

ANY GIVEN SUNDAY

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REVISED SHOOTING SCRIPT

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"... Any man's finest hour -- his greatest fulfillment to all he holds dear -- is that moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle -- victorious."

Vince Lombardi

FADE IN:

A1 EXT. "SHARK" STADIUM (MIAMI, USA) - LATE DAY A1
(ANY SUNDAY)

MUSIC sets a mood of mystery, verdure, sky... Grass sways gently in the wind, silence to the world... Then a football is placed in the grass. The large, taped knuckles of a center grasp the football for the snap. The world is still, coiled like a spring...

CREDITS RUN...

1 GAME 1 MINNESOTA AMERICANS AT MIAMI SHARKS - FIELD #1 - 1
CONTINUOUS ACTION

An EXPLOSION on the field -- as bodies crash against each other like armies. The game as played and felt in "the pit".

A swift, short pass over the middle... A tight end (Miami) takes the hit... Then the quarterback (Miami) goes down hard. A blur of motion. A WHISTLE BLOWS and referee #1 signals first down; chains are moved.

2 HELICOPTER #1 2

A steep view of the proceedings -- godlike, evoking ghosts, wind; as if the football gods look down on their human combatants and vote for first downs, touchdowns, careers, lives... These overheads punctuate the film... The silence lingers briefly -- before the Announcers' voices bring us back to the media reality of the late 20th Century...

TUG KOLOWSKI (V.O.)

(on TV)

... And what a beautiful day for football it is here in South Florida!! It's Sunday, and the sun is shining and playoff berths are on the line. It doesn't get much better than this! Don't you think so, Kevin?!

KEVIN BRANSON (V.O.)

(on TV)

That's the one thing you and I can agree on, Tug. You can almost feel religion in the air here at Miami's 'Shark' Stadium.

The MUSIC THEME -- a blend of martial, choral, and rock and roll -- is now swallowed in the ROAR of the CROWD...

SMASH CUT TO:

3 FIELD #2 3

... the technicolor eyes of quarterback JACK "CAP" ROONEY, hostage to anger and pain, as his aging frame crashes on the dirty grass.

4 SIDELINE #1 4

Head coach TONY D'AMATO, a striking, intense man in his 50s, moves in a five-yard swath of the sideline, his eyes flicking worriedly to his fallen alter-ago.

TONY

I've been doin' this for too many years...

(at McKenna)

You mother...!!! Goddamn ass...!!!

He's giving it to Leslie McKenna, the right guard, and the other linemen, as he senses the game is now shifting momentum -- against him.

TONY

... 'mother!... you candy ass... no blockin' bitches!... 68?! McKenna, get your brain-dead head out of your ass!! You're not blocking, you're tip-toeing through the tulips!...

5 SIDELINE #2 5

DR. ALLIE POWERS, 30s, the new internist with the team, grabs his doctor box and starts onto the field.

TONY

Powers! Get the hell back here! Where you going?! He's fine!

Powers sheepishly u-turns back to the sideline where DR. HARVEY MANDRAKE, the grey-haired team orthopedist, gives him a second scolding.

MANDRAKE

What are you thinking, Allie?! There's 1:43 on the clock! You walk on that field after the 2-minute warning and we automatically lose a time-out. Wake-up! You been here almost a goddamn season!

POWERS

Sorry -- I thought he was hurt.

6 FIELD #3

6

As LESLIE McKENNA (#63), the big right guard, helps Cap up, knowing he's blown the block.

TUG (V.O.)

Yes, sir! That's the real deal right there. Cap Rooney... Two Pantheon Cups. Almost 50,000 passing yards. More touchdowns than I care to remember...

CAP

(rising, to McKenna)

McKenna, you fat bubble of lard! One more block like that, you'll end my career!

TUG (V.O.)

... our computers rank Jack Rooney one of the top five quarterbacks of all time when it comes to pressure situations... At 39 he may be a step or two behind -- 12 off-season operations have a way of doing that to you -- but he still stands head and shoulders above these new kids...

7 WIVES' SECTION #1 (VIDEO)

7

CINDY ROONEY, a sweet-looking blonde, waves back as she notices the electronic eye gazing down on her; other wives join in.

BRANSON (V.O.)

.. Without a doubt, Tug! 'Rock' Rooney also happens to be married to a heckuva nice gal sittin' down there in the stands just like the star struck fan she's been since their college days together at Michigan -- that's Cindy Rooney, folks, and I can tell you...

TUG (V.O.)

Stop boasting, Kev! But beautiful she certainly is, un-hunh!... And a mother of three beautiful children...

8 SIDELINE #3

8

Coach D'Amato fumbles with his newly-mangled headset, consults his plastic-coated single-page game plan, into his mouthpiece:

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED:

8

TONY

Nick, where the hell are we here?!
Whatta ya think -- Ace Right 90
Cadillac? 60-40 against?

INTERCUT WITH:

9 COACH'S BOOTH #1

9

NICK CROZIER -- 40s, star offensive coordinator, in his first year here, handsome, a comer -- studies the game below through instant computer printouts. In the booth are several offensive and defensive assistants.

TONY (V.O.)

... they been giving Sanderson the inside. If we roll Cap left, Les and Madman can handle the backside.

CROZIER

(into headset)

I'd say 75-25. But let's try -- slot right switch and if they bring the bandit, we check to 99 max...

(relays call)

Okay! Slot Right Switch 90 or 99 Cadillac.

