

FOURTH DOWN

Written by

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EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD. - AFTERNOON

SUPER: October, 2022, lower, centered. The Thunderbird High School Titan football team, wearing orange and blue uniforms are on the football field playing against the Camelback Spartans wearing red and black uniforms. Palm trees dot the landscape. A racially balanced crowd of black, caucasian and Hispanic people are watching the game from weather beaten stands. Both teams are racially balanced. Time out has been signaled by the Titan head coach. The scoreboard: Thunderbird High School 21 - Camelback High School 24. 4th Quarter. Time remaining :04

CAMELBACK FANS

Zero and nine. Zero and nine. Zero
and nine.

EXT. VIEWING STANDS OF THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD
- AFTERNOON

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES, 55, black and slender, is dressed in a three-piece suit. He is standing on the bottom rung of the bleachers that are on two sides of the Thunderbird football field. He is next to SHEILA JONES, 52, black. She is svelte and wearing fashionable apparel. Adult people in the viewing stands are wearing lower middle-class clothing, including work shirts, blue jeans, nylon jackets and work boots. Mostly black students sit with black students and white students sit with white students. 25% of the students are Hispanic. There is 10% of mingling between the races. Many students have cell phones in their hands.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

(Irritated) This game
isn't over.

Cecil Jones turns to his right and speaks to his wife.

PRINCIPAL JONES

We have a chance to get a tie game
with a field goal. (Slightly
angered) I-don't-like-field-goals.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD TITANS HIGH SHCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD. -
AFTERNOON

ROBERT NICHOLAS, 17, and 6', is the quarterback. He looks to the sideline to COACH LEON TOWNS, 35, black, 6'3" and 265 pounds. Coach Towns puts his right hand on his right leg and makes a slight kicking action. Robert Nicholas speaks in the huddle.

ROBERT NICHOLAS

Field goal on the second hut. Rea-

He is interrupted by MAXIMILIAN GRANDVILLE, 17, the right-side tight end.

MAX GRANDVILLE

Screw the field goal. I've got my guy beat by three steps all afternoon - **TOUCHDOWN** - We win our first game!

ROBERT NICHOLAS

Coach says field goal - we're gonna kick a field goal. (Pause) If the snap is high - you'll be the outlet pass. Field goal on hut one, Ready - break!

The Thunderbird Titans team lines up to kick a field goal. The ball is snapped to the holder. The hike is low. The holder scrambles to catch and steady the ball on the ground. As the ball is hiked, Max Grandville runs down the field and is four steps ahead of his defender. Max waves his arms.

MAX GRANDVILLE

I'm open. I'm open.

The ball is stood upright on the ground. The kicker, #12, kicks the ball. The ball arcs high and bounces one time on the cross bar. The ball comes down from its bounce and bounces again on the crossbar, falls and lands on the one yard line. The referee signals that the kick is not good.

CAMELBACK FANS CHEERING

0 and 9. 0 and 9. 0 and 9!

EXT. DETROIT METRO AIRPORT - AFTERNOON

People are walking into the airport main building.

INT. 757 JET PLANE CABIN - AFTERNOON

SUPER: August, 2023. STEVE KOVAL, 39, white, sits next to LINDA KOVAL 35, white, A.J. 14, white, and Krystin, 13, white.

CAPTAIN HELENE TWOCHUCK (O.S.)

Thanks for flying with Delta Airlines. Flight time today from Detroit to Phoenix is three hours and 23 minutes.

(MORE)

CAPTAIN HELENE TWOCHUCK (O.S.)

We are expecting a smooth flight.
Weather in Phoenix is bit warm at
83 degrees. Please relax, sit back
and enjoy the ride.

Steve Koval smiles and turns to his wife Linda. He kisses her as she smiles at him. Steve Koval's daughter, Krystin and son, A.J. stare at their video games.

EXT. HIGH ABOVE THE MAIN SCHOOL BUILDING, FOOTBALL/BASEBALL CINDER TRACK AREA OF THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL. - DAY

The cinder block, beige, two story high school has worn and chipped paint and almost dead landscaping. Metal bars cover the lower windows. The sports area - football field, baseball diamond and cinder track are in disrepair. A seven foot high portable utility block building between the baseball and football fields has graffiti on it. Steve Koval, walks up to the sports area. He is wearing a white long sleeve button down shirt, Hawaiian tie and khaki pants and loafers. He leans on the block building and looks around the area. A small smile slowly comes onto his face as he quickly walks, then jogs toward the main school building.

INT. MAIN FLOOR OF THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL. - DAY

A mix of caucasian, black and Hispanic male and female students fill the hallway. Bored looking teachers stand near their classroom doors. A middle aged male teacher gives the evil eye to a tall male student with long brown hair who is having a public display of hugging and kissing a slim girl wearing form fitting clothes. Immediately, the long brown-haired student shows the teacher his middle finger and disappears into the crowd.

INT. JUNCTION OF DOORWAY AND HALLWAY, THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

Principal Cecil Jones walks up from behind the walking Steve Koval.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

Are you sure that you are ready for
this, Mr. Koval?

STEVE KOVAL

Principal Jones, I recognize your
voice. Yes, I'm ready.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES
 Thunderbird High School has 2,300
 students - Many are from single
 parent families - usually due to
 their parents being addicted to
 alcohol or drugs - or both. Some
 students are mentally or physically
 abused at home. Twenty five percent
 of the student population smokes
 pot every day. We have two students
 in National Honor Society. 37% of
 Thunderbird students do not
 graduate. *You can leave now.*

Steve Koval is walking side by side with Principal Jones.

STEVE KOVAL
 (Matter of factly) I want to be
 here. I found out about this school
 and requested this school. These
 kids need me.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES
 And why do they need you, Mr.
 Koval?

STEVE KOVAL
 I was given a few things I want to
 give to them.

EXT. GRANDVILLE AVENUE - LOWER MIDDLECLASS HOMES - DAY

EXT. BACKYARD OF LOWER MIDDLE CLASS HOME, DETROIT, MICHIGAN -
 DAY

LEO, 40, IRENE, 38, LENNY 15, JANE 12, STEVE 9, ROBERT 5,
 are playing basketball. All are smiling. Steve passes the
 ball to Irene who shoots the ball. The balls goes in the hoop
 and backboard attached to wooden garage. Everybody smiles.

INT. GROUND FLOOR OF THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL MORNING. -
 MORNING

STEVE KOVAL
 In Detroit, I went to grade school
 with teachers who deeply cared
 about the students.

INT. GRADE SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

SISTER MARY LORRAINE, 63, wields a ruler in her right hand and is coming after seven year old Steve Koval.

INT. JUNCTION OF DOORWAY AND HALLWAY OF THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

STEVE KOVAL

At Cody High School the teachers were firm and fair. I graduated from Eastern Michigan University - most of the students are the first from their family to go to college. I want the kids from this school to have opportunity. This is where I should teach. Plus, it's warm here.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

Mr. Koval, every bit of evidence about you says that you will be able to do this job quite well. The principal from Cody High School says that you were the best teacher she ever knew.

STEVE KOVAL

My thanks to Mrs. Benhurst. I'm ready for this...

PRINCIPAL JONES

I have another \$6,500 for you.

Steve Koval stops walking. Principal Jones stops walking. Steve Koval turns to look at Principal Jones.

STEVE KOVAL

Am I also the head of the safety patrol?

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

Put out your hand, Mr. Koval.

Steve Koval puts out his hand.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES (CONT'D)

You're our new A.D. and football coach. You played football in high school and for 3 years at E-M-U. You had a minor in phys-ed. You're qualified.

Principal Jones puts a whistle in Steve's hand and points to a double steel door marked "Gymnasium".

PRINCIPAL JONES

Your office is on the right side wall in the gym.

STEVE KOVAL

I'm not a football coach.

PRINCIPAL JONES

I don't care about your opinion or what you want to do. I'm the principal... and you are the new athletic director and football coach or your teaching tenure at Thunderbird High School will be three minutes long.

Steve Koval slowly wraps his fingers around the whistle.

INT. SMALL OFFICE WITH HALF WOODEN - HALF GLASS DOOR - DAY

The office is small, messy and dimly lit. There is an old wooden desk facing toward the door. Another smaller wooden desk is off to the left side wall. The side desk has three huge, dusty swimming trophies and two shot put trophies sitting on it. Three wooden file cabinets are along the right side wall - files are hanging out of all three cabinets. Images of 1975 and 1981 championship football teams are on the wall. Images of 1959 and 1960 baseball championship teams are on the wall. Steve Koval opens the interior janitor closet, takes a feather duster in hand and dusts the office. He looks at the trophies and images of teams on the walls. A floor lamp is turning off and on. Steve, while sitting at the desk and reading a file, takes his left hand and slightly whacks the floor lamp which causes it to stop flickering and stay lit. LEON TOWNS, 38, black, fills the outside of the window in the door.

INT. SMALL OFFICE WITH THE WORDS "ATHLETIC DIRECTOR/FOOTBALL COACH" ON DOOR. - DAY

STEVE KOVAL

(Friendly) Come in. Come in.

Leon Towns finishes putting 1/2 a donut in his mouth. He then quickly lights up a cigarette with a flip of a lighter then speaks.

LEON TOWNS

Just in case you were wondering - 3
and 6 in 2015. 0 and 9 in 2016, 2
and 8, in 2017 and 0 and 9 for the
last five years. I'm Leon Towns,
the guy who **was** the coach of the
football team.

Leon Towns takes two steps into the office bends down and
picks up a cardboard box of his mementoes.

STEVE KOVAL

Nice to meet you, Mr. Towns. I'm
Steve Koval - the new guy. (Quietly
but direct) I don't think you
should be smoking in the school,
Leon.

Leon smiles and continues to smoke the cigarette.

LEON TOWNS

You're inheriting a big pile of
crap. The Titan football team
(Pause) isn't good. Just like those
guys.

Leon points at an Eastern Michigan University cap sitting on
a filing cabinet.

LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

You go there?

STEVE KOVAL

E-M-U class of 2 thousand and 4.
And you went to the other college
in the Washtenaw county.

LEON TOWNS

So... you've heard of the
University of Michigan?

Steve Koval nods his head up and down.

STEVE KOVAL

Yes... and I've heard about you,
Leon. You were a great football
player. Michigan won a lot of games
when you were there.

Leon smiles at Steve.

LEON TOWNS

Thanks... I was part of that
tradition.

(MORE)

LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

But, I haven't been paying attention to college football for a few years.

STEVE KOVAL

Eastern's not bad anymore. The new coach - Chris Crieghton has turned the program around. Eastern's beat Perdue, Rutgers and Illinois.

LEON TOWNS

Eastern beat Big Ten teams? Wow. I would have bet everything I own that Eastern would never beat one Big Ten team. But three.. That's good.

STEVE KOVAL

Stranger things have happened...

LEON TOWNS

Like what?

STEVE KOVAL

I was a walk on football player at E-M-U. I played football for Cody High in Detroit.

LEON TOWNS

I dated two girls from Cody.

STEVE KOVAL

Lucky for them. Now - for whatever reason - here we are. Two Michigan guys - in Phoenix - at the same high school.

LEON TOWNS

That's right. Except that I've left the team and you are coming in.

STEVE KOVAL

Things change in life.

LEON TOWNS

Principal Jones fired me because the team didn't win. Wasn't all my fault.

STEVE KOVAL

Talk to me, Leon.

Leon Towns puts the box on a cabinet and continues talking.

LEON TOWNS

(Agitated) The parents said that the losing was all my fault. The newspapers blamed me - the radio sports guys blamed me. Mr. Koval, your gettin' the same kids I had last year - just a bit older - no talent. And you are losing six seniors. What team did you coach before the Titans?

STEVE KOVAL

I didn't. I just came to Phoenix to get out of the cold and teach. Next thing I know Principal Jones says I'm the new A.D. and the new football coach. Why'd you come to Phoenix, Leon?

LEON TOWNS

Warm. Change.

Leon Towns inhales, then exhales a cloud of cigarette smoke.

LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

So, **you** replaced me... an E-M-U grad replacing a U of M grad. This is a first. And you never coached before? This is gonna be fun to watch.

STEVE KOVAL

(Mildly) Everybody has a starting point - this is mine. We make choices. I decided to come here and Principal Jones accepted me. (Long pause) This season, the Titan football team will win games.

LEON TOWNS

(Mildly) Bull%^t. (Mock voice - slightly high pitched) "I can win if I think I can win. (Agitated voice) Bull&^%t. Pure bull*\$%t. Four or five star players on a football team wins games - not just positive thoughts.

STEVE KOVAL

(Mildly) Fran Tarkenton, Merlin Olson, Dick Butkus and Deacon Jones all never won "the big game".

(MORE)

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

Star players are great, but a team of people who think "win", put in the work and will not quit - well, that is where winning starts.

LEON TOWNS

Oh, your one of *those* people. This is what we have at Thunderbird - bad attitudes. Drug problems. No star players. Academic probation. Should I go on with more?

STEVE KOVAL

Mr. Towns, everything in life comes from how you think.

Steve Koval leans back in his chair.

LEON TOWNS

Your just talkin'. I've heard this psychobabble talk before, - a bunch of times - from a bunch of people. They win at the U-S-C, Notre Dame and University Michigan because they have prime players - we don't have the star players at Thunderbird High School.

Leon puts the lit end of the cigarette out in the dead plant that sits on a steel filing cabinet. He grabs the cardboard box, walks out of the office and speaks from 15 feet down the hallway.

LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

0 and 9 for first year Head Coach - Steve Koval.

Steve Koval sticks his head out of the doorway and talks to Leon Towns.

STEVE KOVAL

(Mildly) It's not going to be that way this year.

LEON TOWNS

Why? Are they adding another game - so you can lose 10 in a row?
(Laughs)

Laughing, Leon Towns walks off down the hallway. Steve Koval goes back into his office and sits at his desk, daydreaming. A small smile comes over his face.

STEVE KOVAL (V.O.)

(In his head) Are they adding another game so you can lose 10 in a row? Leon is funny. (Pause) But, we are not going to be zero and nine.

INT. PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES OFFICE. - MORNING

Steve Koval sits in one of three green leather and steel chairs in front of the desk of Principal Cecil Jones. Principal Cecil Jones is wearing a blue suit, with highly polished shoes. He is sitting on the edge of the front of the steel and leather topped desk, holding a manila file.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

Why do you want to speak to me, Mr. Koval?

STEVE KOVAL

With respect to your position, sir, I want to control who I hire and how I run this football team.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

You want to control the team? I'm the principal. I "control the team" as much as I want to control the football team. Don't put me in a corner Mr. Koval? Don't try it. I have ultimate say, but I will respect your thoughts. *Who* do you have in mind, and *what* do you have in mind Mr. Koval?

STEVE KOVAL

The who... is Leon Towns.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

The man I just fired as the coach?

STEVE KOVAL

He *played* football - he was a star player at the University of Michigan. I knew of him before I came to Thunderbird.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

I've heard a few teachers say that he played college football, but he was hired three years before I came here... and that was eight years ago.

(MORE)

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES (CONT'D)

I don't care about his football life and he never mentioned playing football to me.

STEVE KOVAL

I'm going to ask him if he will be my assistant coach.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

No. Have a nice day, Mr. Koval.

Steve Koval stands up and speaks.

STEVE KOVAL

I would like to continue this discussion at a later date.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

Don't be late for class, Mr. Koval.

Steve Koval leaves the room as Cecil Jones walks to a file case, finds the Leon Towns file and silently reads. Under university: University of Michigan. Under Extracurricular Activities the word: **Unimportant** is hand written.

INT. CLASSROOM IN THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL. - MORNING

STEVE KOVAL

Leon, do you have a minute?

LEON TOWNS

The new guy. C'mon in. Kids won't be here for three minutes.

STEVE KOVAL

I'll get right to the point. I want you to be my assistant football coach.

LEON TOWNS

No thanks. Football is behind me. I'm a teacher. Anything else, Mr. ahhh....Koval?

STEVE KOVAL

Steve Koval. Call me Steve, OK?

Leon slightly nods his head up and down.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

Leon, you really know the game. Those kids could benefit from you.

LEON TOWNS
Benefit from me? Remember -
(sarcastically) I lost a bunch of
games. Zero and nine last year.

STEVE KOVAL
You know football.

LEON TOWNS
This conversation has ended. Please
get out of my classroom before I/

STEVE KOVAL
(Calmly) Before you what?

LEON TOWNS
Before I... call security and have
you escorted out of here.

STEVE KOVAL
Leon, I know who you are and what
you accomplished. You know
football.

LEON TOWNS
Mr. Koval -I'm not coaching. Please
leave my room.

Steve Koval begins to walk out of the room. He takes a few
steps, turns around and talks to Leon Towns.

STEVE KOVAL
OK, tell me about you.

Teenagers begin to fill the classroom.

LEON TOWNS
I have nothing more to say. Class
is starting in a minute.

Leon nods towards the door. Steve Koval leaves the room. Leon
sits behind his desk as students fill the room.

INT. TOP OF CONCRETE STEPS OF APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

LEON TOWNS
(Slurring his words)Number three in
the N-F-L draft.

Holding a drink in a red plastic cup, Leon tips the cup to
his mouth and pours down the contents. He is drunk. He tries
to balance himself, but he tumbles down the concrete steps.

Leon tries to get up, but can't move. He grimaces. He grabs his right ankle. Blood is coming through the cloth.

INT. CLASSROOM THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL. - MORNING

Strikingly beautiful, KRYSTIN AUTUM, 18, stands in front of the daydreaming Leon Towns. She speaks to him.

SUSAN SMITH

Mr. Towns, is the homework due today or Friday? (Pause) Mr. Towns?

LEON TOWNS

Ahhh... Friday.

Leon has a bit of a hard time standing up. He grabs his right leg and stands up.

INT. MAIN OFFICE OF THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL. - LATER

Leon Towns takes seven steps, then an eighth step with a very slight limp through the main office to his mail slot. He takes the envelope, smiles at the school secretary, WANDA PIEDMONT, 60, and talks to her.

LEON TOWNS

Payday is a good day.

WANDA PIEDMONT

Just in time for my bills.

LEON TOWNS

Me to.

EXT. TEACHER'S PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Steve Koval walks up to Leon Towns as Leon is opening the door of his scratched and dirty 2010 blue Chevy Camaro.

STEVE KOVAL

Leon, could I have a few minutes to talk football?

LEON TOWNS

About the Phoenix Cardinals... the Wolverines, or the Eagle - Hurons?

STEVE KOVAL

(smiling) I'm a Huron - the new teams are called the Eagles.

(MORE)

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

Let's talk Thunderbird Titans football. I need you to help me coach the team.

LEON TOWNS

We already talked about this. I'm not doin' it. Not interested. I was fired by Principal Jones.

STEVE KOVAL

I'm the Athletic Director. I looked it up... I hire *my* coaches.

LEON TOWNS

Look, man... the team won a hand full of games over the last ten years. Winning is something that is big part of the Titan football team.

Leon takes a step into his car.

STEVE KOVAL

Will you give me one minute?

Leon nods his head yes.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

There was a time when you were totally committed to winning. I'm sure you worked your butt off during every practice and at every game when you played for the Wolverines. I think you believed that you couldn't be stopped. I know all about you: cocaptain of the University of Michigan football team for 2 years. Big ten championship team for 2 years. Rose Bowl player of the game. And, I've read this about you - you were a walk on - no scholarship until your second season. You accomplished all of that without being committed to being a winner? - (Quietly)
Bullcrap!

LEON TOWNS

(Quietly) and no NFL career because I was a big drinker and fell down some concrete steps and blew out my ankle.

(MORE)

LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

I stopped drinking on my 28th birthday, but (long pause) now I go to A-A meetings every Wednesday.

STEVE KOVAL

I... go to the meetings to.

LEON TOWNS

You're a member of the same club as me?

STEVE KOVAL

Yep. I drank every time we won at Eastern - which wasn't very often. I drank when we lost. I drank with friends... and people I just met. I drank Friday nights, Thursday nights - Wednesday after last class - just about

LEON TOWNS

(Interrupting Steve) Every night and sometimes during the day. We've got the same devil on our shoulder - (Pause) Mr. New Football coach.

STEVE KOVAL

I'm in recovery. It's been 1 month and 23 days since I had a drink - I'm allergic to the stuff. My wife Linda and I are... separated - my choice. My wife, son A.J. and daughter Krystin live with Linda's mother and father.

Tears come to Steve Koval's eyes. But, he doesn't cry.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

I hope... I think... that we will be together in another month or 2. I asked my wife to live with her parents in Sun City until I could totally control this thing.

LEON TOWNS

I haven't touched the stuff for nine years two months and three days. I'm just not going' back in the bottle.

STEVE KOVAL

One day at a time.

LEON TOWNS

Day by day.

STEVE KOVAL

I have another challenge for you,
Mr. Towns.

LEON TOWNS

I don't think I need another...
(Pause) What are you...

STEVE KOVAL

(Pause) Will you be my assistant
coach?

LEON TOWNS

I believe that you're not drinking
any more - but what are you
smoking?(Pause) I don't want any
more football. Football helped me
have my problem.

Leon gets into his car.

LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

You're on your own Mr. New Football
Coach.

STEVE KOVAL

Leon... please - listen to me:
Football didn't make you drink -
you made **you** drink. You chose to
drink - just like you chose to play
football or to teach - or to do
anything. Think about being my
assistant coach... OK?

LEON TOWNS

No. No more thinking about
football. I'm not going to be your
Assistant Coach. No more football.
I gave you your time to talk.

Leon starts SFX: VROOM his car and quickly drives away. Steve
Koval walks back to the school.

EXT. SIDEWALK ALONG THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

JOE SMOKE 18, walks along side MARIA HERNANDEZ 17. They both
have a book in one hand as Joe is trying to walk slightly on
his toes to be as tall as Maria. Marie slightly smiles as she
sees what Joe is trying to do.

JOE SMOKE

I like walking you home, Maria.

Maria smiles at Joe as he is trying to hide standing on his toes.

MARIA HERNANDEZ

Why, Joe? Why do you like walking me home.

JOE SMOKE

Your sunshine... even on a cloudy day.

MARIA HERNANDEZ

(Maria smiles) You took that line from a song that my Dad sings. My Mom likes it when he sings it to her. He dances for her when he sings. Will you dance and sing for me, Joe?

JOE SMOKE

Here? Now?

A car full of teenagers is watching and smiling. They car pulls alongside Joe and Maria. They are all staring at Joe and Maria.

MARIA HERNANDEZ

Is the tough football player scared? Well, are you going to dance and sing for me, Joe... in front of your football buddies?

The car of teens is three feet away right alongside Joe and Maria. Joe looks at Maria then at the car and back at Maria. Joe drops his book to the ground. He begins to rhythmically snap his fingers. He takes a step closer to Maria. She stops walking. Joe athletically and smoothly dances as he sings.

JOE SMOKE

(Above average singing) I've got sunshine on a cloudy day. When it's cold outside - I've got the month of May. I guess you say what can make me feel this way? My girl. My girl. My girl. Talking 'bout my girl.

Joe stops singing and smiles. He bows to the car of teens, then to Maria. The group in the car claps and hoots. Joe picks up his book and puts his arm around Maria as they continue to walk down the street.

INT. PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES OFFICE. - AFTERNOON

Principal Jones, briefcase in hand, is opening the door to leave. Steve Koval is standing on the other side of the door.

