



Elite Education Student Service

Essay #10 (Swarthmore)

I hesitated on the ground for only a moment before sprinting to the huddle. Through the light drizzle on artificially bright AstroTurf, a mist rose from my teammates—the product of fourth quarter determination and weeks of preparation. I took my place behind a tackle and steadied my breathing as the linebacker began to boom out orders. “Third and eleven, fifty-two bobcat, ready...hit!” My legs twitched, my eyes focused, and the ball snapped. Ripping to the outside, I saw my opportunity: the quarterback was only two steps away. This tackle is mine. I will sack the quarterback. Suddenly, I was flying towards the ground. My body hit the ground with a sickening thud as the enemy completed his pass for a first down. I had been blindsided. This time there was no hesitation; I pushed off the ground and regrouped with my teammates thirteen yards closer to my end zone. I should have anticipated the trap; I had almost cost my team the game. Physical pain paled in comparison to my mental anguish. As formations came in via linebacker, the other defensive end gave me a fraternal thump on my pads. I broke out of the huddle and my chagrin hardened into resolve. Thoughts of how much we had all sacrificed brought our August practices abruptly to my mind. How many times did we take respite in grilling burgers or floating down the river after an especially grueling practice? Strong left, strong left. Again I locked eyes with an opposing tight end, our faces equally grim and determined. My body calmed, a smooth anticipation prepared me to test and break my limits. “Down, green nineteen, green nineteen, set, hit!” boomed the rival quarterback, his red #7 jersey a matador to my bull. The center’s arm twitched and I fired into my man—the sort of collision that makes mothers shudder and dads grin. Again, I fought to the outside, but it came too easy. Years of drills turned technique into instinct and I could almost hear Coach’s familiar words, “That’s it, fight pressure. Don’t let him set the pace.” Almost without meaning to, I spun around and now faced a somewhat surprised running back. In a split second, we were two gladiators, sizing each other up and feeling only the rhythmic beat of an excited heart. He stepped right and my cleat mirrored his, the few yards still between us crumbling away. As I moved closer, his dark eyes and furrowed expression became distinguishable and infused me with renewed determination to make the play. He faked



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left, opening his arm to me. Seizing my opportunity for redemption, I drove into his hips with a gratifying CRACK! Together, we hit the ground—a perfect tackle. It was a few moments before I heard the roar of the crowd, an orchestra of excitement brought alive with air horns, stomping feet, and whistling. I regained my footing to see the teammate who had bolstered me moments before, now carrying the ball down the field. I had caused a fumble! Sprinting after the ball, I caught up with my brothers in the end zone and jubilantly joined them in celebration. As, we jogged off the field I could not help but look around at my teammates, my family—“the wrecking crew.”