10 SIDELINE #4

10

TYLER CHERUBINI, the stoic, 32-year-old perpetual back-up quarterback relays the telex signal from upstairs, on his headset to the field via walkie-talkie -- in addition to various body signals, both legitimate and deceptive.

11 HUDDLE #1

11

QB Cap Rooney bangs on his helmet; something in the electronics is off. He glares at his teammates, and though at times he chews them out like a Marine sergeant, there is an unmistakable affection for his line. He tries his hardest, like an aging Boy Scout, not to curse, not always successfully.

CAP

Damn headset! Never goddamn works when you get hit!! Every damn time! Damn it, Madman! That sonofabitch is headhunting!
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CAP (CONT'D)

Hold him, rip out his goddamn eyes, but don't let him mess with me! I'm too goddamn old!

PATRICK KELLY, his massive right tackle, known around the league as "MADMAN," bleeds from his nose, but adores his QB.

MADMAN

Cap, I'll keep him off ya even if I gotta bite off his thumb!

CAP

You do that!
 (to SANDERSON, the star wide receiver)
 ... Get yourself open, goddamnit, 'Sandman.' If you gotta coldcock him, I'll find you.

SANDERSON

Hey I'm there, Cap! In the wind. Just fling it, baby!

CAP

(to the second wide receiver)
 'Zonker'! You're number two, get open, run your dig route at 15...
 (to the huddle)
 Okay, listen up, Slot Right Switch 90 or 99 Cadillac, check with me, and kill any sonofabitch tries to cross that line before his time! On three. Ready!

They clap and break. With 15 seconds to play time, the constant barrage of "voices" inside Cap's helmet ceases.

TUG KOLOWSKI -- in the flesh -- is a boisterous, boozy, veteran sportscaster, alongside KEVIN BRANSON, a young and upcoming TV-type who seems Tug's opposite, bland and safe.

TUG

... But not all is paradise here in Miami. Cap Rooney may be on his way into the record books, but for Coach Tony D'Amato it's been a dismal season with attendance sliding, as the crosstown Dolphins prosper...

INTERCUT WITH:

13 STANDS #1 (VIDEO) 13

Reveals the stadium at two-thirds capacity.

A13 SIDELINE #5 (VIDEO AND FILM) A13

Tony, on TV display, talking intensely into his headset, takes us past defensive coordinator MONTEZUMA MONROE -- 60s, a monument of a man, former star linebacker, now limping noticeably. He glares strongly, rarely moves. With him is 34-year-old vet LUTHER LAVAY, linebacker and the captain of the defense, black, built, and a total predator. His nickname: "SHARK."

TUG (V.O.)

... With three straight losses and a slide from four years ago when they won two Pantheon Cups in a row, D'Amato's going to have to struggle to get his aging team into the playoffs! But today is looking good for the Sharks, leading the Americans in the second quarter, 21-17.

BRANSON (V.O.)

... They still got those holes in that offensive line, Tug, but the biggest problem has got to be the defense, and Montezuma Monroe knows it...

An ASSISTANT offers Monroe a set of digitally-produced enhancements of the Minnesota offensive formations.

MONROE

Get that shit outta my face!
Shark -- what the fuck's goin' on out there?! We gotta get more pressure on the goddamn quarterback! That motherfucker's splitting our seam 15 yards every goddamn time. Now fix it!

SHARK

I'm on it, Coach.

He stomps toward the defensive unit.

BRANSON (V.O.)

... there's also of course the impact of management decisions on the Sharks' turn in fortunes...

14 OWNER'S BOX #1 (VIDEO)

14

As seen on TV, several family friends and VPs mill around, but we only see the back of elegantly-attired blonde President and co-owner, CHRISTINA PAGNIACCI.

TUG (V.O.)

No question, Kev! Since the death of 'Big Daddy,' Art Pagniacchi -- his daughter and new President of the team, Christina Pagniacchi has made some -- many people think -- questionable financial decisions in letting three All-Pro Bowl selections leave town for free agency.

BRANSON (V.O.)

... although she did bring Julian Washington in from K.C. A big 1500-yard back...

15 FIELD #4 (VIDEO AND FILM)

15

JULIAN WASHINGTON, 27, an extremely strong, sexy, solidly-built, 230-pound running back, sets, his teeth blazing with jewelry and facial paint on the far edges of the Association's rule book (The Associated Football Franchise of America). He presently goes into play-motion.

TUG (V.O.)

... who can be great when he's not hurt. And his heart's in it. And here we go!

Rooney barks out the numbers, "hot reading" the coming blitz. The clock slows, as his eyes flick from the key safety to his own team. Can they handle the confusion of the audible?

ROONEY

(audibling)

Set! Blue 83... check, check...
Arizona 99 Cadillac, Arizona 99
Cadillac! Hut! Hut! Hut!

The Shark linemen read the shift... but Madman is clearly confused... blocking assignments are missed.

Cap takes the snap and fades back to pass, but he's an inch too slow and a year too old -- his arm in the air, about to release, he is brutally blind-sided by a fast reptilian defensive end. Simultaneously, a blitzing safety hits him in the lower back with his helmet. Cap goes down hard again, landing on his own blocker's helmet at an awkward angle -- he screams loudly -- and this time, nothing moves.

16 SIDELINE #6 16

Tony is looking at his worst fear come true. An eerie quiet momentarily pervades the stadium. D'Amato breaks it, yelling at Dr. Powers.

TONY

Get the hell out there! Move!
Can't you see he's hurt?

17 WIVES' SECTION #2 17

Cindy Rooney shares the uncertainty.