STEVE KOVAL

May I see you for a few minutes, sir?

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

Respectful requests get answered. Yes... come in - you have three minutes.

STEVE KOVAL

Leon Towns.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

A blunt start. What about Leon Towns?

STEVE KOVAL

The team could benefit from him.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

His football record for the past years is evidence of my point. You are the new coach. I fired him. No. (Slight laugh) How can *he* help? You'll have no significant answer.

STEVE KOVAL

He knows football. And I understand what these kids need.

Cecil Jones stands up and gets within 12 inches of Steve Koval's face.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

Get really close - I don't want you to miss a word.

Steve Koval moves to within six inches of Cecil Jones' face.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES (CONT'D)

(Pause) (Quietly). No. This meeting has ended. You know the way out, Mr. Koval.

STEVE KOVAL

Leon knows football way more than I do. I want him as part of this team. What do *you* want, Cecil?

Cecil Jones turns and takes three steps. He pauses. He turns and looks back at Steve Koval.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

(Slightly angered) OK... I'll play your game. I want this school to not be the object of ridicule. Can you change that... Mr. Koval? Can you? The superintendent of schools told me that "The Thunderbird High Titan football team has the lowest G.P.A. of all the teams in the city - along with the lowest winning percentage. Can you change the football team's G.P.A. and win games Mr. Koval?

STEVE KOVAL

I can get the G.P.A. up... and change the football team - but I need help.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

(Pause) Mr. Koval - You must win football games(Pause)and raise the G.P.A. So... will you?

STEVE KOVAL

I will.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

(Exaggerated pause) You may hire Mr. Leon Towns as your assistant coach. I will not tolerate a bunch of losses or a low G.P.A. As the boss of the team - which includes Mr. Towns, you must deliver, Mr. Koval. Am I clear?

STEVE KOVAL

The world as we have it is a process of our thinking. It -

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

(Says the same words at he same time as Steve Koval)
Cannot be changed without changing our thinking.

STEVE KOVAL

I see that you like the work and thinking of Albert Einstein. So do I.(Pause) The G.P.A. will go up.
(MORE)

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

The team will change how they think and they ... will... win... football games. Leon Towns will change his mind about the position of Assistant Coach.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

*You asked him before you asked me?
I run this school, Mr. Koval.*

STEVE KOVAL

Sir, you made me the Athletic Director. So I am directing athletics.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

You've pushed me to the edge, Mr. Koval, leave before I get angry at you and myself for changing my mind.

Steve Koval walks to the door of the office, turns the knob slightly and speaks.

STEVE KOVAL

Thank you, Mr. Jones. You ultimately decide what happens here. Thank you.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

No need to tell me what I already know, Mr. Koval.

Principal Jones makes a motion towards the door. Steve Koval walks out.

EXT. HIGH ABOVE THE FOOTBALL/BASEBALL TRACK AREA OF THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL.- MORNING

Leon Towns pulls up in his scratched and dirty beaten up 2010 blue Chevrolet Camaro. Leon gets out of the car. A carton of cigarettes on the passenger seat lay near a pile of fast food wrappers. He slowly walks to the cinder track turning his head from left to right -looking for something or somebody. Leon Towns wears a blue University of Michigan t shirt with dark blue U of M sweat pants and huge army style boots. Steve Koval, standing on the cinder track in the early morning sunlight wears an Eastern Michigan University sweat shirt, grey shorts, and running shoes. Both men are standing about 10 feet away from each other.

LEON TOWNS

I've seen you out here. Do you have a minute for your assistant football coach... unless you already hired somebody?

Steve Koval smiles and extends his hand.

STEVE KOVAL

Welcome aboard, Mr. Towns. What made you change your mind?

LEON TOWNS

I've never been a quitter. I've been fired - but I've never been a quitter. I want w's.

STEVE KOVAL

Good. We are going to win a bunch of games this year Leon.

LEON TOWNS

So... you want me to run around the track with you and talk football?

Leon makes a swirling circular motion with his finger.

STEVE KOVAL

We will walk and talk football. OK? We've got a small bit of time until football season begins. I'm going to learn how to be a football coach... from you. And you, in return, are going to learn something from me... at least relearn something that you knew for a long time.

Leon Towns takes out a cigarette and lights it.

LEON TOWNS

And what is Mr. E.-M.-U. going to teach to Mr. U of M.?

STEVE KOVAL

(Matter of a factly) I know about what you did at U of M. I'll get you... I mean I'll help you be that same guy. (Pause) When the players see what's happening with you, well, they'll follow you like you were a free I-phone.

Leon takes one last long drag on his cigarette, exhales smoke, and drops the cigarette to the track. He rubs out the ember with his boot.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

Let's start walking. No jogging - no running. Walking. Side by side. Come on - you don't want an E.M.U grad to be in front of a Wolverine... do you?

LEON TOWNS

My bad leg won't put up with this. I messed it up - three operations.

STEVE KOVAL

You can do it. Come on, Leon, let's walk and talk football.

Steve Koval starts to slowly walk. Leon Towns starts to walk at the side of Steve Koval.

LEON TOWNS

OK. I'm walking. But, if my leg hurts - I stop.

STEVE KOVAL

OK. Now... tell me about a good pass play for 4th and long.

Steve and Leon are talking and walking around the track. Leon stops walking. Steve stops walking.

LEON TOWNS

I'm 50 pounds over what I should weigh. I ate three donuts on the way here... I had two cigarettes after the donuts. This is going to be tough-

STEVE KOVAL

I don't see any quitters here.

Leon begins to walk again with Steve at his side. The men talk.

SUPER: THE NEXT DAY

EXT. NORTH SIDE OF RUNNING TRACK - MORNING

Five men walk and roll in wheelchairs on to the cinder track. They are all 40-65 years old. The oldest man and the youngest man are in wheelchairs.

The older man in the wheelchair has one leg and the younger man has no legs. The standing man is wearing dark sunglasses. The chubby man has one arm missing. The two other standing men each have one prosthetic legs. STAN KOVAL, 62 is one of the standing men with one prosthetic leg. Stan Koval approaches Leon Towns and points at him.

STAN KOVAL

You're Leon Towns, I remember when you played for U of M.- great player - great player. Fast and smart. There's no quit in this man. So.. What are you doing these days, Leon?

LEON TOWNS

I... I... I'm a teacher and the assistant football coach here at Thunderbird High School.

STAN KOVAL

I'm Stan. Good to meet you.

LEON TOWNS

Good to meet you, Stan. Why... what are you gentlemen doing here so early in the morning?

STAN KOVAL

We meet here three times a week so that we don't turn into mush - we exercise together. We're veterans. Are you still fast, Leon?

LEON TOWNS

No... almost as fast. OK -I'm slow(Leon laughs.) I goofed up my ankle and gained some weight. But, I'm workin' through those obstacles.

Leon Towns begins a very slow jog away from the men.

LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

(Over his shoulder)Excuse me gentlemen, but I need to get in my exercise.

Leon, jogging slowly, is 30 yards away from the group on the cinder track.

STEVE KOVAL
(Slightly yelling) I'll meet up
with you in a few, Leon.

Steve Koval walks up to the man with the almost bald head and
prosthetic leg and puts money in his hand.

STEVE KOVAL
Uncle Stan - Thanks for
showin' up with your pals
from the Sun City Amvets
post. Here's \$75 bucks
for breakfast for you and
your friends.

Steve Koval quickly shakes hands with each man.

STAN KOVAL
\$75 bucks for 45 seconds. How much
is that an hour? You are welcome
Steve... How did we do?

STEVE KOVAL
Look.

Steve points to Leon Towns.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)
Leon is jogging!

Steve Koval catches up with Leon Towns and jogs side by side
with him.

LEON TOWNS
I thought that having a smoke and
finishing up with a donut when we
were done talking with those
veterans was a bad idea.(Pause)
Those men - they just don't quit.

STEVE KOVAL
They just keep at it. They're
motivated.

LEON TOWNS
Workin' with what they've got. I'm
impressed.

LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)
What motivates you, Steve?

STEVE KOVAL

I don't like losing. 2nd place
isn't good for me.

LEON TOWNS

So... it's not winning?

STEVE KOVAL

I like to win, but the taste of
getting beat or doing something
poorly stays with me for a long
time. I like to control what I can
control. I control my effort.

Steve looks to the sky for a moment.

LEON TOWNS

I think we both know why those men
were put in front of us today,
don't we? Those men were put here -
in front of us - on purpose.

STEVE KOVAL

Maybe they were, Leon. Maybe they
were.

EXT. DRIVEWAY OF STEVE KOVAL'S HOME. - AFTERNOON

Steve pulls up onto the driveway in a 1956 black Chrysler 300. He parks the car in front of the huge four car steel garage, equipped with two separate double garage doors. He walks past the side door of the house, to the side steel door of the garage. He puts his key in two door locks, slides a steel bar up and opens the door.

INT. FOUR CAR, TWO CAR DEEP STEEL SIDED GARAGE. - DAY

Steve flicks a switch and three spotlights light up the 1969 black Dodge Charger undergoing restoration on the lower part of the car under the driver's side door. A Hemi engine is attached to an engine stand 15 feet from the car. Makeshift exhaust is linked to each side of the engine. The engine's starter motor is linked to a battery. Two wires are hooked to a push button start switch. A tube runs from a large gas can to the engine. Steve walks over to the Dodge Charger, runs his hand along the long lines of the car from front to the back. He walks back, stoops down and slides his right hand up and back over the body filler in the area undergoing restoration. He grabs a small piece of sandpaper. He glides the sandpaper over the under repair area a few times then puts the paper on a nearby stool.

COACH STEVE KOVAL (V.O.)
 (Speaking to himself - just above a
 whisper - out loud) First, think
 through the situation. Evaluate.
 Work hard to improve. Work some
 more. Don't quit. Finish the job.

Steve walks over to the Hemi engine on the engine stand, pushes the button and the engine SFX- VROOM-VROOM roars to life. The engine idles. Steve places his hand on the linkage of the twin carburetors and moves the small metal bar. The engine SFX- VROOM-VROOM responds and roars. He guns SFX- VROOM-VROOM SFX- VROOM-VROOM the massive engine two more times. Steve smiles and puts a huge cloth over the carburetors to shut the engine down. He flicks off the light switch and leaves the building.

INT. KITCHEN OF STEVE KOVAL'S HOME. - AFTERNOON

The kitchen is older and under renovation. The wooden floor is 1/2 coated with new dark stain. Cabinet doors are off of their hinges and placed on saw horses. An electric sander sits on cabinet doors. Steve sees the light blinking on the phone base and pushes the button. He hears his wife's voice.

LINDA KOVAL (O.S)
 How are you doing, honey? Your
 daughter misses you and I miss you.
 Your son misses you. I know you're
 getting better. I lovvvvve you.
 Call me. We need to be a family
 again. I love you. Your kids love
 you.

Steve, rubs a tear off of his face and punches buttons on the phone.

STEVE KOVAL
 (1/2 second pause) Hon... I'm so
 happy to hear your voice. (Pause) I
 love you to. I'm gettin' through.
 (Pause) Good to hear. No. The
 further I get away from it, the
 better I am. (Pause) May be a
 couple more weeks. (Pause) I want
 to face this thing by myself - I
 gotta look the dragon in the eye
 when he shows up again. (Pause)
 Love you too. Tell the kids that I
 love them!

Steve takes a deep breath, hangs up the phone and walks to the refrigerator.

He takes a chunk of lettuce, some blue cheese crumbles and two pieces of chicken out of the refrigerator. He stops at a drawer and takes out a knife and fork with his left hand. He carries the food in his right hand. He walks to the kitchen table and places the food and the utensils on the table in front of him. He turns around walks two steps to the wall, grabs a picture of his family - off the wall and places the image on the kitchen table opposite of where he is sitting and eating. He eats, quietly says "salt" to himself and stands up.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)
(Very quietly.) Salt.

He walks over to the three kitchen cabinets and opens the middle cabinet and grabs the salt shaker. He sees a bottle of whiskey on an upper shelf, partially obscured by a plate. He takes the salt in one hand and the whiskey in the other hand. He stands adjacent to the table, salts his chicken and places the whiskey on the on the table in front of a chair, next to the image of his family. The whiskey bottle becomes three times its size. The image of his family becomes darker... almost black.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)
(Calmly with a touch of fear) You picked this moment to show me how big you are. I see what you're doing. My wife, daughter and son aren't here, I'm the new teacher at school... the new athletic director and football coach. I'm under some stress - so you're going to test me. Is that what you're thinking?

The bottle slightly obscures the family photo. The photo darkens.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)
One drink wont kill me. I can have one drink. Nobody will know that I had one drink.

Steve, gets up, gets a glass from a cupboard, walks to the refrigerator, opens the freezer, grabs a handful of ice and puts the ice in the glass. Steve stands next to the table.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)
(Calmly with a bit of strength) I wanted to test myself - being alone -without any help. Well, the ice is in the glass.

Steve puts the glass of ice in front of the bottle on the table. The bottle bends over the glass with the help of Steve's hand. The liquid is about to enter the glass. SFX: CRACK- CRACK- CRACK- Broken glass (from a normal size bottle) is all over the table and floor. Whiskey covers the table. Steve is standing and holding the top of the broken bottle. Pieces of bottle finish scattering on the floor. He begins to sweep the floor.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

I win.

Steve Koval 1/2 smiles and then walks over to the TV set, clicks the remote and sees a horrible dancer. He quietly laughs, turns off the set and walks over to the overstuffed leather couch on the hardwood floor. He looks at a three inch pile of manila folders, and flips through the folders to read these names: STAR CALDWELL 17, LUTHER SMITH 16, JOSHUA HOWARD 17 and JULIUS SIMS, 17. Steve grabs the top folder, opens it and begins to read it while laying down. He continues reading the contents of the folders.

INT. CLASSROOM THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL. - MORNING

Steve Koval wears a brown sports jacket with a white shirt and a wide Hawaiian tie and Khaki pants. His back is to the students as he writes his name in cursive on the blackboard. He turns to the class and speaks.

STEVE KOVAL

Today, I want all of you to say the name of a person who is an important part of American history. The person can be living or dead - famous or not famous. Miss Star Caldwell, please begin.

STAR CALDWELL

Sammy Davis Junior.

STEVE KOVAL

Excellent choice. Famous singer, dancer and actor. Now, Mr. Luther Smith.

LUTHER DETROIT

Martin Luther King.

STEVE KOVAL

Prominent peace loving civil rights activist. Mr. Joshua Howard - it's your turn.

JOSHUA HOWARD

Henry Ford.

STEVE KOVAL

Assembly line mastermind. He was the first to pay production workers \$5 dollars a day. Mr. Ford owned Ford Motor Company.

JOSHUA HOWARD

\$12 dollars is what I make **an hour** at McDonald's. 5 dollars is not a lot of money for a whole day of work.

STEVE KOVAL

(Warmly) At that time an average home cost about \$1,800 - now an average new 2,000 square foot home across America costs about \$225,000 dollars, but, that's economics and that is another class.

JOSHUA HOWARD, 16,

Teach - Ahhh.. Mr. Koval. How did you know who we are? We ain't wearing name tags.

STEVE KOVAL

All of you are special to me. So, I learned your names.

JULIUS SIMS

How did you do it?

STEVE KOVAL

(Matter of factly) I studied your files. You do what you have to do to do your job well.

JULIUS SIMS

You learned a few of our names so that we would think that you're a genius.

Julius Sims stands up.

JULIUS SIMS (CONT'D)

Who am I?

STEVE KOVAL

Julius Frederick Sims. And, who is the person in American history who is important to you?

JULIUS SIMS

Irene King. Who is that... Mr. Koval?

STEVE KOVAL

(Warmly) She is your grandmother. You may be seated, Mr. Sims.

The students all have a shocked looked on their faces and become silent.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES (V.O.)

Teachers - we have a Code seven. I repeat... a code seven.

EXT. HIGH ABOVE THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

At each corner of the school, two blue and white Phoenix police cars are parked. Four more Phoenix police cars are slowly riding around the perimeter of the school.

INT. PHOENIX POLICE CAR, NORTH CORNER OF THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL. - DAY

PETER WALSKI, 32, and chubby, 5'8" tall, is seated in the passenger seat. OSCAR ROBERTS, African American 37, 6'2", and medium build, is driving. Peter Walski is eating a large submarine sandwich. Seeing a dog in front of the cruiser, Oscar Roberts suddenly SFX SCREECH stops the patrol car. The submarine sandwich is all over the face of Peter Walski.

PETER WALSKI

You did that on purpose.

OSCAR ROBERTS

Yes, I stopped the car on purpose. I forgot to tell your sandwich.

Peter smiles then laughs. Oscar laughs. Stanley wipes his face with a napkin.

PETER WALSKI

I don't see any kids fighting around here. I see cars.

OSCAR ROBERTS

Look - behind those three dumpsters. I see movement.

EXT. TEACHER'S PARKING LOT, THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Ten students, black, white and Hispanic are fist fighting. Three students are each holding another student while another young man is punching. In the middle of the group, a 5'4" inch student, LOUIS SOUTHERLAND, 16, slight of build, is standing. He holds a baseball bat, with one hand on the small end cap. The barrel end is touching the ground.

LOUIS SOUTHERLAND
(Yelling) Give me some motha'
f&*ka' so I can smash his head in.

Officer Oscar Roberts walks up to within ten feet of Louis Southerland. Peter Walski walks up and stands at the side of Oscar Roberts. Four more Hispanic officers appear, surrounding the group. The boys see the police and stop fighting.

OSCAR ROBERTS
(Firmly talking)) Phoenix police.
All of you - don't move. And you...
who are you?

LOUIS SOUTHERLAND
I'm Louis Southerland and I'm not
scared of you.

Oscar Roberts slowly walks up to within six feet of Louis Southerland. The barrel end of a baseball bat is still touching the ground.

OSCAR ROBERTS
Louis Southerland, - you're not
scared of me - OK - you're not
scared of me. Right now, Mr.
Southerland, you are in a small bit
of trouble. You raise that bat at
me and you will be in big
trouble.(Pause) Do you want to be
arrested for threatening an officer
of the law? We have witnesses.

Louis looks up and see hundreds of students who are looking at him from the windows of the school building.

OSCAR ROBERTS (CONT'D)
Take your chances in court and
possibly go to jail or... drop the
bat.

Louis Southerland drops the bat while not taking his eyes off Officer Oscar Roberts.

LOUIS SOUTHERLAND

I'm cool.

OSCAR ROBERTS

Smart move Mr. Southerland, very smart.

INT. 2012 HOT ROD HEMI, RED CHALLENGER - EVENING

Michael Warner is driving the hot rod red Challenger with two male passengers. The car is moving south on Thunderbird Road to 19th Road. TOMMY WOYCHINSKI, 18, speaks.

TOMMY WOYCHINSKI

I can't wait until this Friday night. I'm gonna pick up Carol, cruise for a while in my brother's F-150, then we're going snipe hunting near the Salt River.

MICHAEL WARNER

Snipe hunting? How can you see -

TOMMY WOYCHINSKI

That's the point, Sherlock. You can't find snipe because there aren't any snipe. So we need to do **something** to pass the time. Ohhh. Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhh. Yeah!

EXT. THUNDERBIRD ROAD, TWO LANES NORTH AND TWO LANES SOUTH, AT A STOPLIGHT. - NIGHT

A 2008 white Mustang is SFX RUMBLE- RUMBLE revving its engine next to the 2012 red Challenger. SEAN DAVIS, 17, red hair, thin and tall is driving the Mustang.

SEAN DAVIS

Hey... dumb s&*ts!

Bernard Prince turns and looks at Sean Davis.

SEAN DAVIS (CONT'D)

Yeah... you. We beat you and your **for s#t** Titan football team by 40 points last season. Now I'm gonna blow the doors off of your crap red Challenger... or don't you want a piece of this?

The Mustang engine SFX - VROOM- VROOM revs loudly at the stop light. Michael Warner sees a Maricopa County Sheriff patrol car approach from the left side of the road. He slightly SDFX VROOM revs the engine of the Challenger.

MICHAEL WARNER
Goofball! When it turns green...

The light turns green and the Mustang jumps ahead with a SFX VROOM- loud roar. The Challenger takes off slowly. The Mustang is put into 2nd gear and pulls far ahead. From behind the Mustang, a Maricopa County Sheriff patrol car's lights VFX - FLASH. Siren SFX- WOOP- WOOP is blaring. The deputy sheriff in the car motions to Sean Davis who pulls the Mustang over to the right side of busy Thunderbird Road.

MICHAEL WARNER (CONT'D)
Dumb ass. He's on a football team full of dumb asses. This season he and his goofy football team is going to get the chocolate kicked out of them. We **are not** gonna lose a ton of games this year. Not gonna happen. I'm sick of this losing.

ROBERT NICHOLAS
That new American History teacher who knows everybody's name is the new A-D and football coach. He's pretty cool. Maybe he'll change some stuff. I've been practicing. Been throwing footballs to my Dad while he rides on my old mini-bike.

EXT. NINE ACRE ASPHALT PARKING LOT - MORNING

JOHN NICHOLAS, 44, is bald, 5'11" and slightly muscular. He is wearing a A.S.U. sweat shirt with blue jeans. He is holding a football, standing near a running SFX RUMBLE_RUMBLE mini-bike, with a green plastic clothes hamper screwed to the left side.

JOHN NICHOLAS
Take this.

John Nicholas hands his son the football.

JOHN NICHOLAS (CONT'D)
I'll go out 15 yards, fake right and head slightly left. Put the ball in the basket after I've gone another ten yards.

John Nicholas twists the right grip of the mini-bike SFX VROOM and the dark green machine quickly moves forward. At 15 yards out, John Nicholas makes a slight right turn, then heads left across the parking lot. Robert Nicholas, takes two steps back, cocks his right arm and throws the football at the basket. The ball ends up ten feet to the right side of the mini-bike.

JOHN NICHOLAS (CONT'D)
Nice spiral. Same play. (Warmly)
You can do it - put the ball in the
basket, son.

John Nicholas returns on the mini-bike to the right of his son.

JOHN NICHOLAS (CONT'D)
Ready? Hut 1, hut 2. Hike!

Robert Nicholas nods his head yes. John Nicholas takes off SFX VROOM on the mini-bike, rides out 15 yards, turns slightly right, then goes left. At 22 yards out, Robert Nicholas takes a step back, cocks his right arm and throws the football toward his father on the moving mini-bike. The ball lands two feet short of the basket. John Nicholas picks up the ball, puts it in the basket and returns to the right side of his son.

JOHN NICHOLAS (CONT'D)
Close your eyes. See the ball going
in the basket. Follow through with
your arm movement. Can you see the
ball going into the basket?

Robert Nicholas closes his eyes nods his head yes, opens his eyes, reaches in the basket, grabs the ball, and holds it at chest level.

ROBERT NICHOLAS
I can see the football going in.
It's goin' in. Ready? Set. Hut one,
Hut two, Hut three.

John Nicholas takes off SFX VROOM on the mini bike, 15 yards straight, turns slightly right then turns slightly left and forward. Robert Nicholas, seeing his Dad at the 20-yard mark, takes 1 step back, cocks his arm, then throws the ball with an exaggerated follow through. The ball lands in the basket. Robert runs up to meet his father who is sitting on the mini-bike.

JOHN NICHOLAS
Good job. Good. You put one
in.(Pause) But, It's gettin' late.
(MORE)

JOHN NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

Can you put one more in or are we leaving and getting burgers?

