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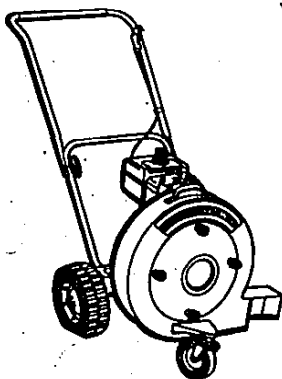


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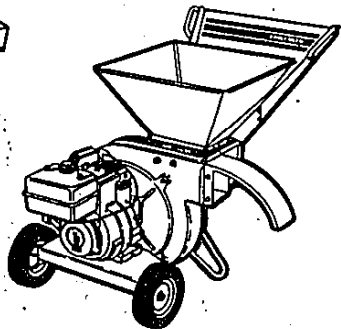
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# Penalties and Points

by John Bozzo

## Letter began great season

Ten years ago football began July 25.

It started in the form of a mimeographed letter bearing the salutation "Dear Football Candidate:" from my high school football coach.

Enclosed along with the letter was a conditioning program. Our tri-captains for the coming fall season would be organizing workouts, the letter explained.

Further information about things like physical exams, issuing of equipment and the start of practice ("official practice") would be sent in future letters.

Finally there was a quotation, preceded by the statement, "A little something to digest:"

*The will to win is great, but the will to prepare to win is even greater!*

AT THAT POINT I knew that I had to play football in the fall. Up until then, I had known limited success as a football player.

For three years, I played second string. We had winning ball clubs every year, one undefeated team, a year with one loss followed by a two-loss season.

Despite the team success, without participating in the games, it seemed hardly worth the effort.

Fortunately, I won a starting position on offense that fall 10 years ago. Our high school team finished 7-0-1.

Now my memories of high school football tend to be happy ones of triumph.

Almost forgotten are the three weeks of grueling workouts before the first game.

Only a few times will I recall the 30 minutes of crawling on hands and feet up and down a hill after a

three-hour practice, twice each day.

My recollections are now like the following: shaking hands with my teammates in the huddle, waving to the opponents at the line of scrimmage as the last few seconds ticked away in our victory over a team rated second in the state.

FOLLOWING ARE some things I learned which may help youngsters interested in playing football.

- Workout during the off season. Ask the coach for a conditioning and weight training program.

- Begin early. Find a good youth program which stresses fundamentals.

- Help, don't work against, the coach. Little league coaches have a difficult job with little compensation. Often the only thanks they get from parents is second-guessing if things go wrong in a game.

Ask the coach what help is needed. Transportation of players is always a problem. Keeping track of equipment is a help.

Any of the details a coach can delegate to someone else allows the coach to spend more time coaching the players.

Like any other activity, sports can be very rewarding or disappointing. Perhaps because of the physical, mental and time commitment, any benefits or failures are exaggerated.

If I had not started on an undefeated team my memories may not be so happy.

However, sometimes, late at night, I have a nightmare that I'm still in high school and I have to play one more season.

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