18 OWNER'S BOX #2 18

Still standing with her back to the window, Christina talks to a friend.

CHRISTINA

... well, until I'm on the
finance committee, I have zero
say on network negot...

As she becomes aware of the hush in the stadium, she turns to look -- then up at the TV for the slo-mo replay.

BRANSON (V.O.)

... Every Shark fan has a
sickening feeling in the pit of
their stomach at this moment. I
know I do. Cap Rooney is down and
in obvious pain.

CHRISTINA

Dammit! Who was on the weakside
safety?! Was that McKenna, you
f -- ?

She reaches for a red phone.

TUG (V.O.)

Man oh man! Did you see that
collision?! His body went in five
different directions!

INTERCUT WITH:

19 TV MONITOR 19

shows the injury in slo-mo. Xs are drawn over Cap's knees by Tug's finger on the telestrator. A big O goes over Cap's back.

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED: 19

TUG (V.O.)
Ouch! I've been there and that is
a world of pain!

20 MEDIA BOOTH #2 20

Branson covers his microphone and hisses at both a technician and Tug:

BRANSON
Stop showing that for Christ's
sake!...
(on camera)
We'll be right back with Cap's
condition after this word from our
sponsors.

21 FIELD #5 21

Drs. Mandrake and Powers, and Trainer #1 attend to Cap as he rolls back and forth, in intense pain.

SANDERSON
Suck it up, Cap...

CAP
My back!

MANDRAKE
(feeling for the
injury)
Straighten your legs. Wiggle your
toes. Alright, Cap, they cut to
the commercial. You can get up now.

CAP
(through clenched
teeth)
I must've broke my back!!

MANDRAKE
Come on, babe, you're still moving
your feet. There's no way you
broke your back!

POWERS
Where does it hurt?

CAP
(screaming)
Right where you're touching,
you...!! I swear... I can't
breathe...

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED:

21

MANDRAKE

Neither can I -- it's the humidity. Do I gotta get you a stretcher now? You that old?

CAP

(shakes it off,
pulls up)

Dammit! I'm walkin' outta here!...

(rising)

Oww -- my butt! It's like a knife in it!

The stadium applauds as Cap hobbles up to his feet.

22 SIDELINE #7

22

Back-up QB Tyler Cherubini nervously jams index cards with play calls under the clear plastic holders inside his special wristband, intersecting Coach D'Amato.

TONY

Nice and easy, Ty, okay. We're up 21-17. Hold on. Steady 'em.

Cherubini AD LIBS and jogs onto the field. Fans stomp their feet in sync with the driving beat of the inspirational "Shark Theme."

BRANSON (V.O.)

We're back! And Cap Rooney looks to be all right. Listen to that crowd!

Cap crosses towards the bench on the shoulders of Powers and Trainer #1. Tony intersects briefly, but he doesn't seem to want to confront this, makes light of it.

TONY

You all right, 'Rock'?

His sometime nickname for Cap.

CAP

(winces)

Yeah! Hurts like a...

TONY

Way to hold on to that football, kid! Take it easy, we'll finish this up without you --

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: 22

BRANSON (V.O.)
 Back-up quarterback Tyler
 Cherubini hasn't seen a lot of
 action recently!

23 FIELD #6 23

From the BOOTH POV -- the team claps and breaks from the huddle.

TUG (V.O.)
 Hate to tell you, Kev, it's a
 little scarier than that. Tyler
 Cherubini hasn't thrown for a
 first down all season!... but it's
 going to take a nail and a coffin
 to keep Cap down on the farm
 warming the pine. This may only
 be a game but to Cap Rooney it's
 the only game in town.

24 OMITTED 24

25 FIELD #7 25

Tyler Cherubini scans the defense, sees all the signs for another impending blitz.

CHERUBINI
 (long count)
 Set! Red 14 Ace, Red 14 Ace!
 Check, check! Black 90 Razor,
 Black 90 Razor! -- Hut! Hut!

Minnesota attacks with everything they've got...
 Cherubini never even sees the light of day as he is
 buried, coughing up the ball -- which bounces into the
 hands of a surprised Minnesota safety -- who sprints
 20-some yards into the Miami end zone for a touchdown!

The fans go wild with rage, booing the fallen Cherubini.

BRANSON (V.O.)
 Oh my gosh! Touchdown! And the
 Americans go up 23-21. Man-o-man!
 Did they nail him! He's...
 Cherubini's not getting up!

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED:

25

TUG (V.O.)

Two quarterbacks down, one after the other. This is crazy! I think they just lost Cherubini, too! My God! I haven't seen this since... the Aztecs and Pharaohs in '88 -- or was it '78?

26 OWNER'S BOX #3

26

Christina watches the fiasco with her husband, ANDY MATTER, a young handsome lawyer, and two VPs of the team -- JOHNNY POLITO, in his 50s, and ED PHILLIPS, in his 60s -- a distinguished man with a comforting aura, the family advisor from her father's era.

CHRISTINA

(into the red phone)

Oh, Jesus! Vincent, get me the names of who's available out there in the quarterback market right away, would you?... and how 'bout every available line coach -- maybe somebody who can actually teach this line how to block!!

A young woman raised to appreciate football, her outburst quiets the dozen people partying in the box. Her mother, MARGARET PAGNIACCI, an elegant older woman, who looks out of it, mostly quasi-drunk or drugged, though she does a superb job of concealing this with her fixed and dignified expression, inquires:

MARGARET

What is it, honey...?