ROBERT NICHOLAS

The ball goes in the basket one more time.

EXT. PARKING LOT OF DIAMOND'S - AFTERNOON

John Nicholas is on the mini-bike. Robert Nicholas stands five feet from him and holds the football in his hand.

ROBERT NICHOLAS

I'm gonna do two. Got this. One more in the basket.

JOHN NICHOLAS

Four seconds to go. Titans are down by four. Ball on the 26 - yard line. You ready?

John Nicholas guns SX VROOM the engine of the mini-bike and rides 15 yards, slightly turns right, then slightly turns left then straight ahead. Robert Nicholas, takes a step back, cocks his right arm back when his father rides to 30 yards out and throws the ball. The spiral thrown ball floats in the air and lands in the basket. John Nicholas turns the mini-bike around and ends up eight feet from his son. Robert Nicholas does a fist pump.

JOHN NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

Good work, Rob. Real good.

ROBERT NICHOLAS

Two is good with my Dad on a mini-bike, but during a game with huge guys trying to crush me like a grape sounds impossible. (Robert takes a deep breath.) How am I gonna' to complete a pass with three guys chasin' me?

JOHN NICHOLAS

Think through this with me... your offensive line protects you. Right?

ROBERT NICHOLAS

Right.

JOHN NICHOLAS

OK. So... who is faster you or a 220 pound line man?

ROBERT NICHOLAS

Me.

JOHN NICHOLAS

So... You have four or five guys protecting you and you're faster than a 220 pound lineman.

ROBERT NICHOLAS

Yeah, I can do this.

JOHN NICHOLAS

Now you're thinking right. Here's the next step. Put in the work. Find the time. Practice running 5 and ten and 15 yard sprints while holding the ball. Act like guys are trying to tackle you. Here - I'll show you.

John Nicholas has the football in hand and pretends to evade tacklers/opposing lineman. Robert Nicholas chases John Nicholas. Robert Nicholas lunges at John Nicholas. John Nicholas evades being caught.

JOHN NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

Is your much older father too fast for you?

Robert Nicholas goes after John Nicholas a second time and grabs him around the waist.

JOHN NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

Do this **evade the tackler** workout after your homework or after you see Sheila.

ROBERT NICHOLAS

Sheila or win games? Sheila or win games? Win games. See Sheila after games.

JOHN NICHOLAS

Now your thinking right.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD. - AFTERNOON

GILBERT JOHNSON, 42, and muscular is wearing a white button-down shirt with a very loose black tie and blackish gray suit pants. He is standing next to his son, JOHN JOHNSON, 17, who is wearing a white tank top and athletic short with a pair of Converse high top running shoes. JOHN JOHNSON, is 6'1'' and of medium build.

Gil JOHNSON

So... you want to have a different season than last year.

JOHN JOHNSON

I just don't want to be on a losing team anymore. (Pause) A hundred times a month you've been tellin' me that if I'm going to win in this world that I gotta do more than the next guy.

GIL JOHNSON

(Smiles) Good - it's finally sinking in that head of yours. You ready to run some patterns?

JOHN JOHNSON

Yep.

John Johnson gets in to the runner ready position.

GIL JOHNSON

Go ten yards out - then slant out 15 more.

John Johnson, jogs for ten yards then slants out and jogs for 15 more yards. He walks back.

GIL JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(Serious, but not angry) I'm happy that you want to win. But, to be a star you've got to put in star effort **during** practice. You think that pro football running backs run half ass in practice?

John JOHNSON

OK. OK. I'll do it again.

GIL JOHNSON

No. Don't do that again. Run full out - like you are in a game. Run like your girlfriend and your mom and your grandmother are watchin' - or we're goin home. Your choice...

John Johnson runs fast. He completes the 10 out and slant 15 pattern. He jogs back next to Gil Johnson.

GIL JOHNSON (CONT'D)

That was better. Raytheon Corporation didn't make me the manager of production because I came in late and played all day. You still have a chance for a football scholarship. You gotta want this and you gotta put in the work. What's it gonna be?

John Johnson walks up to within three feet of his father who is holding a football.

JOHN JOHNSON

My mom is watchin' and I want the college to pay for my tuition.

GIL JOHNSON

Ready. Set. Hut one... Hut two... Hut 3!

Gil Johnson hikes the ball to himself. John Johnson runs fast along the sideline, cutting in to the center of the field. Gil Johnson throw a pass to his son who catches the ball as he is in the air stretched out above the ground to the ground.

GIL JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Excellent speed. Excellent speed - and you focused on the ball. Put in the work and focus... every practice, then in the games.

JOHN JOHNSON

I'll do it. I want to do it.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD. - DAY

Three football players in street clothes are standing near the 15 yard line trying to kick the football over and between the uprights. The footballs are going to the left, right and under, but not between and over the middle bar. A ball rolls up to IRENE WEISS, 17, and 130 solid but slightly curvy pounds. Irene is practicing with the girls soccer team on the adjacent field.

IRENE WEISS

Can I give it a try?

Player #1 tosses the ball to Irene. She places the ball on the 15 yard line.

IRENE WEISS (CONT'D)
It's a football, so...

The three players wryly smile and nudge each other. Irene easily kicks the ball between the uprights, then sprints to get it. TIM KITZ, 16, speaks.

TIM KITZ
Nice field goal. Kick it to me,
here, this time... from there.

Tim Kits points to his chest.

IRENE WEISS
A line drive or with a bounce?

TIM KITZ
One bounce.

Irene Weiss kicks the ball with one bounce directly to the chest of Tim Kitz. Irene walks back to the three players.

IRENE WEISS
I've been thinking about trying out
for the team. If... you know, I
don't... disrupt anything.

TIM KITZ
You want to try out for the team?
Try out for the team. See you in
school tomorrow.

IRENE WEISS
Thanks. Maybe I'll talk to the
coach.

Tim Kitz talks to the other two players.

TIM KITZ
We need her on the team.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD. - DAY

ANTHONY CHICARELLI Sr., 44 is standing next to LEONARD BARNES,
45, muscular and wearing a white shirt and blue jeans.

LEONARD BARNES
Team has a new coach. He's an
American history teacher. My boy
says he's a great teacher. I hope
he's a great football coach.

ANTHONY CHICARELLI SR.

(With a slight tough guy - Italian/New York accent) Some new boss, I mean **coach** comes in - boom - they need to know right away - who is gonna be a player and who is gonna be a bench sitter. My son Anthony junior likes this history teaching football coach - and Anthony Junior likes football - so I support him - but, I was brought up in Italy - I know about soccer. My high school team won the championship for the whole country. three years in a row.(Pause)But,... I don't know American football. I know soccer and I know how to run a pizza joint. I don't know how to **hold** a football.

LEONARD BARNES

Don't worry. I know the game. Anthony, you just bein' here is what your boy needs. I played football. I know the game and I can throw the ball.

ANTHONY CHICARELLI SR.

(With medium Italian accent) Good. I don't want my son to see that I can't throw an American football.

LEONARD BARNES

(Warmly)Your lack of football skills isn't what is important here. These boys are focusing on speed. Were you ever fast, Anthony?

ANTHONY CHICARELLI SR.

(Boldly)I am fast, even in my old age. (Smiles) Probably faster than you. I was what you here in America say.. "Bad ass fast" - like - a lightning!

LEONARD BARNES

Lightning fast?

ANTHONY CHICARELLI

Leonard - you are five inches - make that 12 centimeters taller than me. You weigh 18 kilos or for you - 40 pounds more than me.

LEONARD BARNES (CONT'D)
That's about right.

ANTHONY CHICARELLI SR.
You are strong and tough, so you
are... top dog. Am I correct?

LEONARD BARNES
(Smiling)Yep.

ANTHONY CHICARELLI
And since we are friends you know I
am not being mean when I tell you
that you - even witha' all those
muscles - you can't take this
soccer ball from me. I'ma' too fast
for you.

LEONARD BARNES
OK. (Pause) Show me.

Anthony Chicarelli SR. drops the soccer ball to the turf.

ANTHONY CHICARELLI SENIOR
Take the ball from me.

Leonard shrugs his shoulders and speaks.

LEONARD BARNES
Anthony - you don't want any of
this. (He gestures to himself)

ANTHONY CHICARELLI SR.
He who controls the ball in any
game - wins the game. Big and
strong doesn't always beat smaller
'n fast. Most players - especially
the big guys, lose their speed
after a few ticks of the clock.

LEONARD BARNES
So... can you keep the ball away
from me?

ANTHONY CHICARELLI
(Warmly) Forget that for now,
Leonard. Let's focus on the boys.

LEONARD BARNES
OK.

ANTHONY CHICARELLI
They gotta practice like how they
gonna play in the game.
(MORE)

ANTHONY CHICARELLI (CONT'D)

My old soccer coach had a saying
about winning.

LEONARD BARNES

The boys are here. You tell 'em. In
Italian, in English - just tell em.

ANTHONY CHICARELLI SR.

I'll tell 'em. I'm gonna show 'em
to.

LEONARD BARNES

We... Anthony, you, gotta get it in
their heads - they need to put in
the work.

ANTHONY CHICARELLI SR.

I'll get'a the message in their
heads.

Six young men, join Leonard Barnes and Anthony Chicarelli JR.
in the middle of the football field. A football is tossed
underhandedly to each player. Leonard Barnes walks up to the
group with Anthony Chicarelli Sr. at his side. The
Thunderbird girls soccer team is ending practice nearby. The
girls are beginning to walk off of the field.

LEONARD BARNES

You all decided to be here because
you want this football season to be
different than last season.

All of the young men nod their head up and down.

LEONARD BARNES (CONT'D)

The official Titan football season
doesn't start for a few more weeks,
so you can go home now and come
back when practice starts.

All of the young men stand still.

LEONARD BARNES (CONT'D)

I think you all know Mr. Chicarelli
from Chicarelli'S Pizza. He was on
championship soccer teams in Italy.

ANTHONY CHICARELLI SR.

(Quietly)My team was three years
numero uno in the country.

LEONARD BARNES

Soccer is a sport where you run for the whole game. The whole game. So speed and being light on your feet is a big deal. Mr. Chicarelli is here to help you get faster.

ANTHONY CHICARELLI SR.

Near my feet I have a soccer ball. I know you play witha' football - but I wanna show how to be fast with your feet. What kinda ball - no matter! OK. I would like two volunteers to come and take the ball - Hey, there's a Irene Weiss - the soccer player - nice girl - eats with her family at my restaurant - (yelling) Heya' Irene, can you come here for a few minutes?

Irene Weiss hears Mr. Chicarelli and comes running over to the group.

ANTHONY CHICARELLI SR. (CONT'D)

Irene, you are a very good player on the soccer team, right?

IRENE WEISS

Two years on the All County team, Mr. Chicarelli.

ANTHONY CHICARELLI SR.

Good.

Mr. Chicarelli rolls the ball with his toe in front of Irene.

ANTHONY CHICARELLI SR. (CONT'D)

You two boys - try to get he ball from Irene.

Mr. Chicarelli points at two boys.

ANTHONY CHICARELLI SR. (CONT'D)

Anda' Irene - you keepa the ball away from the boys. You all'a ready?

IRENE WEISS

This won't be fair (Pause) These boys are football players.

Both of the boys have stunned looks on their faces.

LEONARD BARNES

She's serious. Two of you - come forward.

Two of the young men step forward. Both are 6'2" and muscular. Irene Weiss pushes the ball backward with her right foot and pops the ball up to her head. She drops the ball to her left foot. She dribbles the ball expertly runs 15 feet controlling the ball, stops suddenly and runs 20 more feet with the ball. The boys try to get the ball but they are too slow. Both boys end up falling on the ground.

ANTHONY CHICARELLI SR.

You are going to see players on the other team who are much taller and stronger than you. They gotta big muscles. (He almost whispers) But, you can't beata' speed. You faster - you win. Irene - kick the ball to me.

Anthony Chicarelli Sr. is standing about 20 yards away from Irene Weiss. She kicks the ball precisely to Mr. Chicarelli's right foot.

ANTHONY CHICARELLI SR. (CONT'D)

Now - you boys take the ball a away from me. I'm 44 years old - an old man compared to you two. Take... the... ball... from... me.

Mr. Chicarelli Sr. expertly moves the ball and evades the 2 boys. The taller boy falls down as he makes a last attempt to get the ball. The ball is passed to Irene. The boys try to take the ball away from her but fail miserably. Irene quickly passes the ball back to Anthony Sr.

LEONARD BARNES

Your fast, Chicarelli. You born that way or did you get that way?

ANTHONY CHICARELLI SR.

Four or five days a week I dribble the ball and I like'a to run.

Mr. Chicarelli looks at he assembled boys.

ANTHONY CHICARELLI SR. (CONT'D)

You gotta put in the time - here on the field - run, run, run. Run fast - win!

Anthony Chicarelli Senior smiles.

LEONARD BARNES

What should the boys do now to get faster, Mr. Chicarelli?

Anthony Chicarelli Sr, with arms folded, walks in front of the group of six young men and faces them.

ANTHONY CHCARELLI SENIOR

(Pauses) Showa' me how you run. 20 yards.

LEONARD BARNES

You heard the man. 20 yards out. Touch the line and 20 yards back. one, two, three... Go!

The young men run, but not fast. They jog back.

LEONARD BARNES (CONT'D)

What'd you think- how'd they do?

ANTHONY CHCARELLI SENIOR

You hada' your arms all over. Pump your arms like this-

Mr. Chicarelli moves his arms at his side, from front to back.

ANTHONY CHCARELLI SENIOR (CONT'D)

Run a bit faster. Control your arms. Pump up and down-up and down.

LEONARD BARNES

All of you, go out ten yards, small fake left, then go right for five more yards. One... two... three... go!

All six young men run faster, at 80%, but not at 100%. The group runs 10 yards out, shoulder fakes left then goes right 15 more yards. Anthony Chicarelli Jr. slightly leads the group at the end of the pattern. All six young men jog back and once again line up on the 20 yard line. They are all breathing a bit heavy.

LEONARD BARNES (CONT'D)

(Looks to Anthony Chicarelli Senior) How about 100% full speed - should they run at 100% full speed?

ANTHONY CHICARELLI SENIOR

I will join them.

The short run ends with Anthony Chicarelli Senior in first place. Stunned looks are on the faces of the young men.

LEONARD BARNES

Nice work men, but you've gotta run faster than a 44 year old man. Do it again. Pump your arms. This time 30 yards. Ready? Set. Go!

Leonard Barnes turns to Anthony Chicarelli Sr. and speaks.

LEONARD BARNES (CONT'D)

44 - and you beat those boys running?

ANTHONY CHICARELLI

I only faster then them one time. Two times - they all faster!

EXT. FOOTBALL/BASEBALL CINDER TRACK AREA OF THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Steve Koval, wearing khaki pants, white short sleeve shirt with a Hawaiian tie stands in front of 44 young men, all wearing gym shorts and t shirts.

STEVE KOVAL

(Mildly) I am Steve Koval, your new football coach. This year this team will win the Friendship Bowl against the Catholic League champs.

Leon Towns, slightly shakes his head up and down.

ANTHONY CHICARELLI JR.

Ahh... what's with Coach Towns.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

Mr. Towns is still a coach on this team.

SAM DAVIS

I don't get it.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

What don't you get, Sam?

SAM DAVIS

What happened? Why isn't Coach Towns the head coach?

COACH STEVE KOVAL

Principal Jones asked me to be the new head football coach - and when your boss tells you to do something... well, you say "yes".

LEON TOWNS

I'm the assistant coach.

SAM DAVIS

Is this some kinda' racial thing?

LEON TOWNS

The Superintendent of schools in Phoenix is black. He is the boss of Principal Jones who is black. No, Sam - it is not a racial thing.

ANTHONY CHCARELLI

May I speak?

STEVE KOVAL

Go ahead.

ANTHONY CHCARELLI

So how we gonna' go from zero and nine to winning the Friendship Bowl?

COACH LEON TOWNS

This is you, Coach Koval.

STEVE KOVAL

(Calmly) First - change your thoughts and you change your world. We will put in the effort - every moment of every practice... and every game. We will work harder than our opponent. Each of you - including me - will do our job. We will finish everything we start. (Pause) The only time you fail is when you fall down and stay down. My grandfather told me something that I still do to this day. He said that if you get knocked down three times that you have to get up four times. And if you get knocked down four times - you get up five times. You know why, you get up off the ground again and again and again? Because your opponent is going to do the quitting - not you.

(MORE)

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

He won't know what to do when you keep coming back up off of the ground. Understand, there will be no quitters on this team. That idea is going to be our team motto -

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

"Knocked down seven -

Steve Koval cups his right ear and leans into the team. A single player, WEAK VOICE PLAYER, 18, answers

WEAK VOICE PLAYER (V.O.)

Get up eight?

STEVE KOVAL

Get up eight. That's it. Good. "Knocked down seven... get up eight. Knocked down seven... get up eight. ". Remember it. Do it. We will help each other... during practice and on game day.

Anthony Chicarelli raises his hand. Steve Koval nods his head and points at Chicarelli.

ANTHONY CHICARELLI

(With a slight smile on his face)
What if they knock us down eight times?

Leon Towns takes two steps to Anthony Chicarelli and speaks.

LEON TOWNS

Then you get up off of the ground and knock them down, Chicarelli!

ANTHONY CHCARELLI

Understood, Coach Towns.

STEVE KOVAL

(With ease) Study hall. Study hall is mandatory unless you have all A's. Study hall is three times a week. Let me make this next point very clear. Great players with poor grades don't play football.

Coach Steve Koval gives a stack of papers to each player in the front row.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

Pass these out. Everybody gets two sheets of paper. First is a permission slip that your parent or guardian will sign - and you will sign - so that you can play football. The second sheet is the rules for being on the team. That sheet also needs to be signed by you and your parents or guardian. Think about what I said, and if you want to be part of this team be here at 4:15 P.M. tomorrow.

Most of the team glances at the papers. Six players bring the papers to their eyes and quickly down to the side of their body.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

Any questions about the...

LEON MAJORS, 17 speaks.

LEON MAJORS

What's readin' some papers have to do with winnin' football games?

COACH LEON TOWNS

Have the papers signed before tomorrow's practice.

Coach Koval walks over and quietly talks to Leon Majors.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

(Almost whispering) Leon -
Do you want to play
football?

Leon Majors

Yes, sir. I want to play football.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

(Warmly) You can follow those team rules, right?

Leon Majors looks at the papers and sees jumbled text. He looks up at Coach Koval as a single tear rolls down from his eye.

LEON MAJORS

I want to play football. I...
ahh... can't. I can't...

COACH STEVE KOVAL
Meet me in my office tomorrow
morning at 7:15 A.M.... OK?

Leon Majors has a half smile come across his face.

LEON MAJORS
You gonna help me?

Coach Koval shakes his head yes.

COACH STEVE KOVAL
Every school day at 7:15. It will
not be easy.

LEON MAJORS
Can I play football?

COACH STEVE KOVAL
Put in the effort every morning...
and you'll play football in the
afternoon.

INT. HALLWAY ADJACENT TO COACH STEVE KOVALS OFFICE - MORNING

Six players are standing in line at the door of Coach Steve Koval's office. Leon Majors knocks on the door. Ramona Bendorf, 18, wearing a cheerleader outfit, taps the shoulder of RONALD GRAYMAN, 18, and 215 pounds of muscle.

RAMONA BENDORF
Special team meeting this morning,
Ron?

RONALD GRAYMAN
Ahh. Yeah. Going over some special
info.

RAMONA BENDORF
Good. I hope you guys win a lot of
games this year.

Ramona walks away. The group of players walk into the office.

INT. STEVE KOVAL'S OFFICE - MORNING

Leon Towns stands in the doorway.

COACH STEVE KOVAL
Leon, come in.

On the portable blackboard, the letters of the alphabet are written on three lines.

COACH STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)
Gentlemen, 30 minutes, every school
day. Let's get to work.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD. - AFTERNOON

Players walk up to Coach Koval and give him signed papers.
Steve Koval speaks.

STEVE KOVAL
(Strongly) The road to the
Friendship Bowl game has begun.
Each day we will put in our best
effort. Each game is a one day
season. When you do all that you
can do in each practice, you've won
that day. Team... run to the middle
of the field and line up in five
lines.

The players line up. Coach Steve Koval stands in front of the
team.

STAN KOVAL
Follow my movements. Follow me.

Steve Koval does stretching, jumping jacks and sit ups. The
team awkwardly follows his movements. After the exercises, 20
young men begin wind sprint running drills following the
coaching of Leon Towns. Three players practice the three man
monkey roll, supervised by Leon Towns. Leon speaks to the
team.

LEON TOWNS
Those of you who think that you are
a punter or field goal kicker...
please line up alongside of me.

EXT. HIGH ABOVE THE FOOTBALL FIELD. - AFTERNOON

The ball is on the 15-yard line as the quarterback, #27 holds
the ball with his pointing finger. The ball is kicked by
#seven. The ball bounces on the ground for 15 feet. The ball
is on the 15-yard line as the quarterback hikes the ball to
#9. The ball is awkwardly kicked by #9 almost straight up in
the air 12 feet high. The ball moves two feet forward. The
ball is in kick off position on the 20-yard line as #14 runs
up to the ball, makes a kicking movement with his right leg
and slightly moves the ball two feet. He lands on his back.

The ball is on the 15-yard line as the quarterback, #27 holds the ball with his pointing finger. The ball is awkwardly kicked by #9. The ball moves 12 feet, sharp right turn out of bounds. The ball is on the ten yard line as the quarterback, #27 holds the ball with his pointing finger. #15 jogs up to the ball, makes a kicking movement with his left leg, kicks the ground, misses the ball and lands on his chest. The ball is on the 20-yard line as the quarterback, #27 holds the ball with his pointing finger. #34 runs up to the ball, makes a kicking movement with his right leg, kicks the ground, then the ball and the ball bounces out of bounds, gently bounces up and hits Coach Towns in the back of his left leg. Leon Towns walks up through the players and puts his hand on the shoulder of Steve Koval.

COACH LEON TOWNS

(Shaking his head from left to right) I've just about had enough field goal, punting, kick off tryouts. How about you Coach Koval?

Steve Koval smiles as he hears the voice of Leon Towns.

STEVE KOVAL

One man to go. A kick off specialist. OK, Jones, Give it a kick. Go ahead.

Steve Koval tosses the football to #22, Jones. #22 catches the ball. Holds it with two hands, takes a step and kicks the ball backward 25 feet.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

I appreciate all of you trying out for kicker. I will let you know what we've decided.

Coach Koval walks 10 yards to where Leon Towns is standing, away from the players.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

Anybody with potential?

LEON TOWNS

(Shakes his head from side to side) This field goal - punter - kick off situation does not look good at all. (Pause) Our two kickers from last year were seniors - they're gone. Our junior who was starting to be a kicker is academically ineligible.

STEVE KOVAL

What about that kicker you told me about who was also a trumpet player?

LEON TOWNS

In the marching band. We - have - no - kickers- on - this- team. (Shakes his head from left to right in disgust). No good field goal kickers. No punters. No kick off kickers.

STEVE KOVAL

(Pause) Leon, the timing is right for something that I've been thinking about for a long time.

LEON TOWNS

Lay it on me.

STEVE KOVAL

(Pauses) This kicker situation presents us with an opportunity.

LEON TOWNS

Opportunity for what? Getting beat worse than... What opportunity?

STEVE KOVAL

Right now, is the time for our team **not** to have a field goal kicker. Or punter.

