and loose and warm and free-moving. Then Jackie Hore, the Southern skipper, came in to toss, and we looked at him. There he was, the

man we had been talking about all the week. He lost the toss and laughed. He looked a good deal smaller than I'd been imagining him. Of course we had played against him before, but the strain makes you think silly things. We felt better after he'd gone.

"He doesn't look so soft," said Bob to me.

"Poor old Jackie. I'll try and bump into him again to-day and you just watch."

"Never mind," he said, "unless you do it from the other side and straighten your nose up."



I strapped up my weak knee, and when the vaseline came round, plastered it on my face to prevent scratches. The coach came in, and we packed a scrum for him.

"That looks all right," he said.

"Well, now, listen boys. Remember you're going out as the Varsity boys have done for many years now, to play off for the championship, and a lot of those old players are out there to-day watching to see how good you are. Don't let them down. Remember the first 10 minutes in the forwards. Hard! (He punched his hand.) Go in there and dominate." But the referee was in the room to inspect the boots, and the coach's exhortation was lost in the movement.

"Rightoh, boys. One minute to go," said the ref.

We took off our coats and handed round chewing gum. Buck and I put on our ear-guards. Mac found the ball, and we lined up in the passage. The Southern players were there already, skipping about and rubbing their hands. They felt the cold, too. The whistle blew, there was a glare of sunlight, and we were outside, going out into the field, right out into the open. A roar from the crowd rolled all around, enveloping us. A cold easterly breeze blew through our jerseys as we lined up for the photographers, squinting into the low sun. The Southern players looked broad and compact in their black and white jerseys. We gave three cheers, and trotted out into the middle. The turf felt fine and springy. We spaced ourselves out.

I took some deep breaths to get charged up with oxygen for this first 10 minutes. A Southern player dug a hole with his heel and placed the ball.

"All right Southern? All right Varsity?" called the referee.

Both captains nodded. He blew the whistle. The Southern man ran up to kick.

"Thank God," I thought. "The game at last."

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