CHRISTINA

(ignores her)

... find out about Malloy. Why'd Denver cut him? Where is he?

27 SIDELINE #9

27

WILLIE BEAMEN, third-string QB, 26, black, sits on the bench, as accustomed, not expecting to be called on.

QB COACH

Beamen! What the hell are you doing? I told you to warm up five minutes ago! Look at your wristband -- it's upside down. Take your head out of your ass. Let's go, you're up!

A27 TUNNEL #1

A27

Drs. Mandrake and Powers enter the locker room tunnel with Cap Rooney when TRAINER #2 yells after them:

TRAINER #2

Doc! They need you back!
Cherubini's down!

MANDRAKE

Cherubini! What -- he fall off a bench? What the hell's next?!
Stigmata!

(to Powers,
re: Rooney)

... Just sit him out and don't touch him till I...

TIME CUT TO:

28 OMITTED

28

29 FIELD #8

29

The Americans kick off.

30 SIDELINE #10

30

As the kick returner downs it in the end zone, D'Amato huddles with Willie Beamen, who is adjusting the speaker sound in his helmet.

TONY

Beamen, it's you now. Left Deuce
Zig 22 Tomcat. Easy hand-off
to Julian, okay?

WILLIE

Right.

CROZIER (V.O.)

(on helmet)

Willie, can you hear me? You're gonna be all right. The Americans got no profile on you. Use it... surprise 'em.

Willie looks for Crozier upstairs in one of those anonymous boxes, lost in the roar of sound and the sea of faces.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

30

WILLIE
 (difficulty hearing)
 ... do what?

TONY
 You're gonna do fine. Look at me,
 son. You're gonna do fine...
 (tapping over
 Willie's heart)
 You hold it all inside. Stay
 there. Stay focused.

WILLIE
 Right...

Tony slaps Willie on the shoulder and sends him out.

31 MEDIA BOOTH #3

31

TECHNICIANS and assistants frantically adjust as Tug and Kevin rifle through papers during the commercial break.

BRANSON
 Get me more stats on Willie Beamen
 now!

TUG
 Cap's out... Man, I can't believe
 this...

BRANSON
 You know anything about Willie
 Beamen?

TUG
 Who the hell's Willie Beamen?

TECHNICIAN
 We're back in five, guys!

32 HUDDLE #2

32

Willie is ignored in the huddle, hesitant -- he tries to shut out the stadium noise.

BRANSON (V.O.)
 As we wait for word on Cap
 Rooney's condition, Miami's
 sending in third-string
 quarterback Willie Beamen. Willie
 is 26 years old.
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BRANSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

A 'mystery man,' seventh-round draft pick out of Dallas, he went to the University of Houston. In his fifth year, his first year with the Sharks, he's seen four teams in his professional career...

Willie tries to hear the QB Coach's voice in his helmet.

VOICE (V.O.)

(helmet)

Left Deuce Zig 22 Tomcat. Watch the mike backer, he'll probably be coming. Relax and show me you got it!

Willie turns and waves to the sideline.

VOICE (V.O.)

(helmet)

No... tell them!

WILLIE

Awright, guys! Come on listen up!... the call is Left Deuce Zig 22 Tomcat.

McKENNA

(to the rest)

HEY! SHUT THE FUCK UP! On?

TUG (V.O.)

(during this)

... D'Amato's gotta be losing his mind -- a 14-point turnaround, lost his starter, his back-up, and maybe the game in two plays! What a disaster! It's an absolute...

WILLIE

On?

WASHINGTON

(intense)

SNAP COUNT!

Willie is trying to suppress dry heaves.

WASHINGTON

You all right? Holy...!

WILLIE

Augghh... Ugghh...

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED: (2) 32

Willie suddenly rips off his helmet and vomits.

SANDERSON
(leaping back)
Oh, shit -- !

33 SIDELINE #11 33

Shark Lavay, the middle linebacker, is standing next to Monroe.

SHARK
Did he puke?! Did he just puke on
the sacred turf?!

34 MEDIA BOOTH #4 34

Tug is laughing heartily.

TUG
(to Branson)
Oh, man! Hey, Kev' -- shades of
you the night we went out after
the Cleveland game.

Kevin shoots him a look, and rifles through some papers.

BRANSON
... Beamen even played cornerback
for a while when he was at San
Diego, where he was injured in his
third year...

35 OWNER'S BOX #4 35

Christina is now on a black field phone:

CHRISTINA
Soon as you know, you call! If
this is serious, Harvey, I need to
know yesterday, you understand
what I'm saying?!

36 HUDDLE #3 36

WASHINGTON
(to Beamen)
Fuck, man! I've got to get into a
three-point stance in your puke?!
Get it together, nigra...

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED:

36

SANDERSON
 (cleaning his shoes)
 You puked on the logo, my man!

REFEREE #1
 (intersecting)
 Come on, son, let's play ball!

VOICE (V.O.)
 (helmet)
Would you run the play already!

A36 FIELD #9

A36

As they move towards the ball, Willie glances in several directions -- it's terrifying -- the Minnesota defense is shifting position, confusing him; the crowd is deafening, the cameras zooming in, the sun blazing.

MINNESOTA TACKLE
 (greeting Willie)
 Better get ready, motherfucker!
 I'm coming and I'm gonna be
 picking peanuts out of your ass!

MADMAN
 Come to Mama first, loudmouth!

MINNESOTA TACKLE
 Oh yeah! Through you, 'round you,
 upside down you, you useless
 mother...!