LEON TOWNS

(Almost whispering/half smiling) Have you started drinking again? Whiskey?(Pause) Steve, how are we going to win without field goal kickers? Kicking on most 4th downs is the smart thing to do.(Pause)

STEVE KOVAL

Listen to me, Leon. **We** can win without kickers. (Pause) Every football coach in the country **thinks** that the smart thing to do on 4th down is to punt the ball or try for a field goal. Not our team. We are always going to go for it on fourth down. Plus we are only going to do on-sides kicks.

LEON TOWNS

Kicking on every fourth down is **not** the smart thing to do. It's all about field position. (Exasperated) Please listen to me, Steve. A field goal - within the range of your field goal kicker - is usually three points on the board. And punting *is* the safe thing to do when your back is against the wall. And... on-sides kicks are used when you have little time and you have to score to win.

STEVE KOVAL

Leon... We now have a perfect situation.

LEON TOWNS

Steve, you are the head coach - but listen to me... You want me on the team because I know football.

STEVE KOVAL

That's right... go on. I'm listening.

LEON TOWNS

Coaches are just looking at the odds... the statistics. If it's 4th and 34 yards for a first down - well, you miss a pass - or a running play ends up in a loss, and well, - Steve the ball goes to the other team - deep in your part of the field. A field goal, if your close enough is usually three points. It's the statistics. Is what I'm saying make sense to you?

STEVE KOVAL

(Quietly yet strong) **Bullcrap.**
Bullcrap on the those statistics. I looked this up on the web... On May 6, 1954, Roger Bannister was the first man to run the mile in under four minutes.

LEON TOWNS

What's Bannister got to do with playing football?

STEVE KOVAL

The general thinking of the time said that a sub four- minute mile couldn't happen, because it *never* happened before Bannister. People knew - that is - *thought they knew* - that a sub four - minute mile was an impossibility.

LEON TOWNS

He was *one guy* - out of thousands of runners. Tens's of thousands.

STEVE KOVAL

Listen to me, Leon. After Bannister broke the record - 16 other people ran a sub four-minute mile within three years. That record has been broken many times. Why? (Pause) First, Roger Bannister believed that he could beat the record. Then he put in the work. He didn't quit. Those other runners after Bannister *believed* it could happen. I believe that we can win football games without a field goal kicker or a punter. We can win football games by going for it on fourth down and using on-sides kicks.

LEON TOWNS

Steve... you know that I know the game, right?

STEVE KOVAL

Yes... but, really listen to me. Do you think you have a better chance of accomplishing something if you are given three opportunities or four opportunities?

LEON TOWNS

Well (pause) - quietly - four. But,-

STEVE KOVAL

But, nothing. Do we have a field goal kicker or punter who can kick better than my grandma?

LEON TOWNS

We have a new transfer student - a soccer player from Poland- who has never played football. He's on the team - maybe he could kick.

(MORE)

LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

But the short answer to your question is: No. We have no experienced field goal kickers. No experienced punters. No experienced kick off people. Steve, I know you think it's a great idea to go for it on fourth down - but the numbers don't work. You hired me because I know football. Give me one game.

STEVE KOVAL

Let me think about it.

Leon turns and looks at the team. Steve Koval, football in hand, walks 15 feet away from Leon Towns. Steve turns toward Leon, digs his right heel into the grass and puts the tip of the football into the tiny hole in the grass.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

Leon.

Leon turns and looks at Steve and sees the ball. Leon slightly smiles at Steve.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

You struggled and battled with me to hire you as an assistant coach. You gave me a chance - I'll give you *your* chance. One game.

LEON TOWNS

We *do* have two kids who can fly - and three more who are almost as fast. We've got two quarterbacks who can throw the ball 1/2 way down the field. I've driven by this field and saw what you saw - players working out before the season. These kids want to win football games - and they are putting in the effort.

LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

We've got... a new coach.

STEVE KOVAL

And a guy who knows football.

LEON TOWNS

I'll show you what can happen using a soccer kicker - I'll have Wiznewski make some small adjustments.

STEVE KOVAL

One game.

LEON TOWNS

Good.(pause) Steve, can you help me with a little job tomorrow?

STEVE KOVAL

Yep. What do you need?

LEON TOWNS

Tomorrow morning, I'd like you to help me dig the Grand Canyon in my backyard. I want to have something different back there.

Steve Koval smiles.

EXT. BACKYARD OF LEON TOWN'S HOME.- MORNING

The sun is peaking above the horizon. A four foot by eight foot hole is in view. Steve Koval is shoulder high, digging the hole in the backyard of Leon Towns home. An image of the Grand Canyon, nailed to a stick, is placed to the right of the hole.

INT. KITCHEN OF LEON TOWNS HOME - MORNING

Leon Towns is pouring himself a cup of coffee. Above the kitchen sink is a window that overlooks his backyard where he sees a hunched over indistinguishable person digging a hole. Leon quickly runs outside with the cup of coffee slopping on the kitchen floor and down the steps to outside.

EXT. BACKYARD OF LEON TOWNS HOME - MORNING

LEON TOWNS

(Slight anger) What the -

Leon Towns sees the image of the Grand Canyon on a stick. Leon sees that the person digging is Steve Koval. Leon smiles.

LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

(Matter of a factly) After you retire from coaching you should get a sales job getting Klan members to join the N.A.A.C.P.

INT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL, LOWER HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Students are in class.

EXT. CLASSROOM THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL. - AFTERNOON

A bell SFX RING- RING rings. Students are leaving the classroom.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD FACING NORTH FIELD GOAL. - AFTERNOON

Football players are standing in front of Steve Koval and Leon Towns.

LEON TOWNS

OK. Quiet, gentlemen. Helmets, off. Stand or take a knee. Coach Koval - has something to say.

STEVE KOVAL

(Quietly, yet strong) This team is ready. Ready to win. I see it in your faces. At the end of the season - do you want the to win the Friendship Bowl against the Catholic league champs?

THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM

Yes.

STEVE KOVAL

(Quietly - yet strongly) This team is going to play every down like it is the last play of the championship game with the score tied.(Pause) We are **not** going to walk anywhere - we will jog to our position. No looking to the ground if a play doesn't go our way. We are **not** going to let up the pressure for one second - on offense or defense. We are not going to pay attention to or react to trash talk.(Pause) This team is going to play football with speed and toughness... every play. Knocked down seven times... get up eight times.

(MORE)

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

We are going to do our homework every night and we will be gentlemen in and outside of that building.

Steve points to the high school building.

LEON TOWNS

Is that clear gentlemen?

Steve Koval turns around and walks off the field to the road where his 1956 black Chrysler 300 is parked. Leon Towns quickly joins Steve Koval at his side.

STEVE KOVAL

(Quietly) Look back for a second. Are they talking to each other or did they break up?

LEON TOWNS

(Slight laugh) They're talking with each other.

STEVE KOVAL

Good. They want to play some football.

LEON TOWNS

(Smiling) Principal Jones is gonna see some wins and get off of our backs. Then he'll make me the head coach... again. If you're nice to me... maybe I'll hire you to wash helmets.

The football players, without the coaches, have a team meeting.

ANTHONY CHICARELLI JR.

(Yelling) Team meeting. Team meeting. I've got something to say. We gotta change what we are doing. Zero and nine is not good. Everybody thinks that we are a big joke. I'm embarrassed to be on this team - but I still want to play.

JOE SMOKE, 18, thin build, speaks.

JOE SMOKE

Chicarelli is right. My cousins make fun of this team. My uncle and even my aunt asks me if we are ever going to win a game.

(MORE)

JOE SMOKE (CONT'D)

Do you guys think the new coach makes sense? I do. He's smart.

ANTHONY CHICARELLI JR.

Have you guys ever seen any team win football games walking around lookin' at the ground?

Chicarelli looks to the ground and takes a few steps.

JOE SMOKE

Last year we quit when the play is half over.

EUGENE WISNWESKI, 17, 6'4 and 245 pounds, steps forward.

EUGENE WISNEWSKI

(Heavy Polish accent) I want to win football games.

Joe Smoke walks over to Eugene, puts his hand his shoulder.

JOE SMOKE

Eugene, I'm sure you were **great** at kicking a soccer ball.

EUGENE WISNEWSKI

Very great at kicking soccer ball.

JOE SMOKE

But, how long have you been kicking an **American** football?

EUGENE WISNEWSKI

(Quietly)Two days.

JOE SMOKE

We like you Eugene, but...

EUGENE WISNEWSKI

You don't want me to kick. Is it because... I... am... immigrant?

JOE SMOKE

Eugene... you ain't thinking right. I don't care where you're from.

Joe Smoke points to the team.

JOE SMOKE (CONT'D)

They don't care where you're from.

EUGENE WISNEWSKI

I know how to kick soccer ball. Why not have me as... football kicker? I am immigrant and talk funny... so/

JOE SMOKE

I don't care if you are from the moon. You know how to kick an American football?

Joe Smoke tosses a football to Eugene who drops the ball. Joe Smoke picks up the ball and puts the ball in the hands of Eugene Wisnewski.

JOE SMOKE (CONT'D)

Kick it, Eugene.

Eugene drops the ball in front of his foot and kicks the ball backward over his head.

JOE SMOKE (CONT'D)

So... you ready to be our kicker?

EUGENE WISNEWSKI

Not ready... yet.

JOE SMOKE

You've been kicking a football for two days. (Pause) Two days doesn't turn you into a kicker. You are a good guy - your football kicks' ain't good... yet.

Eugene shakes his head yes.

JOE SMOKE (CONT'D)

(In front of the team) The coaches will help teach Eugene how to kick an American football. We can only get better from here on out. Make sense?

ANTHONY CHICARELLI JR.

We can't just keep doin' what we've been doin. We gotta' do something different.

JOE SMOKE

(Looking at the team) You guys want to do what we've been doin' - losin' games?

(MORE)

JOE SMOKE (CONT'D)

I'm sick of having the marching band and the theatre people talking crap as they walk by the football table at lunch. Agreed? Are we all in? Are you guys in?

THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM

Yeah. OK.

JOE SMOKE

Good.

THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM

Yeah. OK. Yeah.

Joe Smoke smiles.

Joe SMOKE

Eugene.. You in?

EUGENE WISNEWSKI

Immigrant soccer player becoming kicking football player is... in. I Now need to learn to kick ball in front of me.

TEAM

Laughs.

JOE SMOKE

Good. Eugene is gonna become a great football kicking player.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SHCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD. - DAY

A new, long handled axe is in the middle of the field. A stump, three-foot-high, has one, four inch in diameter branch near it.

STEVE KOVAL

Mr. Wisnewski, I will need your assistance.

Eugene Wisnewski, walks up from behind the group near Coach Steve Koval.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

(Steve Koval hands Wisnewski the axe) Mr. Wisnewski, I want you to split this branch into two pieces.

Steve gestures at the branch.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

Before he starts - I have a question - will he have a better chance of splitting the branch into two pieces if he uses one swing, two swings, three swings or four swings?

JOE SMOKE

Wisnewski's strong - but... he might need two or three swings.

EUGENE WISNEWSKI

One swing. Just one swing.

Wisnewski takes one swing SFX CHOP and the branch is clearly cut but, not in half. He swings the axe again SFX CHOP and the branch is almost separated. Wisnewski takes another swing SFX CHOP and the branch is 98% cut into two pieces. The branch looks like a "V". Coach Koval pulls the branch off of the stump and shows that the branch is 98% separated, but 1/16 of an inch wood tissue still holds the two pieces together.

STEVE KOVAL

Is Wisnewski finished cutting the branch into two pieces? (Pause) If he held the axe a different way or struck it just a bit harder he could have gotten through with one try. But, this time, he needs - four swings. Eugene, take another swing at it.

Wisnewski takes the axe and easily SFX CHOP, cuts the branch into two pieces. Wisnewski drops the axe to the ground.

Steve Koval picks up the axe.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

Thank you, Eugene.(Pause) Sometimes you are going to get the job done on your first effort. The difference between winning and losing is... not quitting and finishing the job. This is exactly the same as when you get knocked down. If you get knocked down seven time...

FOOTBALL TEAM

Get up eight!

INT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL WEIGHT ROOM. - NIGHT

Leon Towns clicks on four switches as he enters the dark weight room at 9:00 P.M. Leon walks over to the bench press and puts 200 pounds of weights on the bar.

LEON TOWNS
(Under his breath)
Been a while. I can still do this.

Leon adjusts his hands on either side of the bar. He brings the weight up and down to his chest.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL WEIGHT ROOM. - NIGHT

Joe Smoke and JOSE RODRIGUES 17, walk on the sidewalk, by the weight room.

JOE SMOKE
Somebody's in there. It's... Coach Towns. He's doin' the bench press. He was going to be in the NFL.

Leon Towns has two, 45 pound weights on each side of the bar on the bench press. The total is 225 pounds. He moves the weight up and down SFX CLANG-CLANG and sees the two football players out of the corner of his eye.

COACH LEON TOWNS
(Out loud) one, two, three, four, five, six,...

Leon struggles with the weight on his chest but presses on until he reaches 11 repetitions.

COACH LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)
Seven. (Pause) eight, nine, ten, 11.

Leon stands up and walks over to the treadmill. He walks.

JOE SMOKE
Coach is really going after it.

INT. WEIGHT TRAINING ROOM NEXT TO BASKETBALL COURT OF THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Leon Towns is squatting down just in front of the bench press. Laying down on the bench press is Anthony Chicarelli JR. 125 pounds is on the bar. Anthony is on number five of his repetitions. Anthony is continuing on with the bench press.

LEON TOWNS

The player on the other team is going to do ten. He wants to be ready for you. The weight is very heavy Anthony.

Three players are surrounding the bench press. The players count.

3 Players

Six... seven...

ANTHONY CHICARELLI JR.

(Grunting the words) 5 more pounds on each side.

Five more pounds is placed on each side of the bar by the closest player to the bar.

3 PLAYERS

Eight... nine... ten...

Anthony Chicarelli struggles but passes ten and brings the bar to his chest for number 11.

3 PLAYERS (CONT'D)

(Yelling) 11... 12... 13... 14!

Anthony Chicarelli Jr. struggles. The bar slowly goes to the full extent of Anthony Chicarelli Jr.'s arms and is locked into place.

ANTHONY CHICARELLI

14. I beat him Coach,
I beat **old thinking**. I didn't quit.
I win. **We win!**

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

The stands on both side of the field are 50% filled with people of all ages. Partially hidden by a large woman, LINDA KOVAL, 39, and shapely has an almost blank look on her face as she looks from left to right at the Thunderbird Titan football team. She sees Steve Koval and smiles. Steve Koval does not see Linda Koval. The visiting Maryvale Panthers football team are on the far side of the field. The Thunderbird Titans are on the near side circled around Coach Koval and Coach Towns.

COACH LEON TOWNS

Coach Koval, the team has something to say to you - let's hear it.

THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM
 (tough guy chant) We are gonna play,
 we've got a good G.P.A. - We're
 gonna beat Maryvale Tech today.

COACH LEON TOWNS
 Two point three-nine as of this
 morning. 0 detentions for the week.

COACH STEVE KOVAL
 (Smiles) Great work, team. You men
 are called **student** - athletes. You
 should be proud of the effort and
 sacrifice you've given to be on
 this team. (Pause) Coach Towns...

COACH LEON TOWNS
 The team we are playing against
 today went seven and two last year.
 Last year we were zero and nine.
 That was **last year**. Have we all
 changed from last year? Have we?
 Think- have I changed who I am and
 what I do? (Pause) You have changed.
 I can't talk you into winning. But
 I do know this. Maryvale doesn't
 know what is going to happen to
 them. You do.

Steve Koval slightly nods his head.

COACH LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)
 OK. Bring it in. Hands on hands or
 hands on helmets. (Pause) Beat
 Maryvale on two. Ready. one.. two/

THUNDERBIRD TITAN FOOTBALL TEAM
 Beat Maryvale!

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD. - AFTERNOON

The teams line up to kickoff and receive. Maryvale player #35
 kicks the football down the field. The ball is caught by #14,
 a Thunderbird Titan player who is met by two Maryvale players
 who tackle him on the 32-yard line. Thunderbird High moves
 the ball forward with a running back play up the middle for 6
 yards. Thunderbird Titan running back gets caught behind the
 line of scrimmage for a loss of two yards. The Thunderbird
 Titans miss a short pass to #18 who was wide open, but drops
 the ball.

COACH STEVE KOVAL
 You run the offense, Mr. Towns.

COACH LEON TOWNS
Crisscross over the middle on hut
three.

The ball is hiked to Joe Smoke, #12. The two ends cross 10 yards over the middle. Smoke pump fakes to the right end and passes to his left end, #80 who is wide open but jumbles the ball and drops it. Coach Leon Towns slightly hangs his head down and slightly shakes it from right to left. Coach Koval is approached by Coach Leon Towns. The ball is on the Maryvale 32-yard line. Time to go: two minutes in the 4th quarter. Maryvale offense is on the field. The ball is hiked to the quarterback. Defensive lineman, #71 RICK MICHOVSKI breaks through the offensive line of Maryvale, swats his arm on the right arm of the quarterback of making the ball fall out of his arm. Thunderbird player #72 ANTHONY JOHN, picks up the ball on the run and runs to the 50 yard line. The Thunderbird Titans run three running plays and get the ball to the 4 yard line with five seconds to go in the game. The scoreboard reads Visitor 21 - Thunderbird Titans 18. Coach Towns speaks to Joe Smoke. Joe smoke runs to the huddle.

COACH LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)
Field goal on hut two.

JOE SMOKE
Field goal on hut two!

Wiznewski lines up for a field goal. Joe Smoke gets the ball hiked to him and places the tip of the ball on the ground. The center #76, blocks the opposing guard to the right. Wiznewski trots up to the ball, plants his left leg and follows through with his right leg. The ball is kicked to the backside of an offensive Thunderbird lineman and lands near Wiznewski. The scoreboard reads Visitor 21 - Thunderbird Titans 18. Coach Leon Towns and Coach Steve Koval walk away from the field after the game.

COACH LEON TOWNS
Our field goal kicker is not ready.

Coach Koval slightly nods his head yes. Player Wiznewski walks up to Coach Koval and Coach Towns.

WISNEWSKI
(Heavy Polish accent) I am not
worthy of being on team.

Wiznewski hands his helmet to Coach Towns.

COACH LEON TOWNS

My fault to... you quit this team -
you are quitting **you**. Are you
 quitting you, Wiznewski?

WISNEWSKI

My responsibility to kick field
 goal. I miss. Team loses.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

The team is **my** responsibility. I'm
 the reason why the team lost.

COACH LEON TOWNS

Wiznewski, I let you down.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

We will win games and you will be a
 part of it. OK?

WISNEWSKI

May I have my helmet? I stay on
 team.

Coach Leon Towns hands Wisnewski his helmet. Koval walks off with Wiznewski to another field beyond a stand of trees. Just before they are out of view Coach Koval stops and acts like he is kicking a field goal - without a ball. Wiznewski nods his head up and down in agreement.

EXT. SECLUDED GREENBELT AREA OF LARGE WOODED PARK-NIGHT

15 football players, are in a secluded area of Indian Bend Wash - a greenbelt of three acres. 15 teenage girls are also at the party. A small fire burns in the middle of the group of students. Seven male and seven female other students from Thunderbird High School are at the party. Bottles of wine, whiskey and bottles of beer are passed around. Marijuana joints are being smoked and passed around from person to person. Steve Koval, out for a ride, notices his players at the gathering. He parks his car, unnoticed at the end of the parked cars near the gathering. A slight hill protects the view of the car from the crowd of people. Steve Koval stealthily walks toward the group. He walks on top of a picnic table and speaks:

STEVE KOVAL

Everybody makes mistakes and this
 is a mistake that could lead to
 somebody getting hurt or somebody
 dying. Pour your open bottles of
 beer and wine onto the ground.

(MORE)

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

Place the unopened beer and wine in
the trunk of my car.

Steve Koval points to his car.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

Toss the joints into the fire pit.
Football players on my team don't
put themselves in a position to be
arrested or cause harm to
themselves or other people.
Students of Thunderbird High School
- this is your one free hall pass.
Don't goof up again. Leave this
area now.

Every person at the party follows Steve Koval orders. Steve Koval unlocks the trunk. The teens place their unopened bottles of alcohol in the trunk of his 1956 black Chrysler 300.

INT. BLACK INTERIOR OF A 1956 CHRYSLER 300. - NIGHT

Steve Koval begins to sweat as he drives. He puts on the radio and hears the song, Born to be Wild. He drives through the neighborhood of small, neat bungalow homes. Steve sees the bell tower of Saint Paul Catholic Church. He looks directly at the cross on top of the bell tower. He continues driving around through the rear parking lot into the back area of the church building. The back of the church has a nearby three story beige brick school building to the right and a two story priest's rectory home to the right. A balding priest, FATHER PAUL OSHAWITZ, 60, watches Steve Koval from a second story window.

EXT. BACK END OF BEIGE BRICK, SAINT PAUL CHURCH. - NIGHT

Steve Koval gets out of the 1956 black Chrysler 300. He opens the trunk and sees all of the alcohol. His eyes grow wide. He takes out one bottle of whiskey. He opens the bottle, holds it out in front of his face, slowly smiles and pours the whiskey into the sewer that he is standing on. He places the rest of the alcohol into a blue dumpster that is five feet away from his car. He gets into his car, looks up at the cross on top of the church steeple, slightly smiles and drives away.

EXT. NEAR BLUE DUMPSTER NEXT TO SAINT PAUL RECTORY AND CHURCH. - EVENING

Father Paul is dressed in roman collar black shirt with black pants. He is 5'10 and 240 pounds. He walks to the dumpster. Custodian DONALD KASMERIK, 35, is at his side. Both men take the alcohol out of the dumpster and place it on a flatbed cart as they speak.

DONALD KASMERIK

Father Paul, why is this dumpster so popular for dumping off alcohol?

FATHER PAUL OSHAWITZ

People want to **show God** that they are doing the right thing.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT

Custodian Donald Kasmerik pushes the cart stacked with beer and wine to a double steel door on the side of the beige brick school building that is 30 feet away. Father Paul Oshawitz takes a key out of his pocket. He opens the lock on the door and opens the double doors to reveal a large stockpile of beer, wine, whiskey, rum, vodka and gin. Donald Kasmerik turns his head, looks at Father Paul and speaks.

DONALD KASMERIK

A lot of people aren't drinking tonight.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SHCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD. - EVENING

Seven middle aged men, are standing to the right side of the 1956 Black Chrysler 300 owned by Steve Koval. Steve Koval has his backside leaning on the car. Leon Towns is in front of Steve, on his right side. UNNAMED MAN, 47, smallish in stature, speaks to Leon Towns as he approaches the car.

UNNAMED TALL MAN

Another loss. Nice start.

Leon turns around, looks at the man and speaks.

LEON TOWNS

(Slight pause) Who are you, sir?

LESTER SMOKE

I'm Lester Smoke... Joe Smoke's father.

LEON TOWNS

Good. Now I know your name. I'm
Coach Leon Towns.

Leon sticks out his right hand. LESTER SMOKE, 47 reluctantly pumps his hand one time. Leon then gestures to Coach Steve Koval.

LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

He is coach Steve Koval.

LESTER SMOKE

Which of you is the damn fool who
came up with this field goal kicker
who can't kick field goals?

