

Almost Pro
by William E. Smith Copyright 2008
page 1

Chapter 2 Practice makes less than perfect

The week of no pad practice went quickly. That Saturday would be the first full pad practice. Bob held a meeting with the offense before the practice.

“Gentlemen, the only thing I want to say is that championships are won before the kickoff of the first game. It is what we do here now and for the next month of preseason practice that will determine more of what will happen this year than anything else. If we're truly ready we'll win. If not, we'll lose. I have no intention of suffering through a losing season. I know that those of you that were on the team last year have paid the price during games but without a good preseason, you were doomed to the same result.

“Playing the game should be fun. When things are going great, the game is fun. The problem is that the only way things will go great during the game is by putting in the very hard work in practice to make things easier in the game. I can promise you all one thing. Practice is going to be four times harder than the game. You are all going to hate me from today until the kickoff of our first game. Then and only then will you realize that we had to do what we did during practice to make the game fun.

“One thing you are going to hate is that fact that we are going to run and run and run some more. You will be in the best condition of your lives or be dead from cardiac arrest. Based on what the offense did last year, either alternative would be an improvement.

“My hope is you will survive, but that is up to you. After the preseason you will believe the saying 'that which does not kill us only makes us stronger.' I hope we will all be stronger.”

“That's easy for you to say, we are in much better shape than you are! Who are you to be making us run that much while you stand there and time us?” The speaker was the starting right guard Salam Samir.

“I'll make you a bet. If you can do more sit ups than I can, you will only have to run every other practice. If not, then you do what I tell you.”

“You're on *coach*.” The disdain in his voice was obvious. The team began to count as both began their exercise to the death. Samir got up to fifty-six but could not do any more. Bob did ten more then led the team out to practice. Bob was in pain but knew that he could never let the team see him sweat or know he was in pain. If they smelled Icy-Hot they would eat him alive. But the coach was not the only one that was having a difficult practice.

Samir struggled through the offense only portion of the practice and was not able to finish the scrimmage.

The coaches meeting that night was argumentative. Ace sat behind his desk. Something that Bob had not noticed when he first met Ace was that while Ace's chair was unusually high, the office chairs surrounding the desk were lower than normal.

“Gentlemen, I am fairly happy with the defense but not so much with the offense. Bob, the offense is way too simple. The opponent will know all six of our plays and be ready for them. I want to go back to our original play book and install it tomorrow night.”

“Dad, that is what I have been trying to convince Bob about. We need to be practicing the plays that the team knows not these new plays that nobody ever saw before.

Tuesday morning when Bob woke up he felt like he died and rigor mortis had set in. His stomach muscles were so sore he could hardly walk. Every time he sat down, he got a shot of pain that felt like 9 mm bullet. As he shaved, he noticed that he was leaning slightly to the right.

Almost Pro
by William E. Smith Copyright 2008
page 2

As soon as he walked into the office, Amy, his secretary of more than 8 years, was trying to withstand the urge to laugh out loud.

“Did you get the license number on truck that ran over you?”

“I’d laugh but it would hurt too much.”

“Did you know you’re leaning to the right?”

“You wouldn’t expect me to lean to the left would you? It would be totally against my nature.”

With that he disappeared into his private office. Amy stuck her head in as Bob was sitting down with a grimace on his face.

“Bob, are you alright?”

“If you come in later and find nothing left of me but a pile of dust, just sweep me up and put me out for the cleaning crew to dispose of.”

She brought a cup of coffee into her boss. She was careful to put it close enough to him so he would not have to reach too far to get it.

“Mr. May, in case you hadn’t noticed, you are not 23 anymore. In fact, you haven’t been 23 for ten years. Were you trying to practice with those young studs?”

“NO!” Bob realized he was using his coaching voice inside. After all, he was talking to the only person that was there to help him get through the day. He toned down his volume. “I was just not used to that amount of exercise.”

Practice went fairly smoothly until Ace came down to the field. He walked around glad-handing every player and promising them they would all make the team. The problem with that was there were almost 80 players for just 55 spots on the team. At the coaches meeting after practice, Ace dropped another bomb.

“By Sunday, we have to send the list of 60 players still on the roster. I hate to cut players, so I leave that to my coordinators. We will meet Friday night after practice and talk about the cuts. Be thinking about who you can live without between now and then.”

“I have always believed it was the head coach’s duty to cut players.”

“Well, just think of it as a growth experience. I’m giving my assistants some head coach responsibilities.”

“Thanks, coach.”

Can’t play the game in the prison coach. My brother is an inmate and I did 3 years there for forging a check.