Willie intensely scans the defensive alignment. All talk ceases when he yells:

WILLIE
 Set Red 378! Red 378! Hut! Hut!

Willie steps back a little too fast and too far. He spins towards Washington, awkwardly handing the ball off on a delayed slant... Washington shoots into a different hole than assigned -- a dangerous runner, gaining ten yards from nothing.

In the backfield, the taunting defensive end slaps Willie's helmet hard as the whistle blows. Willie barely has time to breathe before he hears "the voice of God" in his helmet speaker:

VOICE (V.O.)
 (in helmet)
 Thunder Left Smoke 90 Sally.

TIME CUT:

37 FIELD #10 - WILLIE'S SUBJECTIVE VIEW 37

in motion, of the speed and confusion of the game as giant defensive linemen close on him. He sees a brief opening onto Sanderson 15 yards downfield -- throws far too high -- almost intercepted by the safety.

38 SIDELINE #12 38

Tony, concerned, beckons to his tight end, talks to him and sends him out onto the field. Tony continues to yell something into his headset at Crozier.

39 HUDDLE #4 39

The tight end yells something lost in the crowd. Willie has to look up the play on his arm band.

WILLIE

Awright, Deuce Right Split 24
Barrel Clear. On one.

WASHINGTON

I'll be coming in fast on your
left, boy -- don't make me wait!

WILLIE

On one!

40 FIELD #11 40

At the line, Miami players immediately sense the defense is stacked up to the right for Washington's run.

WASHINGTON

(urgently, under)
Audible, man -- change the play --

Willie realizes it too -- audibles too quickly and too softly to communicate accurately.

WILLIE

Set! Green 41 -- um -- switch, switch...
Red 70 Blackstar, Red 70 Blackstar
... Hut!

The snap -- Miami is hopelessly confused. There is no such play as "Red 70 Blackstar" and players run this way and that. After several athletic moves, Willie is bounced out of bounds, eight yards behind the line of scrimmage.

41 SIDELINE #13

41

Tony is having a really bad day, about to throw his mangled headset away again.

TONY
(to Crozier and
QB coach)

What the hell was that?! What's he doing out there? Does he know any of these plays?

CROZIER (V.O.)
Tony, he knows the basic package but he's only taken a few snaps.

42 FIELD #12

42

Washington yells at Willie on the way back to the huddle:

WASHINGTON
What the fuck is Red 70 Blackstar, homes!? There is no such fucking play!!

WILLIE
(coolly)
I just figgered that out, J Man...
(his nickname)
but there oughta be...

TIME CUT:

43 SCOREBOARD #1

43

MINNESOTA 24, MIAMI 21. SECOND QUARTER. 0:25...

A43 SIDELINE #15

A43

Tony has one more chance at a field goal at the Minnesota 45-yard line.

TONY
Come on! Hurry it up! Let's go... let's go!

44 FIELD #14

44

Willie eyes the defense as he sets, but mistakenly lines up over right guard Leslie McKenna instead of his center...

(CONTINUED)

44 CONTINUED: 44

MCKENNA

'Less you tell me you love me,
sugah, get your hands outta my
ass!

The defense picks up on it instantly and goes after Willie loudly. Embarrassed, he makes his adjustment -- but too late. A flag flies. Delay of game penalty.

A44 SIDELINE #16 A44

Tony throws up his hands and rolls his eyes. There goes the field goal!

45 PRESS BOX #1 - JACK "RIPPER" ROSE 45

a sportswriter with his own local TV show, makes an acid comment on this bone-headed move to a colleague as he works his laptop. Coming off Beamen's throwing up, the press knows it has a story!

46 OWNER'S BOX #5 46

Christina leans forward to watch. Willie fades back to pass.

47 FIELD #15 47

The rush is on again. Willie, scrambling out of the pocket, avoids several tacklers, but his eyes give away the 25-yard pass... The defensive back steals it from Sanderson and runs it back 10 yards. The crowd roars with disappointment. Referee #1 whistles -- ending the half.

48 SIDELINE #17 48

Coach D'Amato shakes his head, picked up by the TV cameras.

TUG (V.O.)

That was bound to happen, the way this kid's movin'. Too fast, just too fast. He's gotta be nervous out there! He's ahead of his receivers... Thank God that ends the first half with the sun going down on this delayed and chock-full-of-surprises game...

49 INT. SHARK LOCKER ROOM - LOCKER ROOM #1 - HALFTIME - NIGHT 49

With 10 minutes to go, the offense is concentrated in one part of the room on chairs, the defense in the other -- listening to analyses and looking at video pictures from their respective coaches.

50 TRAINER'S AREA #1 50

Madman's got the flu, and is dehydrated enough to require two I.V.s in either arm. Dr. Powers reads his thermometer.

POWERS

101... You light-headed?

MADMAN

I was light-headed at kick-off, Doc. Now I'm at the 'one foot in the coffin' stage.

POWERS

You're a couple of quarts low, Madman, you just need an oil change...

MADMAN

Yeah, then why are my legs one big knot, Doc!? I need some cyclobenzaprine...

Powers sees Dr. Mandrake hurry past, follows him.

POWERS

Harvey, just a sec...!

Mandrake barely breaks, waits.

POWERS

I'm worried about Cap -- he's losing ankle strength. I think he's got...

MANDRAKE

(surprised)

What'd you do? Examine him? Look, Allie, you're actually one of the few relatives I can stomach, but you're the internist. I'm the orthopedist, remember? You leave my people alone...

POWERS

I just think that...