LEON TOWNS

Talk to me. But, I'm nobody's fool.

Lester Smoke walks within four feet of Leon Towns.

UNNAMED TALL MAN

You must be out of your mind. That
boy can't kick. Are you stupid?

Leon Towns stands up, and towers over Lester Smoke. Quietly and deliberately, Leon speaks.

LEON TOWNS

Wiznewski missed a field goal. We
lost our first game - but the boys
have turned the corner. We are
going to be just fine.

LESTER SMOKE

You are going to embarrass
yourselves and this team.

LEON TOWNS

Coach Koval and I have a plan.

LESTER SMOKE

(Pause) The fathers are taking our
boys off of the team, unless of
course you and Coach Koval quit. We
need new coaches.

Steve Koval stops leaning against his car and stands up.

STEVE KOVAL

Coaches never stand in the way of a
father's decision. I'll call them
over right now. (Yelling) Team,
come/

LESTER SMOKE

(Long pause) We'll give you two more games. This plan of yours works or the boys come off the team. Is that understood?

STEVE KOVAL

We understand that we are the coaches. You gentlemen are the fathers and you can take your boys off of the team whenever you make that decision.

The seven men walk away.

LEON TOWNS

How did you know that those men weren't going to yank the boys from the team?

STEVE KOVAL

(Smiles) I didn't.

EXT. TOP OF BLEACHERS, THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL - EVENING

The sun is setting. Leon Towns, sits by himself in the far corner of bleachers overlooking the baseball, soccer and football fields. He is looking towards the ground with a slightly sad look on his face. As he looks up, he sees five teenage girls kicking a soccer ball on the soccer field. One girl stands in the middle of the other four girls. Leon stands up and watches as the girl in the middle precisely kicks the ball on the ground 20 feet to the other girls. Her accuracy is perfect. Leon walks down the stands to the soccer field.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD OF THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL - EVENING

Leon Towns walks up to within 20 yards of the girls. Two of the girls tilt their head, noticing the coach that they both know. The girls both smile. Two of the other girls slightly wave at Leon Towns. IRENE WEISS, 18, speaks.

IRENE WEISS

Hi, Coach.

LEON TOWNS

Nice to see all of you out here practicing. If you can do it in practice... you can do it during the game.

IRENE WEISS

My mom says that hard work pays off. I practice four or five times a week.

LEON TOWNS

Your mom is a smart lady.(pause)
Can you kick the ball right here?

Leon Towns points to his chest. Before he can take his hand from his chest, Irene kicks the ball exactly to his hand. The ball falls to the ground at Leon's feet. Leon smiles.

LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

Nice job - what's your name?

IRENE WEISS

Irene Weiss.

Irene points to the other girls, CAROL BARBER 17, DIANE PLICKI, 17, HEIDI SOLA, 18, and KATE ELLERS, 17.

IRENE WEISS (CONT'D)

That's Carol Barber. She's Diane Plicki.

Irene points at the two other girls.

IRENE WEISS (CONT'D)

Heidi Sola and Kate Ellers.

LEON TOWNS

I'm Coach Towns. Irene, can you kick that way all the time?

Irene shyly smiles and nods her head up and down.

Leon moves to just in front of the soccer goal and points to the lower right. Irene puts the ball to the lower right. Irene continues to put the ball in the upper right, lower left and upper left.

LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

Come on out for the football team.
I think we have a spot for you.

IRENE WEISS

I've thought about it... but... i don't know.

LEON TOWNS

The invitation is open. Come see me.

INT. 3 BEDROOM, MIDDLE INCOME RANCH HOME - EVENING

Leon walks in his home office/den. Football trophies and memorabilia along with muscle car wall adornments and images on the wall of Leon holding up big fish at a beach.

LEON TOWNS

Gonna watch some videos for 15 minutes or so, then I'll go outside and put the steaks on the grill.

JUDY TOWNS (V.O.)

No more than 20, minutes, OK, Leon.

LEON TOWNS

I'll be cookin' in just a few.

INT. HOME OFFICE, COMPUTER WITH MONITOR ON DESK.- AFTERNOON

Leon is at his desk, with computer, looking at the monitor. He types. Auto drag racing comes up on the screen with a big crash after 4 seconds. He types. Man is surf casting and pulls in a medium size shark. Leon types in: "Michigan football, Leon Towns" on the keypad. On the video screen, the Michigan quarterback throws a long pass and Leon watches himself catch the ball and run in for a touchdown. **Leon types in "how to win high school football games"**. On the screen is PROFESSOR LEOPOLD BERNARD, 60. He has wacky salt and pepper hair. He is wearing a green bow tie, a white button down shirt and black pants. He holds a football in his hand as he speaks. He stands in front of a black board, while pointing with a pointer to various numbers. On the lower third of the screen, text: **SUPER: Football: Maximizing Points Utilizing Fourth Down / On Sides Kick Viability and Conversion Study, just over, Dr. Leopold Bernard, Statistics Professor, just under, HARVARD.**

INT. LIBRARY CONFERENCE ROOM - AFTERNOON

DR. LEOPOLD BERNARD

The hypothesis is the following:
Coaches want to maximize the points that they are scoring and minimize the points that the other team is scoring. With that said, here are the following algorithms with statistical analysis from 12,356 football games for each level of play: high school, college and professional. Each play of each game was noted.

(MORE)

DR. LEOPOLD BERNARD (CONT'D)

The amount of times a team went for and achieved a first down or more on a fourth down play was tallied. Two secondary studies were also completed, two point conversion and on sides kick. The numbers speak for themselves.

Dr. Bernard points to three numbers stacked on top of each other. Wins, games and punts or kicks field goals: HS, College, Professional. The numbers 42.3 and 76.1 for HS, 44.4 and 75.1 for college and 41.9 And 75.3 for professional.

DR. LEOPOLD BERNARD (CONT'D)

Statistically, teams that go for it on fourth down, score more points in a given game than teams that punt or try for a field goal. Teams that go for a 2 point conversion score more points than teams that try to kick the extra point. The same is true for on sides kicks - teams that utilize an on sides kick win more games than those that don't. The hypothesis proves that in order to maximize points, a team must go for it on fourth down, run or pass for the point after touchdown and always do an on sides kick. Teams that have possession of the ball have increased likelihood to score and win games. Field position was not a factor. It is a mathematical probability, not a possibility, that keeping possession of the football highly outweighs field position. Keeping possession of the football ultimately leads to scoring. Scoring leads to winning football games. Present day real life statistics are available.

Leon Towns sits stunned looking at the monitor. A huge smile comes across his face.

LEON TOWNS

(Calmly, warmly) Instead of eating here, let's go out tonight to that real nice steak house downtown. OK?

JUDY TOWNS, 34, speaks from across the house.

JUDY TOWNS

Sure.

LEON TOWNS

But first, I need to see Steve Koval and tell him he's a football genius. I'll be back in 15 minutes. He's just around the block.

JUDY TOWNS

(with a smiling voice) You just set me up, Leon - but that's OK, we're going to The Grandville Avenue Steak House.

LEON TOWNS

Phoenix's best.

JUDY TOWNS

I'll have your sports coat ready when you get back. Steve Koval knows more about football than you? You're telling me that Steve Koval...

LEON TOWNS

Come with me. We'll go out after I see Steve.

JUDY TOWNS

I gotta see this.

Judy Towns grabs Leon's sports coat. Leon Towns calls Steve Koval on his cell phone.

EXT. FRONT OF STEVE KOVAL'S HOME. - DAY

Steve Koval is cutting a low hanging branch from a tree. Steve answers his cell phone and sees that it is Leon calling.

STEVE KOVAL

How's my favorite football coach?

LEON TOWNS (V.O.)

Good. You home?

STEVE KOVAL

Yeah, I'm/

LEON TOWNS (O.S.)

Stay there... OK?

STEVE KOVAL
Sure, what/

EXT. FRONT OF STEVE KOVAL'S HOME. - DAY

Steve looks at his phone and sees that the call has dropped.

INT. HOME OFFICE- AFTERNOON

LEON TOWNS
Judy, let's go. OK?

Leon and Judy rush out of the house.

I/E. INTERIOR, 2010 DODGE CHALLENGER ON ROAD- - AFTERNOON

Leon drives his car quickly but sees a police car and abruptly begins to drive slowly. A 2nd police car comes from the opposite way and Leon slows down again. The next turn is on Steve Koval's street. Leon runs over a curb and places his car half way on the grass of Steve Koval's home.

LEON TOWNS
I'll just be a minute.

JUDY TOWNS
(Half pleading) Leon - what's happening. You look crazy.

LEON TOWNS
The Thunderbird Titans are going to be the best team in the city this year.

Judy Towns looks puzzled. Leon jumps out of the car and runs up to Steve Koval as Steve places a pile of small branches into a wheelbarrow.

LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)
You're smart and you are right.

STEVE KOVAL
About...

LEON TOWNS

I just saw this YouTube video - this statistics professor - A doctor of statistics says that it is a mathematical **probability**, not a possibility, that keeping possession of the ball highly outweighs poor field position. Keeping possession of the football ultimately leads to scoring. Scoring leads to winning football games. (smiling) I remembered it word for word.

STEVE KOVAL

I took stats. Numbers don't lie.

LEON TOWNS

Over 12 thousand games for high school, college and pro. He said statistically going for it on fourth down, 2 point conversion and on-side kicks give you Prob-a-bili-ty of winning! He said probability not possibility. **Prob-a-bil-i-ty!**

Leon points to Steve Koval.

LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

(half singing/chanting)

**Prob-a-bil-i-ty. Prob-a-bil-i-ty.
Prob-a-bil-i-ty.**

Steve Koval joins in with Leon.

LEON TOWNS/STEVE KOVAL

**Prob-a-bil-i-ty. Prob-a-bil-i-ty.
Prob-a-bil-i-ty.**

LEON TOWNS

Aggressive play pays off. I am so in. Steve, you knew what you knew - even though you didn't have "**statistical verification**".

STEVE KOVAL

We're going to win big this year Leon.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD. - AFTERNOON

The stands on the visitors' side of the field have 500 people.

50% are adults and 50% are students from Central High school. The stands on the home teams' side have 250 people. 50% are adults and 50% are students. The Central High Bobcats football team is dressed in grey and red.

INT. FOOTBALL LOCKER ROOM OF THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL. -
AFTERNOON

Steve Koval takes out his cell phone and taps some numbers and digits into it. Two large speakers are on either side of the locker room. "You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet", by Grand Funk begins to play.

STEVE KOVAL

This music is old, but it has something to say.

The entire Thunderbird Titan football team of 42 young men finish putting on their uniforms. A group of six players are praying. Steve Koval walks among the players.

LEON TOWNS

OK. Huddle up.

The team comes together in front of the two coaches. Steve Koval looks over the group and into the eyes of the players.

STEVE KOVAL

(Pauses) **You control you.** You decide to get up off of the grass or to stay down. You decide to block with everything you've got so your running back has room to run. You decide to pump your legs faster when you are tired and beat up. Winning is doing your job expertly when the other team is up by three touchdowns. Winning is not letting up when you are down. (Pause) Coach Towns...

COACH LEON TOWNS

It's game time. What are you made of? Show yourself - right here - right now. Coach Koval...

STEVE KOVAL

Coach Towns and I have a set in stone plan for the rest of the season. This team is going to go for it on fourth down. Every fourth down.

The team looks stunned.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

I don't care if it is 4th and 99 - yards... this team will be running or passing the ball. You've already been running the plays in practice. No more punting or field goals. Only on-sides kicking. (Pause) You people in front of me have the ability win games. You've put in the effort in practice. I can see the hunger in your eyes. Am I understood?

The team smiles and nods their approval.

LEON TOWNS

I now want to introduce our on sides kicker. This person is accurate, strong, smart and has a 3.8 grade point average. (Louder) New on sides kicker, please join the team.

Irene Weiss, walks in wearing a football uniform with a protective sunglass style dark plastic shield as part of the helmet. She stands for a three seconds and slowly takes off her helmet. The team looks stunned. Leon Towns looks at the team. Steve Koval looks at the team. The players on the team look at each other. Joe Smoke walks from the back of the group of players to directly in front Irene Weiss.

JOE SMOKE

This person is going to...

Joe Smoke turns and looks at the team.

JOE SMOKE (CONT'D)

This person is going to help us win games this year.

The team walks up, smiling. They pat her on the helmet.

STEVE KOVAL

(calmly)I have a one time message for you gentlemen. One time.(pause) Just to make everything clear-first, Irene Weiss is a female. Their will be no jokes or comments about her anatomy. No funny looks. No comments. There will be no inappropriate touching. Do I need to spell it out any further?

(MORE)

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

Do any of those things one time and you are off the team. Am I understood?

LEON TOWNS

Answer the man, either: Yes, coach. Or no, coach. Speak now.

THUNDERBIRD FOOTBALL TEAM

(Solidly)Yes, coach.

Steve Koval turns and looks at Irene Weiss. Steve Koval speaks to her.

STEVE KOVAL

Miss Weiss... just to be clear. You are here to help win football games.. Am I correct?

IRENE WEISS

Yes, coach. (Pause) May I speak to the team?

Steve Koval nods his head yes.

IRENE WEISS (CONT'D)

(Mild, yet strong)I'm here to prove something... to my self. I'm not here to prove something to you. I'm not a person who is angry at young men. I'm here because I want to show myself what I can do when there is pressure... when things get tough. And yes - I want to help this team win football games this year.

LEON TOWNS

Irene will help the Thunderbird Titans win football games. (pause) All of you... go out there and show yourself what you can do when you don't give up and work together.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD. - AFTERNOON

Coach Steve Koval and Coach Leon Towns trail the Titans football team as the team runs out on to the field. The Thunderbird band plays SFX - MUSIC the fight song from the home team bleachers. A white with blue lettering Phoenix police patrol car is at each corner of the football field. 4 Thunderbird Titans players, Anthony Chicarelli Jr. Joe Smoke, John Johnson, Robert Nicholas are all co-captians.

Robert nicholas is the team captain. Head referee, JOHN VOLK, 65, 6'4, holds the coin and flips the coin.

JOHN VOLK
Home team captain, call heads or tails while the coin is in the air.

John Volk flips the coin.

ROBERT NICHOLAS
Heads.

The coin lands on the head side.

JOHN VOLK
Kick or receive?

ROBERT NICHOLAS
We will kick.

Both teams run out on to the field. The Thunderbird Titans team lines up on the 40 and the Central High Bobcats line up in a receiving formation. The head referee blows his whistle and spins his right arm around to signal the moving of the clock. Irene Weiss, runs up to the ball and kicks the ball with the toe of her foot. The ball travels 15 yards down the field. The ball bounces off the chest of #28 of the Central High Bobcatss. Eugene Wisnewski of the kicking team recovers the ball. He is met by Coach Leon Towns on the sideline.

LEON TOWNS
(Calmly without irritation)
Wisnewski,(smiling) I didn't know that you were a running back.

EUGENE WISNEWSKI
(In a heavy Polish accent)
(Smiling) Running back, kicker, actor. Beeg man on high school campus!

Leon Towns smiles and pats Wisnewski on his helmet. Coach Koval hears the conversation and smiles. The scoreboard: Central High Bobcats 28 - Thunderbird Titans 24. It is 4th down and 35 yards for a first down. 4th quarter with 2:19 left to play. Linda Koval watches from the stands. The ball is on the 27 yard line. Leon Towns walks over to Coach Steve Koval.

LEON TOWNS
You 100% sure?

COACH STEVE KOVAL
 (Slightly nods his head yes)
 What is your play coach?

Coach Towns takes two steps and talks to Joe Smoke, the quarterback. Joe Smoke runs out to the huddle.

JOE SMOKE
 Pass, end over the middle on hut
 three. Ready... break.

Joe Smoke drops back to pass and aims for #23 who appears to be open. Just as Joe Smoke throws the ball he is heavily hit by #39 and #45 of the Central High Bobcats. #28 of the Cardinals comes in and intercepts the ball at the last second. #23 makes his way back to the 50 yard line. The Bobcats set up for a pass play. Their quarterback, #24 looks to have a clear run to the goal line when Joe Smoke, now playing defensive back runs after #24 of the Bobcats. Smoke, at the 15 yard line, grabs the arm of #24 causing him to drop the ball. The ball is picked up by the Thunderbird lineman #71 who runs weaving through players, until he is tackled by three Central High players on the 12 yard line with 5 seconds left on the clock. Coach Leon Towns, takes 3 steps over to Coach Koval.

COACH STEVE KOVAL
 Call the play, Coach.

Coach Leon Towns motions for #27 to come near him.

COACH LEON TOWNS
 Reverse to the right on hut three.

#27 runs the play into the huddle.

QUARTERBACK JOE SMOKE
 Hut one, Hut two, Hut three.

The right end runs behind Joe Smoke and at the same time the left starts to run behind Joe Smoke. Smoke puts the ball in the arms of the left end who meets the right end who comes up the inside, evades 2 tacklers and runs in for a touchdown with 00:00 seconds left on the clock. The scoreboard: Thunderbird Titans 30 - Central High Bobcats 28.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD. - AFTERNOON

Coach Steve Koval, disheveled, with bloodshot eyes, drives his car zigzag down the street adjacent to the football field. Drunk, he parks his car, placing the passenger side right tire up on the curb. He slumps over the steering wheel and begins to pass out.

A moment later Coach Leon Towns pulls up and notices the wheel up on the curb. Leon walks up to the driver's side window and looks in.

COACH LEON TOWNS

Holy crap!

Leon Towns looks from left to right to see if anybody saw what just happened. Principal Cecil Jones, obstructed from the view of Leon Towns by a large oak tree, sees Leon Towns and Coach Koval. Still unseen by Leon Towns, Principal Jones takes 3 steps towards Leon Towns and Steve Koval. Cecil Jones then stops walking when he sees that Leon Towns pushes Steve Koval to the passenger side of Steve Koval's car, starts the car and drives down the street. Steve Koval's head is tilted back and leans on the shoulder of Leon Towns. Leon's eyes meet with the eyes of Cecil Jones. Leon continues driving.

EXT. STEVE KOVAL'S DRIVEWAY. - AFTERNOON

Leon Towns carries Steve Koval out of his car, get the keys out of Steve Koval's pocket, open the garage and puts Steve on the floor of the bathroom in his garage.

EXT. STEVE KOVAL'S GARAGE. AFTERNOON

Leon Towns exits the garage and jogs the 1/8 mile back to the locker room of Thunderbird High School.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL LOCKER ROOM. - AFTERNOON

The team is finishing suiting up for a game.

COACH LEON TOWNS

Attention everybody. Coach Koval is sick today. He's having stomach problems. Line up here -

INT. BATHROOM OF STEVE KOVAL'S GARAGE - AFTERNOON

Steve Koval wretches and throws up in the toilet.

INT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL LOCKER ROOM - AFTERNOON

PLAYER #18, small, speaks from the line of players assembled in front of Coach Leon Towns.

PLAYER #18

Is Coach Koval in the hospital?

COACH LEON TOWNS

No. He's at his house. I've been through his problem. He'll be all right.

INT. BATHROOM OF STEVE KOVAL'S GARAGE - AFTERNOON

Steve Koval violently wretches and throws up again. His head stays in the toilet above the water.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD. - AFTERNOON

In game day uniforms, the team stands in front of player Joe Smoke and Coach Leon Towns.

JOE SMOKE

We've won a game last week - that's old news.

COACH LEON TOWNS

Focus on the job at hand. Don't worry - Coach Koval is gonna be OK. (Pause) Camelback Spartans aren't gonna be OK.

#24 of Camelback catches the ball and is met immediately by 2 Thunderbird players who simultaneously tackle him. Running back #14 of Camelback is tackled behind the line of scrimmage by #76 of the Thunderbird Titans. #76 offers his hand to #14 to help #14 off of the ground. #14 accepts the hand of #76. Irene Weiss kicks an on sides kick that is recovered by #36 of the Thunderbird Titans. Scoreboard shows fourth down and 1 yard for a first. The quarterback runs the ball up the middle 9 yards for a first down. The scoreboard is revealed.

Scoreboard: Thunderbird Titans 32 - Visitor 18

People are quietly walking away from the Camelback Spartans side of the field.

INT. BATHROOM OF STEVE KOVAL'S GARAGE - AFTERNOON

Leon Towns is standing in the doorway of the bathroom, looking down at the slowly awakening Steve Koval.

STEVE KOVAL

We win?

COACH LEON TOWNS

(Angry) We? You're not a part of **we** today. Those kids won.

(MORE)

COACH LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

I helped, so I was a part of it.
You? You lost, today.

Leon Towns extends his hand to help Steve Koval up off of the floor. Steve Koval grabs his hand and Leon let's go, making Steve Koval fall to the floor.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

OK, I deserved that.

COACH LEON TOWNS

What happened to make you jump in the bottle? Your wife and kids die? Your parents get killed in a car accident?

COACH STEVE KOVAL

No. No. My dad told me this morning that my mother is sick - she has cancer. Maybe six months or so.

COACH LEON TOWNS

Sorry about your Mom.

Leon gets within three inches of Steve's face and speaks loudly.

COACH LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

(Pause) Would your Mom want you messing up your life? Show your Mom some love... some respect - not this crap you pulled today.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

(Pause) Give me a break, Leon. My Mom is gonna' die soon and...

Leon Towns grabs Steve Koval and presses him tightly against the wall.

COACH LEON TOWNS

You're always gonna have lots of reasons to drink. You may lose your job or get sick. People close to us lose jobs, lose houses, get divorced, get sick - people you love are gonna die. (Louder) You are going to have problems. Big problems. Those things happen. You gonna always jump in the bottle when a problem jumps into your life?

(MORE)

COACH LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

Does your mother want you to quit the fight when you have problems - when you come up against another wall?

Leon pushes Steve Koval into the wall to the right.

COACH LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

How about this wall, Steve? You need a drink now? How about some whiskey - whiskey gonna help you now?

COACH STEVE KOVAL

This isn't funny, Leon.

COACH LEON TOWNS

That crap you pulled today wasn't funny. You let yourself down. You let those kids down. I covered for you... today. That's it... no more covering for you. I'll help you - but I'm not covering your "I gotta have another drink" mistakes anymore. **You** gotta control **you**.

Steve Koval struggles. Steve struggles more and finally Leon lets go of Steve.

COACH LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

You gotta help yourself first. You gotta decide every day. Today you decided to quit quitting. You weren't in control of you today and you were not a football coach... the bottle won. Tomorrow you gonna stand-up to the bottle? You gonna be a real man again? A real husband... a real father? A real football coach again?

Steve Koval nods his head "yes".

COACH LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

I've been bigger than the bottle. You just gotta be tougher in the moment than the bottle. Just make that decision now. First for you, then for your family and everybody who relies on you.

Steve Koval slightly nods his head yes.

COACH STEVE KOVAL
 (Slightly crying) My wife... my
 kids - I can't fail anymore.

EXT. INDIAN BEND WASH GREENBELT - DAY

Steve Koval walks with LINDA KOVAL, 36.

STEVE KOVAL
 Team is coming along. They won 1. I
 wasn't there.

LINDA KOVAL
 Why? Why weren't you there?

STEVE KOVAL
 I drank. Leon covered for me.

LINDA KOVAL
 Steve... You were doing so well.
 Why did you trip? What happened?

They stop walking. Steve sits on a very large branch laying
 in their path. Linda looks at Steve's face.

STEVE KOVAL
 My Mom is sick. Real sick. I
 thought I could face the bottle by
 myself and win. I thought I was
 ready. I wasn't ready. I...