(CONTINUED)

50 CONTINUED:

50

MANDRAKE

Need a job description review?
 Bone, muscle, joint -- me. Runny
 nose, diarrhea, pink eye, gonorrhea
 -- you. Sports injuries me;
 anything that drips, sticks, or
 stinks, or stinks, you. Okay?

51 MANDRAKE

51

heads toward a small exam room where Cap waits alone --
 bypassing Cherubini, the forgotten QB, waiting to have
 his knee examined, attended to by TRAINER #2, a
 stutterer.

TRAINER #2

Doc, what about Rhodes? He's
 really in p-p-pain...

MANDRAKE

He's a hypochondriac. Give him
 some ibuprofen.

TRAINER #2

He doesn't wanna put that sh-shit
 in his body. He wants Demerol.

MANDRAKE

You think I want to be banished to
 Siberia as an ice hockey doctor?
 Tell him to clench his teeth.

CHERUBINI

Doc, what about my knee?

MANDRAKE

What about it?

TRAINER #2

Well, I think m-m-maybe I can get
 him to t-t-take some Alka-Seltzer.

52 EXAM AREA #1

52

Mandrake closes the door on Trainer #2. Cap is with
 Trainer #1. He puts Cap's x-ray up on the screen.

MANDRAKE

Bad news, Cap, you're okay, it's
 just a bruise. No ribs broken.
 Back's normal.

(CONTINUED)

52 CONTINUED:

52

CAP

... something's definitely wrong,
Doc! My butt's killing me... I
think it's a...

MANDRAKE

... I'll send you over for an
M.R.I. in case.
(to Trainer #1)
Lou, prep me 20 C.C. two percent
lido with marcaine...

53 TRAINER'S AREA #2

53

Powers attends to Madman, who suddenly has an urgent look
on his face.

VOICE (O.S.)

(yelling out)
Three minutes!

MADMAN

Doc! Pull the pipes! I gotta go!

POWERS

Can you...

MADMAN

I mean... I gotta go! Call of
the wild, man!

He goes, IVs trailing, Powers calls out to Trainer #1 for
help.

LOCKER ROOM #2

With shouts of "Get out of the way!", "Coming through!",
Powers and Trainer #2, protecting the I.V.'s,
follow a surging Madman into the bathroom.

BEAST MAN

(as they go past)
Whoo-hoo! Shark football!
Whatever it takes!!!

Other players chorus in, hooting and hollering, till the
coaches shut them up.

BATHROOM #1

The stalls are filled.

(CONTINUED)

MADMAN

(yelling)

Hey, shitheads! It's me --
Madman! Who's on my toilet?!

Madman kicks open a broken stall and finds an unlucky rookie staring back at him.

MADMAN

Rookie, this is reserved! Get the fuck out!

Terrified, the rookie runs out; then Madman forces his way in, managing to squeeze Powers, Trainer #2 and himself into the stall.

POWERS

Don't bend your elbows...

Crozier, studying a stack of computer printouts, enters.

CROZIER

Madman? Yo! You there...?

He whacks on the door, which opens on Madman sitting with his pants around his ankles, I.V.s entering each outstretched arm, ministered to by Trainer #1 and Dr. Powers. Crozier is amused but hardly surprised; to Madman:

CROZIER

The three technique is really getting up field on you. We're gonna rub him with a fullback this half.

MADMAN

Coach, let's run the draw or let me cut his ass on the screens. That'll slow the motherfucker down. And show them what I truly am! A genius!

The players are gathered around Coach D'Amato, who now addresses both offense and defense.

(CONTINUED)

TONY

Look, you the offense, why do you think we work on the blitz package all week? We've lost two quarterbacks in one half of football 'cause our line can't pick up a goddamn backside bandit on max protection!! You and I know this is goddamn stupid football, and you're stressing this shit outta me! We've worked on the calls over and over again but you have no goddamn focus or concentration! McKenna, keep your head on a swivel, you've got to slide out there and pick up that robber -- roll up those outside linebackers! Beamen, know your site adjustments! Sanderson and Fox will break off their routes but you have to deliver it on time. We've had two goddamn turnovers this half, you guys are dumping on my turnover ratio.

You the defense, you've got to create something out there, you've got to start flying around the fucking ball and hitting somebody. Don't let these assholes chew up the clock on us! On first down, they're killing us with the weakside slant. Corners, when we put eight in the box, you've got to jam the receivers, take 'em on, you're hesitating! If you're gonna make a mistake, go on! Make it a big one! I'm not gonna eat your lunch for that, but don't fuck around like pussies at a pee party, you hear me?!... P.J., Mac, Beast Man, Horny, Shark! One, two yards less each time and they'll be two and eight instead of two and six! Stuff the goddamn run. They're killing us!

No more stupid penalties, okay?! Concentrate. Focus. We're only down by three points. We can win this mother! I'm sick and tired of losing! Are you?! Three losses in a row.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED: (2)

54

TONY (CONT'D)

Are you guys sick and tired of this?!
Stand up if you're not! Raise your
hand! Raise your hand if you're a
pussy! Stand up, let's go!

The team is poised, clenching up, except for Washington
who rises laconically.

TONY

What the hell you doing, J?!

JULIAN

I didn't want you to be the only
one standing, Coach.

A tense moment -- then all bust up laughing, including
D'Amato.

TONY

Gentlemen, this is our house!
We live here. Don't let them fuck
with us in our own house! We're
gonna get some points on the
goddamn board if I gotta get out
there myself and throw the goddamn
ball! Now let's go and kick some
second-half butt!

SHARKS

(as team)

Football, ahhhh!!! WHATEVER IT
TAKES!!!

55 BATHROOM #2

55

As the team roars out of the locker room, Madman is eager
to rejoin his crew.

MADMAN

Doc, I gotta go!

POWER

No! Stop! Your I.V.s! Don't
bend your elbows!

MADMAN

(a sweet baby look)

Doc?... Do you mind?

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED:

55

Powers understands that if he can't bend his elbows that he... he sighs and wraps a stretch of tissue paper around his hand -- as Mandrake pokes his head in the stall, enjoying the view of Powers wiping Madman's ass.

MANDRAKE

Say, Allie, you want to get a little Chinese food later and talk about this...?

56 EXT. TUNNEL - NIGHT

56

Winter's night has now fallen as the team hollers, exiting a narrow tunnel onto the field. The stadium is charming but decayed (1930s WPA architecture) and in need of significant renovation...

Jimmy Sanderson, the young star wide receiver for the Sharks, repeatedly adjusts his shoulder pads, talking to himself as he walks; he is all hands and nerves, a thoroughbred with a sweet personality.

SANDERSON

I am precision-honed, muscular-tempered steel. My moves are cosmic. Time to save the day. My legs, torso and arms are energized powerthrust dominant weapons... I can save the day!

SHARK

(bypassing Willie)

Who's that you're throwing to, kid? The receiver or you got some other shit on your mind?

Willie gets the message. Several fans, intoxicated, hurl profanities, peanuts, beer, seat cushions at the Sharks. One OBESE FAN in particular:

FAN

You stink! Hey, Beamen! If you could chuck a football like you chuck vomit, you'd be an all-pro, ha ha ha!

Willie ignores him, but when the Fan throws his beer at him, it empties on Madman, who is rushing out last, his IVs gone. Enraged, Madman roars and tries to go up into the stands after the unlucky Fan, but is restrained by teammates. AD LIBS...

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED:

56

MADMAN

You think that's funny, asshole!
I'm gonna eat your fucking lunch,
buddy!! (etc.)

TIME CUT:

57 SCOREBOARD #2

57

THIRD QUARTER. MINNESOTA 31, MIAMI 21. 7:14 remaining.
Minnesota has increased its lead by one touchdown.

A57 SIDELINE #18

A57

Tony paces anxiously.

58 FIELD #14

58

The Miami defense tries to stop a long gainer by the Minnesota running back, propelling his 230 lbs. right at Shark Lavay, who upends the running back, one on one... Shark is the best open-field tackler on the Sharks, but as he takes those few extra beats rising, adjusting his shaken frame, congratulated by teammates, his expression reveals the wearying price he pays -- at 34, going on 50 -- for this leadership role.

59 SIDELINE #19

59

Powers now kneels next to the defensive end, Beast Man, coming off the field onto the bench with an agonizing, dislocated finger.

POWERS

(to Trainer #2)

Lou, get him X-rayed before I set
this!

BEAST MAN

(vehement)

How 'bout sometime next week, Doc!
How long you been here! I don't
give a fuck if I'm blind, deaf,
and fuckin' dumb, get me back out
on the motherfuckin' field...

Powers hesitates as Mandrake passes by, sees the problem,
and makes the adjustment without thinking.

(CONTINUED)

59 CONTINUED:

59

MANDRAKE

(to Powers)

Oh for God's sake, Allie! It's
just a...

(to Beast Man)

Beast Man, concentrate and think
of pussy.

POP! Beast Man's FINGER CRACKS back into place. Beastie
hardly winces.

POWERS

(to Beast Man)

You're still gonna need an X-ray
after the game, Beast Man, okay?

Beast Man mutters something venomous under his breath,
and moves off.

60 FIELD #15

60

Using his bare white foot, the smallish Eastern European
Miami kicker drills a graceful 38-yard field goal through
the uprights.

TIME CUT:

61 FIELD #16

61

Everything moves fast in the big leagues. Too fast.
Willie again too quickly breaks from the pocket,
scrambling the offensive and defensive lines up and down
the field, tiring them... Unable to find his receiver, he
takes off running; makes it over the middle of the field
for a first down plus another five or ten yards before he
is pulped in two different directions.

62 SIDELINE #20

62

Tony, hiding his eyes as if from a car accident, shakes
his head, to Crozier on the headset.

TONY

... Kid's fast, but he ain't gonna
last, Nick!

CROZIER (V.O.)

He was an alright corner at San
Diego till he got hurt. Watch the
feet. Genius ankles, like Julian.

(CONTINUED)

62 CONTINUED:

62

TONY

He may be a ballerina, but where's the brain? He just called another play that doesn't exist! Goddamn! Settle him down, Nick!

63 FIELD #17

63

Willie drops back, and without any pressure, throws a perfect 10-yard interception over the middle into the arms of a Minnesota linebacker. The stadium turns really sour, booing Willie as he walks off.

BRANSON (V.O.)

... No word yet on Cap Rooney. The only thing we do know is, he's being X-rayed at the hospital, but right now I'd say it doesn't look good for the Sharks...

64 SIDELINE #21

64

Tony is waiting for Willie, like Ahab himself.

TONY

What the hell was that?! You just don't fling the goddamn ball downfield into traffic like...

WILLIE

... Sorry, Coach, I thought it was man-free and he looked open.

TONY

We called Go Z Read! What the hell are you doing changing the play when you feel like it, without even knowing who the hell you're...