Steve Koval eyes become filled with tears.

LINDA KOVAL
 Your drinking isn't about your Mom.
 It's not her fault. She isn't the
 reason. She didn't pour alcohol
 down your throat.

STEVE KOVAL
 I did. I poured it.

Linda Koval looks at Steve Koval with a stern then loving
 face. She looks at the large branch then at Steve Koval.

LINDA KOVAL
 Move this branch out of the path.

Steve ever so slightly moves the branch.

STEVE KOVAL

It's too big, Linda. I'm 174 pounds
and this branch has gotta be a
thousand pounds.

Linda walks 50 feet from the branch and sits on a large rock.

LINDA KOVAL

Move the branch off the path and
I'll kiss you. Do you want to kiss
me Steve Koval... do you? If the
branch is too big... you can just
walk home by yourself.

Steve Koval smiles. He looks at the long branch. He then
grabs a large rock and places it along side the large branch.
He grabs a smaller branch and makes the large branch move. He
keeps on prying the large branch until it is out of the way
of the branch. He walks over and passionately hugs then
gently kisses his wife.

LINDA KOVAL (CONT'D)

Was I worth the effort? Is your
life worth the effort?

Steve Koval begins to have tears form in his eyes. Hand in
hand Steve and Linda continue walking down the river bank.

LINDA KOVAL (CONT'D)

Kissing me isn't going to help you
fight your battle. Your going to
have to move logs by yourself.

STEVE KOVAL

I... I...

LINDA KOVAL

Don't **tell** me what your gonna do.
Just do what you need to do.

INT. STEVE KOVAL'S BLACK 1956 CHRYSLER 300 - AFTERNOON

Steve is driving, glances quickly at Leon and speaks.

STEVE KOVAL

It's working, Leon - it's working.

LEON TOWNS

It's an old car - surprising that
it's still working.

STEVE KOVAL

The boys won two games... without field goals or punting.

Leon is looking at a clipboard.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

Which plays gained the most yards?

LEON TOWNS

The reverse - 33 yards. Short passes on long yardage situations - our competition isn't expecting short passes or

STEVE KOVAL

Going for it on fourth down. The plan is working, Leon.

LEON TOWNS

(Pause) Steve - when we are back on our 20-or-30 yard line in the 4th quarter, well, we are almost giving points to the other team if the play fails. How about...

Steve Koval rolls up to a stop sign near a car dealership and stops.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

(Mild mannered) Do you want to get out now or are you going to ride with me the rest of the way?

Steve Koval drives the car through the intersection and pulls the car over to the curb. Steve open his door, gets out of his seat and walks over to Leon's side of the car and opens Leon's door.

COACH STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

Are you in or are you out?

Leon closes the door.

COACH STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

Good. We've got work to do next week.

Steve Koval smiles.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD. DAY

The Thunderbird Titans line up, in practice uniforms - offense against the defense. Leon Towns is standing behind the offensive line.

LEON TOWNS

It's 4th and 8. Run the quarterback up the middle again. This time - center and guard, make that hole big enough for a truck to run through. Quarterback, *hide* that ball with your arms folded in front of you and run hard up the middle. All of you - make me believe it. On hut three.

The center clears left and the right guard clears right. The quarterback does a fake pass of the ball, but then tucks the ball near his own stomach, then runs up the middle - head down, running forward through the open hole.

LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

Do it again!

Both offense and defense line up in formation.

JOE SMOKE

Hut one. Hut two. Hut three.

The ball is hiked to Joe Smoke. The center clears left and the right guard clears right. The quarterback fake passes the ball and clenches his fist as though the ball is caught. He hesitates, then runs with the ball near his stomach - head down through the open hole.

LEON TOWNS

Coach Koval - are you good with what you just saw?

Coach Steve Koval, smiles and nods his head yes.

EXT. FAIRFAX HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - AFTERNOON

EXT. FAIRFAX HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD, RIGHT SIDE-
AFTERNOON

The down marker is set to 4th down. The ball is on the Fairfax eight yard line. The clock shows five seconds to go in the game. Wiznewski is seen on the side line practicing kicking the ball into a small net.

11 new Thunderbird Titan players run on to the field and the 11 starting players run off the field. The center hikes to ball to the quarterback who throws the ball to the tight end who comes over the middle in the end zone. The tight end catches the ball with zero seconds on the clock. The Fairfax Stampede team walks off of the field. Their heads are mostly tilted down and sad looks are on their faces.

The scoreboard reads: FAIRFAX HIGH SCHOOL, 6 - Visitor 24.

INT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL BUS. - AFTERNOON

The Titan football team is seated, laughing and cheering.

COACH LEON TOWNS

Quiet please. Coach Koval has a few words.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

(Quietly- reverently)Gentlemen and lady - great effort today. Defense was strong. What time is it Coach Towns?

Coach Towns looks at his watch and speaks.

COACH LEON TOWNS

6:45 P.M.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

Celebrate this victory... for five hours and 15 minutes... until midnight. You've all worked hard. Celebrate for the rest of the day. Gentlemen and Irene, we are not done with our job. We have more games to play. (Pause) Also gentlemen, there is a dance tomorrow in the gymnasium. If you go to the dance, the Thunderbird Titan gentlemen football players will come dressed with a tie, a button down shirt, dress pants and no blue jeans. Irene, you will also dress, appropriately.

COACH LEON TOWNS

Is that clear gentlemen and Irene?

The Thunderbird High football team nods in approval. The team begins to walk away from the field. Linda Koval walks up to Steve Koval and stands in front of him.

LINDA KOVAL
 Hey Coach - got a minute for a fan?

Steve Koval realizes that the woman standing in front of him is his wife. He quickly hugs her.

LINDA KOVAL (CONT'D)
 Three and one.

COACH STEVE KOVAL
 (Whispering) Two and zero. Two weeks
 and no drinks.

LINDA KOVAL
 You **are** winning.

COACH STEVE KOVAL
 I'm almost ready, hon. I don't want
 to trip when you and the kids come
 back home.

Linda Koval kisses Steve Koval on the cheek, smiles and walks away. Steve Koval smiles as he watches his wife walk away.

INT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

The large wooden floor gymnasium is filled with students dancing to: **Happy** by Pharrell Williams. The football team walks in as a group of 40, all conspicuous by their ties, button down shirts and slacks. Irene Weiss is dressed in a pretty dress that is cute, but not overly sexy. MIKE WARNER, 18, 6', 190 pounds, speaks to Eugene Wisnewski.

MIKE WARNER
 There she is. There she is. Krystin
 Autum - wearing the blue and white
 skirt. Man... she is beautiful.

Standing with a group of four other girls is strikingly beautiful Krystin Autum, 17, 118 pounds and shapely.

EUGENE WISNEWSKI
 She *is* very, very pretty. Go say
 hello before running back or
 trumpet player from band gets to
 her first.

Krystin Autum stands talking and smiling with the other girls. A ceiling light highlights her from head to toe.

MIKE WARNER

Out of my league. She probably likes rich guys or basketball players.

EUGENE WISNEWSKI

Michael - what are you ...man or mouse? You knock big guys down and you are scared of... hundred and 20 pound girl? You are twice her size.

MIKE WARNER

I don't want to tackle her Eugene, I want to dance with her. She might ahhh...

Mike Warner slightly drops his head and stops talking.

EUGENE WISNEWSKI

But - you are scared... like little boy is scared of Baba Yaga - you call him "boogie man"... right?

MIKE WARNER

Yes... scared like little boy.

EUGENE WISNEWSKI

Immigrant from old country has answer. You act. I was actor in school plays. I act like character. Now - your turn. Act like confident man.

MIKE WARNER

(Smiles) I can't act.

EUGENE WISNEWSKI

You can think - right?

MIKE WARNER

Yes. I can think.

EUGENE WISNEWSKI

Think like I tell you. "This girl wants to dance with me. She saw me from across gym and she wants to kiss me during dance." That is all you think. Now, think what I told you to think as you walk over to her. When you are standing in front of her say these words: "I'm Mike. Would you like to dance? Say it strong like you are president of U-S-A. OK?"

MIKE WARNER
I'm gonna do it, Eugene.

EUGENE WISNEWSKI
Don't tackle her. Just say: I am
Mike - would you like to dance? Go.

Mike Warner walks quietly rehearses his lines as he walks over to Krystin Autum.

MIKE WARNER
Hi - I'm Mike. Would you like to
dance. Hi - I'm Mike Warner. Would
you like to dance?

Mike stands in front of Krystin Autum. 2 girls are to her right and 2 girls are to her left. The song: **Fame** ends. Mike Warner speaks.

MIKE WARNER (CONT'D)
Hi. I'm Mike Warner and I'd like to
kiss you.

Mike realizes with a scrunched face that he said the wrong words. Krystin Autum pauses. With a half smiling face, she takes a step forward. She stands 12 inches away from Mike Warner.

KRYSTIN AUTUM
(Smiling) I'm Krystin. I'd really
like to kiss you.

Krystin Autum leans in, puts her hands on Mike Warner's shoulders, leans in and delicately kisses him on the lips for three seconds. After the kiss, the two students stand apart, smiling at each other.

MIKE WARNER
Would you like to dance?

Krystin takes Mike's hand and walks to an open spot on the dance floor. Mike and Krystin slow dance to SFX - MUSIC: **My Eyes Adored You** as the rest of the students dance around them. Seven seconds into the dance Krystin speaks.

KRYSTIN AUTUM
I like dancing with you. You kiss
real nice. (Pause) I don't have a
steady boyfriend.

MIKE WARNER
Neither do I.

Krystin smiles.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

An ambulance, siren blaring, pulls up into a drive way of a house along side of the football field. JAMES NATHAN, 16, begins to run to the house.

JAMES NATHAN

It's at my house! The ambulance is
at my house!

James Nathan runs the 125 yards to his house.

EXT. FRONT DOOR OF 1,200 SQUARE FOOT HOME - AFTERNOON

James Nathan yanks open the front door of his home.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF JAMES NATHAN'S HOME - - AFTERNOON

James Nathan sees his father, RICHARD NATHAN SR., 48.

Richard Nathan, grabs James Nathan around the waist and holds him as he looks into his son's eyes.

RICHARD NATHAN

Your brother Richard... (pause) is
in his bedroom with the EMT's.
Your mother found him about 20
minutes ago. They are trying to
bring him back.

2 EMT's walk out the room. One of them, A.J. SELLERS, 32 looks at Richard Nathan Sr. and speaks:

A.J. SELLERS

We did everything we could do.

RICHARD NATHAN

Give him something. Shock him with
those paddles. You go in there and
bring him back!

A.J. SELLERS

He's gone, sir.

Richard Nathan grabs A.J. Sellers and screams.

RICHARD NATHAN

Bring him back now!

A.J. SELLERS

He is gone, Mr. Nathan. I'm sorry.

RICHARD NATHAN
My boy. My boy is gone.

Richard Nathan stands with his face covered by his hands. A.J. Sellers hugs Mr. Nathan. SOPHIA NATHAN, 45, enters the room and runs over to hug James Nathan. Richard Nathan stops hugging A. J. Sellers and joins in the hug with his wife and son. The three people cry and hug.

SOPHIA NATHAN
How could he die? He just turned
18... he was healthy.

DEVON WILSON
We found these under his body.

Devon holds out an empty pill bottle and a piece of paper with writing and an image on it. Richard Nathan reads the paper.

RICHARD NATHAN
I was never good enough. No A's in
school. No girls liked me, and I
wasn't good at football. Mom and
Dad... I'm sorry - focus on James
and each other. I love all of you.
But, I had to go. Tell my
grandparents that I love them. Good
Bye.

Richard Nathan shows the paper to his wife. James Nathan forces a look. The picture is of a field goal kicker missing a field goal and the numbers, just under are: 0 - 6.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD. - AFTERNOON

COACH STEVE KOVAL
Everybody... stop what you are
doing - all eyes on me.

Coach Koval waits for silence. The team becomes quiet.

COACH STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)
James Nathan is with his family.
Everybody... pay attention.

The ambulance slowly backs out of the driveway and then moves down the street at a normal speed. No sirens are blaring. No lights are flashing. Coach Steve Koval looks at the face of the driver of the ambulance and sees a slightly sad almost blank look on his face.

COACH STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

OK. Huddle up. Everybody bring it in. Take a knee. Practice is over for today. Go to the locker room. Hit the showers. Then... wait for me.

The players begin to walk back to locker room.

INT. HALLWAY, THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL. DAY

Coach Steve Koval looks out of the school hallway and sees a hearse pull up to home of Richard Nathan. Steve walks out of the building to get a closer look.

EXT. FRONT OF 1,200 SQUARE FOOT HOME - AFTERNOON

A hearse pulls up to the Nathan home. The body of Richard Nathan is loaded into the hearse. The hearse departs. Sophia, Richard Sr. and James Nathan follow in the door family car.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - AFTERNOON

I/E. 4 DOOR FAMILY CAR OF THE NATHAN FAMILY. - AFTERNOON

James Nathan yells out from the car to the Coach Steve Koval and the football team.

JAMES NATHAN

I quit the team. No football. My brother is dead because of football. Read this.

James Nathan throws the note from his brother onto the street. Steve Koval jogs over to the street and picks up the note. Steve looks at the hand drawn image and reads the text. He quickly jogs to the locker room.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL LOCKER ROOM - AFTERNOON

COACH STEVE KOVAL

Everybody stop what you are doing. One of us - a former player on this team, has passed away. Once you are a part of this team, you are forever a part of this team. Grab a hand of the player next to you.

TEAM

Mumbling.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

(Sternly and somberly) Grab a hand.

The players slowly hold each other's hands.

COACH STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

Silent respect, gentlemen and
Irene... for the life of Richard
Nathan - one of us.

The team bows their head in silence. Tears stream down the
cheeks of 10 players.

COACH STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

Practice is over. Go home and think
about what happened today.

INT. LOCKER ROOM OF THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

The team is gathered in the locker room, washing and putting
on street clothes.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

I am here if you want to talk.

Player Walter Jones, 17, slowly stands up and speaks.

WALTER JONES

Coach, this is crap.

Walter Jones begins to cry.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

We just lost a friend - one of us.

The teams stops what they are doing and listens to Coach
Steve Koval.

COACH STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

We lost a special person and
everything that he could have
brought to the world. All the lives
that could have been touched - we
will never know - what could have
been. Now each of you feels the
pain from the loss. You all have
the ability to touch people's lives
- but not if you take your own.

(MORE)

COACH STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

Understand deep in your heart that we all are connected - we all have a golden opportunity in front of us to have an affect upon the world - even when a dark storm makes you feel that there is no way out. Each and every one of you is important. We will attend the services for Richard Nathan unless otherwise instructed by your parents. Men will wear a tie, with a sports jacket or a suit. Irene will wear a proper conservative outfit.

EXT. MAUSOLEUM IN CEMETERY - AFTERNOON

All males of the team are wearing suits and ties or sports jackets and ties. Irene Weiss is wearing a dark dress. Every football player is wearing a black arm band with the number 18. Hundreds of people of every age are talking and crying.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD. - AFTERNOON

The players are all assembled for the beginning of practice.

STEVE KOVAL

We are not going to forget Richard. We will honor him by taking care of business when we are tired and want to quit. He will live on through us. Honor him by doing your best.
(Pause) Let's get to work.

The players go through jumping jacks, sit ups toe touches. Running drills with 6 players are followed by 5 players pushing the tackling sled with Leon Towns barking out orders.

EXT. DESERT VISTA HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD. - AFTERNOON

The Desert Vista "Thunder" football team is dressed in gold uniforms with blue trim. They are standing in the middle of the field. On the Thunderbird Titan cheering side of the field the fans are counting down the clock as the scoreboard is revealed. Linda Koval watches the game and her husband from the bottom level of the aluminum stands. Irene Weiss kicks an on-sides kick. Player #38 of the Thunderbird Titans covers the ball. Krystin Autum looks for and see Mike Warner. Krystin throws a small kiss to Mike Warner. Mike Warner smiles back at Krystin Autum. Steve Koval smiles as his wife smiles back at him.

At the top of the scoreboard are the words: "Desert Vista Field" Just under: Desert Vista Thunder 14 - Visitor 24.

I/E. THUNDERBIRD FOOTBALL BUS IN PARKING LOT OF DESERT VISTA HIGH SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Coach Koval and Coach Towns are standing in the front of the bus.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

We had a major loss on our minds today for the game against Desert Vista High School. Our bodies were here and got the job done,- but our hearts were elsewhere. Let's honor our fallen former player by focusing our efforts for the rest of the season.

Coach Koval walks along the right side and nods to each player. Each player nods back. Coach Towns walks along the left side and nods to each player. Each player nods back.

EXT. WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD.- AFTERNOON

#8 stickers are on the helmets of all the Thunderbird Titan players Scoreboard, on top: Washington High School, just under Home of the Rams, just under to left, Washington 12 - Visitor 16. Irene Weiss kicks an on-sides kick. Player #38 of the Thunderbirds picks up the football but drops the ball before his knees hit the ground. Irene Weiss is violently knocked to the ground by player #28 of Washington. The ref sees the infractions and gives the player #28 a yelling but not heard warning, pointing at Irene Weiss. The ball is picked up by #33 of Washington High School. The ball is on the 32 yard line toward the Thunderbird Titan goal area. #71, #173 and #86 all come to the aid of Irene Weiss as she looks up to them from the ground. Irene Weiss speaks hesitatingly as she slowly gets up.

IRENE WEISS

Knocked... down... seven...

GROUP OF # PLAYERS (IN UNISON)

Get up eight!

EXT. SIDELINE, WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL SIDE.- AFTERNOON

COACH PAUL STOYK, 47, speaks to his quarterback, RICK JEFFERSON, 17.

COACH PAUL STOYK

We've got nine seconds. 1 play.
Pass. Stop and go to the right end.
On Go! You got this!

RICK JEFFERSON

Got it, Coach. One touchdown pass.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD SIDE OF FIELD. - AFTERNOON

Coach Koval talks to defensive Captain Ron Grayman who runs onto the field and tells the play to the team.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

9 man blitz. 2 safety's back.

Ron Grayman runs into the huddle and speaks.

RON GRAYMAN

Blitz. 2 safety's back. We are a
stone wall.

The Washington Rams begin to run their play. 8 Thunderbird players blitz the quarterback, all have #8 stickers covering their helmets. #71 Jeff Savits of Thunderbird falls after being hit, feels that his left knee is injured, but gets up and hops from his right leg to tackle the Washington Ram quarterback just before the ball leaves his hand. The ball falls to the turf at Jeff's feet. Jeff smiles at the ball. The clock goes to all 0's. Linda Koval watches the clock from the stands as it goes to all zeros. She smiles at her Coach Steve who smiles back at her. Krystin Autum stands 2 people down from Linda Koval. Krystin watches the clock and waves to Mike Warner. Mike Warner smiles back at Krystin Autum. The scoreboard score remains the same with 0's on the clock: Washington Rams 12 - Visitor 16.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD CHIEFS FOOTBALL FIELD, SIDELINE - AFTERNOON

The team wearing practice uniforms, helmets off, stands in a semi-circle around Coach Towns and Coach Koval.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

Good game against the Rams
gentlemen and Irene. Very good
game. This man here, right here,
Jeff Savits hopped on 1 leg to get
the Rams quarterback. Jeff come up
here.

Coach Koval claps and the team joins him and claps. Jeff Savits smiles.

Coach Koval takes a #8 sticker and places it on the helmet of Jeff. The team applauds. #8's are seen on other helmets as the viewer sees the team.

ROBERT NICHOLAS

Central Catholic is gonna get stomped when we play 'em.

COACH LEON TOWNS

(Calm-Quietly, yet strong)Of course we want to win the Friendship Bowl championship. But that game is a few games away. Robert, look to next week's game. Keep focused on the task at hand. What are you going to do to beat Greenway this week? Think. Then do. That's all for today, Irene and gentlemen.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD. - NIGHT

The Greenway Demons football team bus drives away from Titans Field at Thunderbird High School. The scoreboard is still lit up. Students and other football fans are walking to their cars. Krystin Autum walks away holding hands with football player Mike Warner. Principal Jones walks toward Coach Koval and Coach Towns. Linda Koval looks at the scoreboard. The scoreboard, Thunderbird High School at the top, Chiefs Field just under. Just under to right, Visitor and the number: 14. To the left: Thunderbird. The number "8" is lit up. Then after a two second wait, the number 2 is lit up. The scoreboard finally reads: Thunderbird Titans 28 - Visitor 14. Linda Koval smiles as she looks at the final score. Principal Jones, Steve Koval and Leon Towns walk off the field together.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

Nice job, gentlemen.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

Thanks, Principal Jones.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

You are welcome. The grades are up and your winning ways continue. I'm glad I gave you a second chance.

COACH LEON TOWNS

I appreciate it, sir.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

I'm not talking about you, Mr. Towns.

The three men stop walking. Principal Jones looks at Steve Koval.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES (CONT'D)

I saw how you parked your car a few weeks ago, Mr. Koval. Then, how you fell asleep on the shoulder of Mr. Towns as he drove your car.

STEVE KOVAL

So... you know.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

Your associate didn't want you to be around anybody - so he took control of the situation - and saved you humiliation and your job.

STEVE KOVAL

I know what Leon did for me. We take care of each other. But, why didn't you step in?

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

Leon saved you - from a potential scene that could have been a disaster for the school. My first concern is for the school, Mr. Koval. That disaster never happened. As for you - well, I was given a second chance by a principal when I was a senior in high school - I was class president - all A's and very popular. A joint fell out of my pocket when I was in meeting with the principal. I could have been thrown out of school - no respectable college would have taken me. (Pause) I could have thrown the book at you but the book wasn't thrown at me. Sometimes... people get second chances.

STEVE KOVAL

Thank you, sir. Thank you.

Steve Koval puts out his hand to Principal Jones. Principal Jones shakes his hand.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

Leon could have let you ruin your own world.

(MORE)

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES (CONT'D)

I saw that Leon was taking care of you. (Pause) Just stay away from the alcohol, Mr. Koval. Am I understood?

STEVE KOVAL

Understood.

PRINCIPAL CECIL JONES

Nothing to add to this conversation Mr. Towns?

Leon Towns smiles and continues to walk.

LEON TOWNS

It's what you do with the second chance that counts.

EXT. MOON VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD. - DAY

The Moon Valley Rockets, wearing royal blue red and white uniforms have the Titans at their three yard line with 37 yards for a first down. Eugene Wiznewski is practicing kicking the football into a net on the sideline. Coach Towns talks to Coach Steve Koval.

COACH LEON TOWNS

It's fourth down, 37 and a half yards for a first down, coach. What do you think?

Coach Koval speaks, but the Thunderbird band is playing the fight song and Coach Koval can't be heard. Coach Towns calls for #28, the small EMILIO GARCIA, 17, to run in a play and be the replacement quarterback.

EMILLO GARCIA

Hut one.

The ball is snapped to Garcia who runs up middle. The Moon Valley Rocket players have surprised looks on their faces as Garcia dodges the defence for 39 yards. The referee signals for a first down. Zeros are on the clock at halftime as the Moon Valley Rocket marching band SFX MUSIC takes the field. The Thunderbird Titans band then takes the field SFX MUSIC along with flag girls.

I/E. THUNDERBIRD TITANS FOOTBALL BUS IN PARKING LOT OF MOON VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Coach Koval and Coach Towns stand inside the bus, near the driver.

COACH STEVE KOVAL
40 to 12. (Smiling) Give yourselves
a clap.

The team claps one time.

COACH LEON TOWNS
Two claps for Emilio Garcia who ran
for 39 yards and a first down.

The team claps two times.

COACH STEVE KOVAL
As you all are aware, in order to
get into the Friendship Bowl game,
our team has to beat the Arcadia
High Comets.

PLAYER RONALD GRAYMAN
We'll beat 'em coach.

Irene Weiss, sitting near the aisle stands up, but doesn't
speak.

COACH STEVE KOVAL
Do you have something to say Irene?

IRENE WEISS
Yes - but it goes against something
you always say to the team.

COACH STEVE KOVAL
I've got big shoulders. Speak your
piece.

IRENE WEISS
You always say - Gentlemen and
Irene. Could you just say "team"?

IRENE WEISS (CONT'D)
I am part of the team. I'm not a
separate person.

Steve Koval looks at Leon Towns who ever so slightly nods his
head up and down.

COACH STEVE KOVAL
You are absolutely right. I will.

LEON TOWNS
Agreed.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

On to our next job... team,
As you all know, we need 8 wins to
get into the Friendship Bowl. But,
for this game, we are not going to
let Arcadia High score a touchdown.
Or... a field goal. (Pause) **Zero
points.**

COACH LEON TOWNS

Zero points. No field goals for
Arcadia High. That means zero
interceptions and no fumbles on
offense. On defense... we are a
brick wall.

The team looks shocked and amazed.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

Champions, well - in order to be
champions- you have to do the
extraordinary. Champions go beyond
pain and adversity. Champions don't
lose focus for a second. They have
to do things they haven't done
before. I'm looking at those people
right now. Team... are we in
agreement?

TEAM

Yes, coach.

COACH LEON TOWNS

Be prepared... our practices during
next will leave you with nothing
left. You will ache. Some of you
will throw up... Some gasping for
air. Anyone want to not be here
next week?

Coach Towns takes his cell phone from his pocket.

COACH LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

Here is my phone. Any of you wanna
call home and report that Coach
Towns is mean or picking on you?

The team looks back with expressionless faces.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD. - AFTERNOON

In practice uniforms, half of the team is taking turns
hitting the blocking sled.

The other half of the team is running wind sprints. The hitting is relentless. The wind sprints show the pain and exhaustion on the faces of the runners.

COACH LEON TOWNS

30 minutes on the sleds and 30 minutes for the wind sprints. Eight minute water break. Then switch.

JOE SMOKE

Coach, I want to say something about the workout.

COACH LEON TOWNS

(Angry) What do you want to say, Joe?

JOE SMOKE

I want to change the eight minute water break to a seven minute water break. OK, Coach Towns?

COACH LEON TOWNS

Everybody will get water and a quick moment to catch their breath. Permission granted. Go tell the players.

JOE SMOKE

Champions have to be extraordinary.

EXT. ARCADIA HIGH COMETS FOOTBALL FIELD. - AFTERNOON

The game is being played with the Thunderbird Titans gang tackling Arcadia Comets running backs and offering a hand to the tackled player. Irene Weiss kicks an on-sides kick. Player #40 of the Thunderbirds covers the ball. Thunderbird Titans players sack the Arcadia High quarterback on six separate plays and offer a hand - that is taken by the tackled quarterback. In the 4th quarter a Arcadia High Comet running back is run down by two Thunderbird Titan players. Eugene Wiznewski practices kicking field goals on the sideline. The Thunderbird Titans are on the nine yard line of the Arcadia High Comets with eight seconds on the clock. It is fourth down.

JOE SMOKE

Quarterback sneak on go.

The ball is hiked to Joe Smoke who runs in for a touchdown. Coach Koval calls for Wiznewski.

COACH STEVE KOVAL
Wiznewski - come here.

EUGENE WISNEWSKI
Yes, Coach. (whispering) My kicking
is...

COACH STEVE KOVAL
I want you to run the ball in for
two points. Tell Smoke to lateral
the ball to you. Make it happen
Eugene.

EUGENE WISNEWSKI
I do it Coach.

Wiznewski runs in and a running back runs out. The team gets into formation. The ball is hiked to Smoke who laterals the ball to Wiznewski. Wiznewski runs in for the extra points. The scoreboard shows: Arcadia High Comets 0 and Visitor 48.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD. - NIGHT

The football field is lit by moonlight. The scoreboard is on and lit up. At the top of the scoreboard; Thunderbird High School, just under: Chiefs Field, just under to left: Home 99, to right: Visitor 00. Krystin Autum sits in the passenger seat of Mike Warner's 2012 Dodge Charger, parked aside the football field. Mike Warner gets into the car and quickly yet gently kisses Krystin Autum. She smiles. Mike starts the car SFX VROOM and begins to drive. Two men are seen as silhouettes as they walk away from the football field. DAVID JOHNSON, 50, is pushing a large janitorial style broom and MICHAEL DAVIS, 49, is pushing a large plastic garbage can.

DAVID JOHNSON
Can you believe it? They just beat
the Arcadia Comets 48 to 0.
Thunderbird High is eight and one
and playing in the Friendship Bowl.

MICHAEL DAVIS
I would have bet my house and my
pension that the Thunderbird Titans
wouldn't be playing against the
Catholic league champs in the
Friendship Bowl.

DAVID JOHNSON
They're gonna have their hands
filled when they play those
Catholic boys. I think they're
playing against Central Catholic.

MICHAEL DAVIS

I'm going to the game. You goin'?

DAVID JOHNSON

Yep.

MICHAEL DAVIS

You're a Catholic. What side are you sittin' on?

DAVID JOHNSON

God knows. And you will to if you see me at the game.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF STEVE KOVALS HOUSE. - NIGHT

Steve Koval is seated on the large brown leather couch next to his wife: Linda, daughter, GRACE 11 and son, A.J., 9. The television is tuned to the local news of channel seven. Bill Bonds, 40 is at the anchor Desk with Diana Lewis, 37.

INT. TELEVISION SCREEN. - NIGHT

BILL BONDS

Seven short months ago Thunderbird High School was in the news for having riots. The school was closed for two days. The football team at the time was zero an nine and the school also placed poorly on the statewide aptitude exams. Now the student body of Thunderbird High has moved those scores to the upper 30% for all public schools in Arizona. The football team is eight and one and will be playing in the Friendship Bowl against the Catholic league champs. Reporter Tom Bell, has more.

INT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL, LOWER HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

TOM BELL

An amazing turn around has happened here at Thunderbird High School with its student population of 2,124 students. To my right is Principal Cecil Jones. What happened here at Thunderbird High to have such an amazing change?

PRINCIPAL JONES

Last year there were big problems at this school. When you have that kind of situation, you must first change how you think. I thought differently about what I could do... what my teachers could do. I came up with a plan. That plan was put into action by the staff of this school. The results are what you see today - a better Thunderbird High.

TOM BELL

Steve Koval is a teacher, athletic director and coach of the eight and one Thunderbird Titan football team. Zero and nine to eight and one. What did you do?

STEVE KOVAL

I just asked the players to think differently and to finish every job they start. Our team motto is "knocked down seven - get up eight. (Pause) The team G.P.A. went from a 2.1 to 2.9. Leon Towns is also a big reason why the team is seven and two.

Tom Bell takes a step and moves the microphone in front of Leon Towns.

TOM BELL

The great University of Michigan football player turned teacher and football coach. Tell us how you came up with this unusual strategy of no field goal attempts. No punting. Plus, Irene Weiss doing those recoverable on sides kicks.

LEON TOWNS

My strategy is very simple. (Pause) I followed Coach Koval's plan.

TOM BELL

Thunderbird High School - rising from the ashes. Back to you Bill.

INT. CHANNEL 7 ANCHOR DESK STUDIO, PHOENIX, ARIZONA. -
AFTERNOON

BILL BONDS
Leon, can you hear me?

Leon nods his head yes.

INT. CLASSROOM THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL. LOWER HALLWAY -
AFTERNOON

BILL BONDS (V.O.)
Coach Koval is your boss and you're
the guy with the huge football
background. Leon, how did you
handle going from Head Coach to
Assistant Coach?

LEON TOWNS
Bill, the hardest times lead to the
greatest moments. This is one great
moment.

Leon extends his open hand to Coach Koval. Coach Koval
smiles, then shakes Leon Towns hand.

Bill Bonds shakes his head up and down and smiles.

TOM BELL
At the rejuvenated Thunderbird High
School - I'm Tom Bell reporting for
Channel 7 Action News.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF STEVE KOVALS HOUSE. - NIGHT

Linda Koval snuggles up closer to Steve Koval on an
overstuffed large brown leather couch.

LINDA KOVAL
You are a special man Steven Koval.
You're humble - Cecil Jones takes
the credit for what's happened at
the school and you just sit here
and smile. What do **you** need?

STEVE KOVAL
Just you, A.J. and Grace.

Grace Koval speaks.

GRACE KOVAL

Mom says you're not so sick, Dad. I don't wanna live with Grandma and Grandpa anymore. I want to live here.

STEVE KOVAL

Don't worry any more, Grace. I'm better. I'm here to stay. The only thing that will take us apart is me going to get ice cream.

Grace smiles.

A.J.

Are you a TV star now, Dad?

STEVE KOVAL

(Warmly) No. I'm **your** Dad. I'm not a TV star - I just look like one.

A.J. smiles and runs up to his bedroom. Steve Koval looks at his wife and walks up next to her.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

I am better, hun.

Steve kisses Linda.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

I'm always going to have to fight **it**, but I'm **not drinking**. Each and every day, I'm not drinking.

LINDA KOVAL

Your fighting and winning. I love you, Steve.

STEVE KOVAL

I love you Linda. I love my family, my players and my students.

LINDA KOVAL

Most people in this world are about - me, me, me. Why are you about everybody else, Steve Koval?

They hold hands while sitting down, Linda on Steve's lap on an oversized leather chair. Steve glances up and sees an old family image of his mother, father and older brother, Leonard, older sister Janice, younger brother Robert and himself up on the wall near where he is sitting. Steve begins speaking again. When Steve says the word **sun** he focuses on the image of his older brother, Leonard.

STEVE KOVAL

I decided a long time ago that I was not the **sun** - the planets do not revolve around me.

LINDA KOVAL

Steve, tell me... Did your parents make you feel special? Loved?

STEVE KOVAL

They cared for me. I just felt that my parents focused their attention on/...

Steve looks at the image of the family on the wall. He focuses on his older brother, Leonard.

EXT. SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF MODEST 900 SQUARE FOOT HOME. - DAY

STEVE, 8, LENNY, 14, are riding their Sting Ray style - banana seat bikes on the sidewalk. Older sister Janice is jumping rope as Steve's mother stands, with younger brother Robert standing a foot from her. She smiles. Steve Koval has a plain green bike, but Lenny's bike has chrome fenders, five speeds, bigger tires and streamers coming from the handle bars.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF STEVE KOVALS HOUSE. - NIGHT

STEVE KOVAL

My parents always said that "Leonard **was older**" and was rewarded for having an excellent report card. (Pause) I would get his old stuff - hand me downs.

Linda Koval shakes her head from left to right in disapproval.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

I didn't want to go to Lenny's high school and be compared to him. Leonard was the best athlete at his high school. Student council president. OK, he was those things - but he was always so arrogant. He talked down to everybody - even my mom and dad. I decided then that I did not need to make myself happy by thinking that I was the most important person on the planet.

LINDA KOVAL

Was he really arrogant to your mom?
His Mother?

STEVE KOVAL

(Pause) I remember going/

SUPER: "Detroit 2001" on bottom left of the screen.

EXT. CATHOLIC CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL, BASEBALL DIAMOND. -
AFTERNOON

LEONARD KOVAL, 18, tall and semi muscular is on the mound pitching for Catholic Central High School against Brother Rice Catholic High School. The baseball coach for Catholic Central, FATHER DONAHER, 46, calls to Leonard Koval.

FATHER DONALDSON

You got this. You got this.

Leonard Koval winds up and pitches the ball against #3 of Brother Rice High school. Umpire HECTOR GOMEZ, 67, says:

HECTOR GOMEZ

Strike three. You're out!

The Central Catholic team rushes the pitcher's mound and cheers.

CENTRAL CATHOLIC BASEBALL TEAM

No hitter! No Hitter! No hitter!

Leonard Koval smiles as his mother, Irene, father Leo, brother STEVE KOVAL 12, sister Janice 14 and youngest brother ROBERT, 6, walk out to the pitcher's mound behind the team and the two coaches. Leonard's Mom, Irene tries to hug Leonard. Leonard speaks.

LEONARD KOVAL

Mom... why are you wearing that old
jacket to *my* game?

Irene looks to the ground. Leonard Koval walks past his brother Steve Koval as Steve Koval slightly grabs his uniform shirt. Steve Koval speaks.

STEVE KOVAL

Hey Lenny - great game.

Leonard Koval ignores his brother and talks to the team.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF STEVE KOVAL'S HOUSE. - NIGHT

LINDA KOVAL

You decided **not** to be like Lenny.

STEVE KOVAL

Well said, lovely wife. I was not going to be **above** everybody - even if great things happened to me.

LINDA KOVAL

My husband has a eight and one football team and he's not arrogant. And... you've got your **problem** under control.

STEVE KOVAL

Like they say at the meetings - one day at a time.

Telephone ringing - SFX: RING - RING.

Linda Koval picks up the wireless phone.

LINDA KOVAL

Hello. (Acts happy to hear him) Oh - hi, Lenny. (Pause) I'm fine. (Pause) He's right here. (Louder) Steve... it's your brother Lenny.

Linda gives the phone to Steve.

STEVE KOVAL

Hello, Lenny.

LEONARD KOVAL (V.O.)

Eight and one football team.

STEVE KOVAL

Yep. We've come pretty far.

LEONARD KOVAL (V.O.)

Big year for you. It's great that you got **lucky** with six or seven star players this year.

STEVE KOVAL

Our guys work really hard, so/

LEONARD KOVAL (V.O.)
 Steve, the ball is bouncing your way to be eight and one - there's gotta be **some luck** involved for your little team to be playing in the Friendship Bowl. My **lucky - little** - brother.

STEVE KOVAL
 Well, Lenny, I've always had great luck. I have you as my brother.

LEONARD KOVAL
 You really think you have a chance against the Phoenix Catholic league champs?

STEVE KOVAL
 (Calmly) We have a good shot at it.

LEONARD KOVAL
 You can't beat Central Catholic. I'll be there for the game.

STEVE KOVAL
 That's nice.

LEONARD KOVAL
 My old football coach Ray Murphy from Catholic Central in Detroit moved to Phoenix four years ago. He's the coach for Central Catholic.

STEVE KOVAL
 So I might see you at the game?.

LEONARD KOVAL
 Probably.

STEVE KOVAL
 So... Leonard, how's your family?

LEONARD KOVAL
 500 bucks says you don't win.

STEVE KOVAL
 Coaches don't gamble. Well - I gotta go, Leonard. (Silence) See you soon.

LEONARD KOVAL
 Big game, Steve. Don't goof it up.

The lines goes dead when Leonard hangs up the phone.

Int. SPACIOUS LIVING ROOM OF LEONARD KOVAL'S HOME - NIGHT

Leonard Koval takes the phone away from his face and smiles.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF STEVE KOVALS HOUSE. - NIGHT

Steve rubs a tear from his eye. Linda walks into view.

LINDA KOVAL

Did he see you on TV? Did he
congratulate you?

STEVE KOVAL

Did he congratulate me? Lenny
doesn't congratulate people. People
congratulate Lenny.

LINDA KOVAL

Your brother Lenny wouldn't talk
nice to you if you won the Super
Bowl.

Steve Koval is silent as he looks at his wife.

EXT. STATE FARM STADIUM - AFTERNOON

The State Farm Stadium has thousands of cars parking in its massive 100-acre parking lot. People of all ages are parking or have just parked their cars and are walking towards the stadium. 50% of the people walking into the structure are wearing lower to middle class clothing which includes wearing Thunderbird High School orange and blue. The other half of the group is high middle to upper class people wearing Central Catholic blue and white apparel and high end clothing.

Int. STATE FARM STADIUM, LOWER SEATING AREA AND PLAYING FIELD
- AFTERNOON

PUBLIC ADDRESS ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Welcome to State Farm Stadium for
the playing of the City of Phoenix
High School Football Friendship
Game. Today's game features the
eight and one Thunderbird Titans
versus the eight and one Central
Catholic Knights.

(MORE)

PUBLIC ADDRESS ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Please rise for the singing of our
National Anthem by SUSAN SMITH, 39.

Ms. Smith stands in the middle of the field and sings.

SUSAN SMITH

Oh! Say, does that star-spangled
banner yet wave, O'er the land of
the free and the home of the brave?

INT. CENTRAL CATHOLIC LOCKER ROOM, STATE FARM STADIUM -
AFTERNOON

The Central Catholic Coach, RAY MURPHY, 49 is surrounded by
his team.

RAY MURPHY

(Angrily) You young men are playing
against a bunch of dumb and nasty
city kids who can't take a hit. You
are playing against kids who are
not in your league. Luck got them
to this game. This is the
championship game - kick their
asses. Defense - crush them.
Offense - run over them. No mercy.
Kick the crap out of them.
(Quietly, softly) Let's bow our
heads as Father O'Reilly says a
blessing.

Father O'Reilly rolls his eyes, shakes his head from left to
right and speaks:

FATHER O'RIELLY

May God bless our team - **and our
opponent** - the Thunderbird Titans
football team. We ask that no
injuries come during this
championship game. Amen.

Father O'Reilly walks up to Ray Murphy and quietly speaks.

FATHER O'RIELLY (CONT'D)

(A bit angry) What are you teaching
these boys, Raymond?

RAY MURPHY

To win. I'm teaching them to win.

Ray Murphy turns his head and walks away from Father
O'Reilly.

Father O'Rielly takes an envelope out of his inside upper pocket. Scribbled on the envelope are the words: Agreement / Ray Murphy. Father O'Rielly rips the envelope into two pieces and places the pieces in a garbage can as he walks out of the locker room.

INT. HOME TEAM LOCKER ROOM, STATE FARM STADIUM. - AFTERNOON

Steve Koval and Leon Towns are surrounded by their team in the middle of the locker room. Every football player is wearing a black arm band with the number 18.

STEVE KOVAL

The social media, blogs, the podcasts and the people on TV and radio say that the Central Catholic team is going to win. You've heard them and you've read what they've said. (Pause) But... what they don't know is what is in your hearts. They think you'll fold under pressure. Well, they don't know how you think. They don't know that this team won't quit... ever.

Steve Koval nods to Leon Towns.

LEON TOWNS

Team, you have shown what can happen when you decide to not quit. What is really important is that you don't quit on yourselves, during this game or during the rest of your life. Knocked down seven times..

THUNDERBIRD TITAN FOOTBALL TEAM

Get up eight.

Leon Towns bends down and lifts the cuff on his pant leg to reveal a prosthetic ankle and foot. The players faces show astonishment.

LEON TOWNS

I had an accident 12 years ago. The doctors couldn't fix my ankle. I could have sat in a wheel chair for the rest of my life or got this (he points to his ankle) and learned to walk again. I wanted to quit... but I didn't quit. I wanted to walk. Now it's your turn. Look inside yourself. Decide.

(MORE)

LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

Am I going to stay on the ground when I get hit? (Pause) The team you're playing against won this championship game for the last two years. They're big and strong. (Pause) You have a decision... do I give it everything I have, or do I quit when it gets tough? What's it gonna be?

STEVE KOVAL

(Pause) Send them out, Coach Towns.

LEON TOWNS

There is no tomorrow. This moment is what you've all sacrificed for. The time is now... leave everything you've got on the field. Go get 'em, Titans!

THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM

Yes! Yeah! (Cheering)

I/E. FOOTBALL FIELD, STATE FARM STADIUM- AFTERNOON

Leonard Koval is on the sideline of Central Catholic, wearing a blue sweater, with his name, Leonard Koval and Class of 2005 and Team Captain in white letters over the left side of his chest. The opposing kicking team takes the field. Steve Koval walks over to Leon Towns.

STEVE KOVAL

Geez, Leon. Why didn't you tell me?

LEON TOWNS

I didn't want you to keep me on as a coach **because** of my ankle.

STEVE KOVAL

You know football, Leon. I wanted you because of your brains.

LEON TOWNS

Somebody wants Leon Towns for his brains - it took 37 years to hear those words.

STEVE KOVAL

You believe again, don't you, Leon?

Leon smiles.

LEON TOWNS

Challenges always bring out
people's weaknesses or strengths.

Leon Towns slightly gestures across the field with his head.

LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

They recruit better than most
college teams. Eight of their
seniors have football scholarships.
But... I'd rather be standing on
this side of the field.

STEVE KOVAL

Winning isn't going to be easy.

LEON TOWNS

Never is.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD. - DAY

The Thunderbird Titan team is assembled in their practice uniforms, standing just behind Coach Koval and Coach Towns. A 24-foot flatbed truck pulls up 30 feet in front the team on the goal line.

STEVE KOVAL

Everybody clear?

Steve Koval looks around the area.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

OK... dump out the chain.

The short fat truck driver pushes a button and the truck bed tilts skyward. A thick steel chain spills out of the flatbed.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

Wisnewski... come up and stand by
me.

Wisnewski walks up and stands next to the coach.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

Pick up the entire chain above your
head.

Wisnewski tries to pick up the chain. He can't.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

Why can't you pick up the chain,
Wisnewski?

WISNEWSKI

Too much for me. I need more people to help.

STEVE KOVAL

This chain weighs 2,000 pounds. Too much for one man - even the very strong Mr. Wisnewski. We are now on the goal line. Look down to the other goal line. Standing there is Mr. Chicarelli Sr. and 20 hot pizzas, chicken wings and drinks.

LEON TOWNS

It's your job - as a team, to pick up the chain and move it 100 yards down the field without letting the chain hit the ground.

STEVE KOVAL

You can do it.

LEON TOWNS

No excuses. Do the work - finish the job. Get the reward. Do it!

THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM

Yeah. Yes. Let's go.

Coach Towns and Coach Koval walk up to Irene Weiss. Irene sees that Leon and Steve are walking towards her. She takes a step towards them.

IRENE WEISS

Do you need me for something?

COACH LEON TOWNS

Coach Koval and I want you... to be a leader on this chain carry.

IRENE WEISS

That chain won't touch the ground.

Steve Koval speaks to the team.

STEVE KOVAL

Go too slow and the weight of the chain will start talking to you. Go too fast and mistakes may occur. A **team** can do this.

The team picks up the chain and begins to move towards the other goal line.

IRENE WEISS

Everybody hold tight. Let's walk
fast. Don't drop it.

The team quickly and easily moves down the field up to the 50-yard line. At the 40-yard line the faces of the young men and Irene Weiss show distress. At the 30-yard line the team is struggling.

THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM

Moan. Groan.

At the 10-yard line the team is fighting to hold the chain above the ground. In four places, each about ten yards apart, the chain is within a foot above the ground. John Nicholas is the third player from the end of the players holding the chain.

JOHN NICHOLAS

(Yelling) Keep it up. Don't let it
hit the ground.

#16 is holding on to the chain but is on one knee and is crawling with three yards to go. John Nicholas moves and positions himself under the chain of #16. The other 38 players and the chain - without touching the ground - cross the goal line.

JOHN NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

I'm under it. Get it across the
line. Don't drop it.

THUNDERBIRD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM

Do it. Do it!

John Nicholas moves slowly on his back and crosses the goal line with #16 holding the chain above him.

INT. STATE FARM STADIUM - AFTERNOON

Steve Koval looks over to the side of the stadium where people are wearing blue and white, the colors of Central Catholic. He sees his Father, Mother, his wife and his two children at the bottom steps talking to his smiling brother, Leonard.

Steve Koval slightly grimaces. #34 walks up to Steve Koval, and points to his shoulder pad. Steve adjusts the shoulder pad and begins looking again to find his wife, brother Leonard, Mother and Father. Steve can't see them. Leo and Irene Koval, plus Linda Koval walk over to the Titan cheering side, 20 rows up and out of view of their son, Steve.

I/E. STATE FARM STADIUM, LOWER BOWL AND PLAYING FIELD -
AFTERNOON

Scoreboard: Central Catholic 23 - Thunderbird High 18. TIM
AVERY, 39, broadcaster, sits next to KEVIN FRITZ, 63, in
broadcast booth, upper, center, State Farm Stadium.

KEVIN FRITZ

59 seconds to go - does this
Thunderbird Titan team have their
comeback season slipping away?

TIM AVERY

The Titans have to stop this
Central Catholic team and their
field goal kicker - former soccer
player Manny Gonzalez - who is
perfect for the season - going 12
for 12. This 29 yard attempt is
well within his range - his longest
field goal is 41 yards.

KEVIN FRITZ

The ball is snapped. Gonzalez takes
two steps/

TIM AVERY

And it looks like three more points
for/

Gonzalez connects with his right foot on the football.
Thunderbird player #32, RODNEY GALLOWAY, 6"5' tall, jumps
with his right hand stretched over his head.

Int. SMALL OFFICE WITH THE WORDS ATHLETIC DIRECTOR/FOOTBALL
COACH ON THE DOOR. - MORNING

Coach Koval is sitting at his wooden desk reading a piece of
paper on a clipboard. RODNEY GALLOWAY, 17, 6'6" knocks on the
frame of the door. Coach Koval looks up.

STEVE KOVAL

Come in, Rodney. How ya' doin'?

RODNEY GALLOWAY

Ahhh... Ahh... I'm quitting.

Steve KOVAL

Quitting what? School?

RODNEY GALLOWAY

I'm not stupid - I'm graduating.

STEVE KOVAL
So... you're quitting the team.

RODNEY GALLOWAY
I don't have to quit.

STEVE KOVAL
I'm confused, Rodney. Your quitting
- and your *not quitting*?

RODNEY GALLOWAY
I'm *thinking* about quitting.

STEVE KOVAL
You have to get a job - or stay
home taking care of a sick parent?

RODNEY GALLOWAY
No... nothing like that.

STEVE KOVAL
You sick?

RODNEY GALLOWAY
No.

STEVE KOVAL
Rodney... I'm confused. Tell me
why you're thinking about quitting.

RODNEY GALLOWAY
I want to play more. Three minutes
each game isn't enough. On the
basketball team - I play the **whole**
game. I think I'm quitting the
football team.

STEVE KOVAL
Rodney, quitting means that you are
going to not play at all.

RODNEY GALLOWAY
I gotta play more coach - I got to
play more.

STEVE KOVAL
Rodney, your big job on this team
is to block field goals and punts.
I can't chance you getting hurt.
Quitting a team is a selfish
decision. I don't see you as the
selfish type.

RODNEY GALLOWAY

The guys on the basketball team are buggin' me about it. *Why are you on that team if you only play three or four plays a game?*

STEVE KOVAL

You are a specialist. (Pause) I look forward to seeing you at practice tomorrow. Real teammates and friends keep their nose out of your business. Ignore them or ask them to talk to me.

RODNEY GALLOWAY

Hard to ignore them when they...

STEVE KOVAL

When they... what?

RODNEY GALLOWAY

When they trash-talk...

STEVE KOVAL

Do you know who Muhammad Ali was?

RODNEY GALLOWAY

Yeah, Coach - "float like a butterfly - sting like a bee".

STEVE KOVAL

Good. Did you know that Muhammad Ali trash talked his opponents?

RODNEY GALLOWAY

Yeah - My Grandpa told me. He said that Muhammad trash talked, to mess up his opponent's head.

STEVE KOVAL

Just like your friends are trying to get a reaction out of you. Just smile at 'em. (Pause) You understand, Rodney?

Rodney looks blankly at Coach Steve.

RODNEY GALLOWAY

I don't know what to do coach.

STEVE KOVAL

Your teammates need you on this team. I hope to see you at practice.

Coach Koval stands up.

EXT. BACKYARD DRIVEWAY WITH 2 CAR GARAGE, WITH RED, WHITE AND BLUE BASKETBALL GOAL ATTACHED. - NIGHT

Rodney Galloway dressed in athletic shorts and long sleeve Titan athletic shirt is under and in front of the backboard. He is facing his mother, GRETA GALLOWAY, 42, who is tall and thin.

RODNEY GALLOWAY

Just 10 more Mom. 10 more... OK?

Grace Galloway slightly nods her head up and down.

GRETA GALLOWAY

Every night - jumping - jumping - jumping.

Greta Galloway throws the football with her left hand, high above the head of her son. Rodney jumps just before the ball begins to decent and tips the football away from the basketball rim.

I/E. STATE FARM STADIUM, LOWER BOWL AND PLAYING FIELD - AFTERNOON

The pinky finger of Rodney Galloway slightly touches the football. The flight of the ball becomes wobbly, turns slightly right and hits the right goal post, tumbles and does not go through. The referee signals "not good". The ball lands on the one-yard line. The referee places the football on the 20-yard line. The clock reads :18 seconds left in the 4th quarter of the game. Scoreboard reads: Central Catholic 28 - Thunderbird Titans 24. Fourth down. Leon Towns speaks to Steve Koval.

LEON TOWNS

Fourth down. We are going to run the ball right up the middle. 32 pitch on hut 3.

Steve Koval nods his head "yes".

JOE SMOKE

32 pitch - got it.

Joe Smoke is surrounded by 10 other Thunderbird players.

JOE SMOKE (CONT'D)

32 pitch on hut 3. Ready... break.

The Central Catholic team lines up for a pass defense.

JOE SMOKE (CONT'D)

Ready set, Blue. Blue. Red. Hut 1.
Hut. Hut.

The ball is hiked to Joe Smoke who pitches the ball to Rick Gomez who makes his way up to the 45 yard line of Central Catholic. Joe Smoke is viscously knocked to the ground by three Central Catholic players just after Joe Smoke pitches the ball. # 56, FRANK THOMAS 17, of Central Catholic purposely steps on the right hand of Joe Smoke. The sideline marker is flipped to first down.

JOE SMOKE (CONT'D)

My hand... my hand.

Joseph Southern signals for Coach Koval. Coach Koval signals for the trainer and E.M.T. Coach Towns joins the group as they head out to Joe Smoke. FRANK THOMAS, 17, walks up to Joe Smoke. The Central Catholic player quietly speaks.

FRANK THOMAS

You are done throwing the ball today. Goodbye Friendship Bowl Championship.

JOE SMOKE

(Smiles) We're not done.

Coach Koval walks out onto the field. He kneels beside Joe Smoke.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

How you feeling? We'll get you fixed. You in pain, Joe? (Pause)

JOE SMOKE

Some pain. (Pause) #56 stepped on my hand... it... won't bend.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

That cheating will haunt him.
(Pause) You are going to heal.

Coach Koval puts up one finger on his right hand and four fingers with his left hand.

JOE SMOKE

I'm done for the day Coach. We've got Rob Nicholas and 13 seconds left on the clock. Rob will take us in from here.

Joe Smoke is walked off the field with Coach Koval at his side. The crowd boos as the large screen instant replay shows where #56 looks around then stomps on the hand of Joe Smoke. ROB NICHOLAS, 17 runs onto the field and speaks to the team.

ROB NICHOLAS

I saw what he did.

The game clock shows that 20 seconds are left on the clock. One yard for a first down. Coach Steve Koval talks to #71 MICHAEL KOWALSKI, 18 on the Thunderbird sideline.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

Pass, right end over the middle,
on: **ready**.

Thunderbird Titans huddle on 30-yard line.

MICHAEL KOWALSKI

Pass, right end over the middle, on
ready... break.

RAY MURPHY, 41, Central Catholic football coach, talks to his player #15, DONALD STONE, 17 on the Central Catholic sideline.

RAY MURPHY

Knock that quarterback *on his ass*.

The ball is hiked and the right end, Thunderbird Titans's #82 runs and cuts across the middle of the field. As the ball leaves the right hand of Rob Nicholas he is hit by two Central Catholic players, #78 and #75. The ball is not caught.

TIM AVERY

Folks, this a tough position for the Thunderbird Titans. They need to run the clock down and they need to score. If the Chiefs score, they must leave no time on the clock. The Thunderbird Chiefs have one more time out left on the clock.

KEVIN FRITZ

The Titan team has 20 yards for score - a field goal will put them up by 1 - but, Central Catholic gets the ball with about 3 seconds to play.

TIM AVERY

That's more than enough time for
"CC" to have 1 more play and
possibly score to win the game.

KEVIN FRITZ

I don't see any other alternatives
for Coach Steve Koval - the Titans
must score... **now!**

Coach Steve Koval gives the hand signals for his team to run a double reverse with a long count before the play. Quarterback Rob Nicholas recites a long six second count. The center snaps the ball to Nicholas. The right end is in motion and comes behind Nicholas. Nicholas gives the ball to # 32. At the same time, the left end, #41 comes around behind Nicholas. #32 gives the ball to #41 who laterals to Rob Nicholas. Nicholas runs to his left, evades a tackler and runs to his right where he is met by two linemen from Central Catholic who, at the same time, tackles him to the ground. The referee signals a first down for the Thunderbird Titans.

TIM AVERY

Quarterback Rob Nicholas is taking his time running down the clock with a long count (Pause) The center snaps the ball to quarterback Rob Nicholas. It's a reverse - the right end is coming around, who hands off the ball to the left end, who laterals the ball back to Rob Nicholas who is tackled at the 16 yard line. **Amazing. Simply amazing.**

KEVIN FRITZ

The ball could have been fumbled. A chance that Coach Steve Koval was willing to take.

TIM AVERY

The Titans **didn't** try to score. They ate up an amazing - let's see - including after the ref signaled the play started to the finish of the play - eight seconds of the clock.

KEVIN FRITZ

Those seconds were valuable time to Central Catholic. They needed that time to either defend their slim advantage or to score again.

(MORE)

KEVIN FRITZ (CONT'D)

The Thunderbird Titans Friendship Bowl Championship - is hanging on this -

TIM AVERY

We have a player down. #14, Rob Nicholas, the second quarterback for the Titans in this game. He took a really hard hit. Let's go to the instant replay.

The video of the instant replay shows #78 and #75 simultaneously tackling quarterback Rob Nicholas.

KEVIN FRITZ

He was hit hard - a vicious double hit. Back to the action... Nicholas is calling for the last Titan time out with eight seconds on the clock.

Nicholas gets up off the grass and walks over, unassisted to the sideline and speaks to Coach Steve Koval.

ROBERT NICHOLAS

I can't throw the ball.

STEVE KOVAL

Come out now... or can you stay in one more play and hold the ball down for Eugene?

ROBERT NICHOLAS

Hold the ball down? We're kicking... a field goal?

STEVE KOVAL

Can you stay in?

Robert Nicholas shakes his head no.

ROBERT NICHOLAS

I can't hold the ball.

ROBERT NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

Put in Irene Weiss, coach. She's got great hands.

Steve Koval points at Irene Weiss standing on the sideline. Robert Nicholas runs out and Irene Weiss comes in. Steve Koval speaks to Irene.

STEVE KOVAL

N-A-F-G. You know the play.

Irene Weiss slightly smiles. Robert Nicholas smiles. Coach Steve Koval walks 2 steps and speaks to #27, Eugene Wisnewski.

STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)
Eugene... ready?

EUGENE WISNEWSKI
(In a thick Polish accent) I rehearse... practice - play for 50 times. I ready.

STEVE KOVAL
N-A-F-G on hut 3.

EUGENE WISNEWSKI
Hut one, Hut two, Hut three, ball hiked - I do my job coach.

STEVE KOVAL
(Whispering under his breath): Do it, Eugene!

Eugene Wisnewski trots out onto the field and calls for a huddle.

EUGENE WISNEWSKI
Huddle. Huddle. Coach says: N-A-F-G on hut 3.

The Titan football team sets up in field goal formation. On the Central Catholic side, Coach Ray Murphy speaks to Assistant COACH DAVE MCDONALD, 34.

COACH RAY MURPHY
(Muttering under his breath) 27-yard field goal and they win or they pass... or run. But they don't kick field goals. But they are... look.

COACH DAVE MCDONALD
How we gonna defend, Ray?

Coach Ray Murphy kicks his right leg.

COACH RAY MURPHY
(Yelling) Field goal defense!

INT. BROADCAST BOOTH, STATE FARM STADIUM . - AFTERNOON

KEVIN FRITZ

The team that *doesn't kick field goals* - the team that *always goes for it on 4th down - is going to kick a field goal -with time running out... on 4th down?*

STEVE AVERY

Coach Koval is having his team kick a field goal. The Thunderbird Titans... are kicking a field goal?

INT. PLAYING FIELD OF STATE FARM STADIUM. - AFTERNOON

The Titans set up in field goal formation. Eugene Wisnewski is 10-yards behind the line of scrimmage.

TIM AVERY (V.O.)

Wisnewski, readies himself for a field goal.

KEVIN FRITZ (V.O.)

This next play will determine the best high school football team in Phoenix.

TIM AVERY (V.O.)

Which team will be the City of Phoenix Friendship Bowl winner?

KEVIN FRITZ (V.O.)

Coach Koval is using the biggest player in the Phoenix public school league to kick a field goal. All that Eugene Wisnewski has to do is connect with the ball. *Will the Central Catholic defense block the kick?*

The Central Catholic team puts nine lineman on the defensive line and two other players in the defensive backfield. The holder is on the 25-yard line. Thunderbird Titan Eugene Wisnewski takes four steps back from the line of scrimmage. He looks up at the goal posts and puts his left and right hands up in front of his face as though he is framing the goalposts. Eugene does two quick practice kicks with his right leg. He gets into position to kick. The ball is hiked to Irene Weiss who catches the ball, slightly fumbles the ball and then quickly holds the ball three inches above the ground. Eugene Wisnewski, with a solemn face, tips his head down, then looks at the ball. Eugene takes two steps towards Irene Weiss. She laterals the ball with her right hand to Eugene.

Eugene looks to his left and sees that his receiver is covered. Eugene looks to his right, pumps the ball once and heads for the goal line. #48 of Central Catholic tries to tackle Eugene but bounces off. Eugene is at the 8.5 Yard line, sees a Central Catholic player come after him and stops as the Central Catholic player runs out of bounds. One final Central Catholic player, #71, runs to tackle Eugene, but is blocked at the last second by Irene Weiss. Eugene runs in just past the goal line with 00:00 seconds on the clock. The referee signals: touchdown. The Thunderbird Titan sideline players swarm the field.

INT. STATE FARM STADIUM, LOWER STANDS. - AFTERNOON

Kristin Autum watches the game with four cute female friends. Krystin stands cheering in the middle of the group of girls. Linda Koval is three rows closer to the field. She is watching the game cheering with her two children.

INT. SIDELINE, STATE FARM STADIUM - AFTERNOON

Coach Leon Towns signals touchdown, looks at Steve Koval, takes a step and hugs him. Steve Koval hugs Coach Leon Towns. Scoreboard: Central Catholic 28, Thunderbird Titans 30.

COACH LEON TOWNS

They did it. We did it.

Coach Leon Towns and Coach Steve Koval have a two second hug.

COACH STEVE KOVAL

Thank you, Leon.

COACH LEON TOWNS

We did it. All of us did it. Steve, tell me. Be honest... did you have any doubt?

COACH STEVE KOVAL

Leon, the belief was bigger.

INT. STATE FARM STADIUM BROADCAST BOOTH - AFTERNOON

KEVIN FRITZ

Worst to Friendship Bowl winners. The Thunderbird Titans and Coaches Steven Koval and Assistant Coach Leon Towns have done the unthinkable - beating the powerhouse Central Catholic Shamrocks for the Friendship game Championship. The final score - Thunderbird Titans 30 - Central Catholic 28. After this short time out, Tim Avery will be down on the field.

Hy-per Lube TV commercial begins to play.

INT. FOOTBALL FIELD, STATE FARM STADIUM - AFTERNOON

Thunderbird Titan football players come together in a huddle and begin to chant.

FOOTBALL TEAM

Thunderbird Titans! Thunderbird Titans! Thunderbird Titans!
(Pause) We're number one. We're number one.

INT. STATE FARM STADIUM. - AFTERNOON

TIM AVERY

An amazing come from behind victory - from an amazing football strategy - no field goals - no punting for 8 of 9 games - only on-sides kicking, then a fake field goal to win - for the last play of this championship game. Coach Koval-

COACH STEVE KOVAL

This team thought right, worked hard, didn't quit and finished the job.

TIM AVERY

Your strengths and weaknesses -

COACH STEVE KOVAL

Tim - we had no seasoned or proven punters or field goal kickers.

(MORE)

COACH STEVE KOVAL (CONT'D)

(Pause) We *had to* run and pass the ball.

TIM AVERY

You were in a tough spot.

STEVE KOVAL

We stuck to our plan.

Tim Avery turns to Coach Leon Towns.

COACH LEON TOWNS

First, thank you to Coach Koval for having me stay and coach this year. (Pause) Our boys, our young men and Irene Weiss - *finished the job*.

Eugene Wisnewski moves 2 steps from behind Tim Avery and is now standing next to him.

TIM AVERY

With us now is Eugene Wisnewski who ran the ball in for the winning touchdown. Eugene never played football before this year. He just moved here from Poland. Eugene... Tell us about that fake field goal and touchdown.

EUGENE WISNEWSKI

I was high school actor in Poland. So, I tell coach. He say "act like kicker". I walk like kicker. I look at goalposts like kicker. I "act" like kicker - but I don't kick.

TIM AVERY

Go on...

EUGENE WISNEWSKI

Holder of ball, Irene Weiss, laterals ball to me after I fake kick. I see both receivers are covered. I run with ball - Irene blocks last player - I run over goal line(Pause).. You understand?

KEVIN FRITZ

(Smiles) Your final score Thunderbird Titans, 30- Central Catholic Shamrocks, 28.

(MORE)

KEVIN FRITZ (CONT'D)

For my cohost Tim Avery and myself,
Kevin Fritz - Good afternoon from
the State Farm Stadium in Phoenix,
Arizona.

INT. FOOTBALL FIELD, STATE FARM STADIUM - AFTERNOON

Steve Koval sees his wife, Linda, son J. A., and daughter, Grace on the lowest steps, at a gate. Steve opens the gate and his family rushes into his arms. Linda Koval kisses Steve and hugs him. Leonard, Janice, Robert, Leo and Irene Koval stand waiting to talk to Steve.

LINDA KOVAL

You did it! You did it!

Linda kisses Steve again. Steve smiles.

LINDA KOVAL (CONT'D)

I love you Steve Koval.

STEVE KOVAL

The boys did it.

LINDA KOVAL

You to, Steve Koval... you to.

Steve Koval, Linda Koval, A.J. and Grace begin to walk off the field. Leo, Irene and Leonard Koval are three steps up from the ground floor of the stadium. In the near background, Krystin Autum runs from the stands to the playing field and wraps her arms around Mike Warner. The Steve Koval family stops walking and waits for Steve Koval's mother, father and younger brother and sister. Leonard gives Steve a small pat on the back. Steve Koval begins to slightly cry.

LEO KOVAL

We are so proud of you.

Steve's mother steps in and kisses Steve. JANICE KOVAL, 31, hugs Steve Koval after her mother, Irene. Younger brother ROBERT KOVAL, 27, hugs his brother Steve Koval.

LEO KOVAL (CONT'D)

We've always been proud of you.

IRENE KOVAL

My son, the coach of the best
football team in Phoenix!

JANICE KOVAL

You did it. You did it. I'm so
proud of you!

ROBERT KOVAL

Good job, Steve. I knew you could do it.

Leonard Koval leans with his back on a nearby wall.

STEVE KOVAL

(To his parents, sister and younger brother) Today is a great day. We did it. My entire family is here to share this great moment with me.

LEO KOVAL

Steve, this is your day. (Pause) Of course we're here for you.

Tears come to Leo Koval's eyes.

IRENE KOVAL

Why are you crying? Tell me. I'm your Mother.

STEVE KOVAL

I saw all of you on the Central Catholic side of the field.

Steve points to the Central Catholic side of the stadium.

IRENE KOVAL

Why would we sit there. We are here for you, Steve.

LEO KOVAL

We **were** there, Steve. Lenny visited with his old coach, Ray Murphy. We went with Lenny and said hello. Then we all came back over and sat about ten rows up from you and your team.

STEVE KOVAL

I thought that all of you were going to sit over there.

LEO KOVAL

Why would you think that, son?

STEVE KOVAL

(Quietly) You treated Lenny like he was the king of the world.

LEO KOVAL

We loved all of you the same -
Lenny just **needed** more from us.
(MORE)

LEO KOVAL (CONT'D)

When he was born, the doctors told us that he might not live. Breathing problems. Doctor visits. Visits to the emergency room. Then when he was about four Lenny developed a stuttering problem - which he had until he was about seven years old.(Pause) You always made it through on your own - you had small problems. You never needed extra help. Lenny had other health problems that we didn't share with you or anybody else.

Steve begins to have tears develop in his eyes.

STEVE KOVAL

Lenny needed the attention. I owe him an apology. I owe you and Mom an apology.

LEONARD KOVAL

I don't need an apology - just a hug from the best coach in Phoenix.

LEO KOVAL

Nobody needs apologies.

Linda, Grace and A.J. Koval walk up to and are standing near Steve, his parents, brother Leonard and sister Janice and younger brother Robert.

LEONARD KOVAL

Steve, (Smiling) Let's all go out for ice cream. On me, Steve...

Leo shakes his head yes. Leo and Irene Koval stand there holding hands as Steve cries and hugs both of them. Steve walks over to Leonard, puts his arm on his shoulder and gives him a hug. Steve finishes the short hug with his brother Leonard. Steve is then simultaneously hugged by his younger brother Robert and his and his sister Janice. Steve then grabs the hand of his wife, Linda. Steve and Linda Koval walk hand in hand out of the stadium through a tunnel with Steve's two smiling children walking in front them. Steve's parents, two brothers and sister follow out of the stadium. Leon Towns walks up to Steve and speaks.

LEON TOWNS

Coach Koval. "Don't quit" Coach Koval. Knocked down seven, get up eight" Coach Koval, thank you.

(MORE)

LEON TOWNS (CONT'D)

They don't give a gift after you win the Friendship Game Friendship game. But, I am.

Leon tosses Steve a ring. Steve looks at it.

STEVE KOVAL

This is your Rose Bowl ring. It's beautiful, but, I... I can't accept this.

LEON TOWNS

I thought that the words "I can't" are not part of you. You can, Steve Koval. You can.

Steve Koval puts the ring on his finger. Leon Towns wipes away the tears on his own face. The group walks away.

Fade to black

12/16/2022

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