WILLIE

They was waitin' for the hitch, Coach. They was there. I had to go for it. I saw daylight!

TONY

(seething)

Daylight? Shut the fuck up and listen to me! Listen to me now!... You're a new player on this team. You got me?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED:

64

TONY (CONT'D)

You are nobody to me or anybody
else here till you prove yourself.
And you start that by doing what
you're fucking told! You got that?

WILLIE

I got that.

TONY

Now get out of my face and next
time you're out there, control the
goddamn ball!

He stalks off. Willie, closed off by Tony's intensity,
moves to the bench.

A64 ON TV

A64

Tony is saying some pretty rough things.

BRANSON (V.O.)

You read lips, Tug?

TUG (V.O.)

Hell yeah. That was a major at
Nebraska.

65 OWNER'S BOX #6

65

The box has been thinned out of associates and friends,
who've obviously sensed Christina's mood on the phone.

CHRISTINA

I don't care if you have to chopper
the guy in off his yacht, Harvey --
bring him out here right away!
And get me the names of the top
neurosurgeons in the country. I
want the best!

INTERCUT WITH:

A65 TV MONITOR

A65

Willie now fumbles a simple hand-off to Julian
Washington... The fumble is recovered and Willie calls
a time-out.

65 CHRISTINA 65

slams her hand down in frustration, sharing a 65 look with Ed Phillips. She is a strong, energetic executive in her late 20s, raised by her deceased father, founder Art Pagniacchi, to be a son and gain the respect of a man's world, to the point of acquiring a "take no prisoners" attitude. She calls up to:

INTERCUT WITH:

66 COACH'S BOOTH #2 66

Crozier is polite, though bothered by her interference.

CHRISTINA (V.O.)

Why?! Why is he calling these plays?... Nick? He's got to take a chance... Nick! Tell him!

CROZIER

I'm doing my best, Miss P. I can't just...

CHRISTINA (V.O.)

Make some noise.

67 SIDELINE #22 67

Willie, coming off the field, moves towards D'Amato, expecting the worst. Instead D'Amato throws an arm around his shoulders and walks him along the sideline -- in a paternal tone:

TONY

Okay, what's wrong, Willie?
What's wrong?

WILLIE

It's moving fast, Coach... but I know I can do it. I can do it.

TONY

Just take a breath now. Believe me when I say you can only get better, kid -- and you don't have to worry about getting the hook -- 'cause I got no one left, okay?

He grins.

WILLIE

I stink. I'm not myself.

(CONTINUED)

TONY

Look at me. Look at me, son...
You know how to play the game.
You been playing it all your life,
right?

WILLIE

Right.

TONY

You grew up in Dallas, right?

WILLIE

Yeah.

TONY

Okay, maybe you're back in Dallas
right now. You're enjoying
yourself. You're back in the
"hood," right before your mama
calls you for dinner. Go to the
Buick, turn around and I'll throw
it to you, you throw it back. A
game of catch, remember that?

WILLIE

... somethin' like that, yeah...

TONY

My point is -- Willie -- just
forget about the crowd and the
formations and the audibles and
the whole goddamn playbook. Just
focus on this one next pass.

(carefully)

Willie -- go to the Buick and turn
around.

There's a special, soothing tone to the way D'Amato
expresses himself, when he wants. A voice that makes you
believe.

TIME CUT TO:

Willie walks up to the line. A fierce new concentration
occupying him. ALL SOUND DRAINS AWAY. He is distracted
by nothing! The crowd has become a semi-real
phantasmagoric beast with a thousand eyes. On his own
face there is an extraordinary, savage look --
primordial.

(CONTINUED)

68 CONTINUED:

68

He barks out the signals, SILENT... Soundless, he backpedals, cocking his arm, fingers tight on the laces, fingernails digging in... his eyes like radar... the read... one receiver... two receiver... a quick, strong release... a fast, clean spiral -- yet it seems to sail for hours through the air.

... Caught by Sanderson at the 20! The beginner's luck holds when the two Minnesota defensive backs collide into each other, falling down, and Sanderson runs freely into the end zone for a TD!... Now -- an EXPLOSION OF SOUND. The first TD of a career.

69 SIDELINE #23

69

D'Amato allows himself a small smile of pleasure -- a long time coming. The offense is cheering -- alongside Montezuma Monroe and his defense, who now pay the offense a little attention.

70 FIELD #19

70

Players slam a stunned Willie on the back.

WASHINGTON

... 'less you wanna kick the extra point, you better get off the field, dawg!

71 SIDELINE #24

71

The Shark mascot -- a guy dressed in a huge foam shark costume -- dances the "Shark dance"... As Madman trudges up to Dr. Powers with blood dripping from his mouth.

POWERS

Madman?...

MADMAN

One of those cheap mothers fishhooked me in the mouth with his thumb... I tried to bite it off but he jammed my mouth guard up and ripped up my gum... Hurts like the lambs, man!

72 SIDELINE #25

72

Willie's eyes looking for D'Amato -- who acknowledges him from a distance.

(CONTINUED)

72 CONTINUED: 72

Sanderson disrupts the moment, in Willie's face, twitching as he repeats himself over and over.

SANDERSON
(repeating)
Hey, you git it, money! You gat
the magic!

TIME CUT TO:

73 SCOREBOARD #3 73

MINNESOTA 31, MIAMI 31. FOURTH QUARTER. 12:00...

A73 FIELD #20 A73

Willie, playing with some real confidence, runs an option pass right, and completes a 17-yarder to the second receiver.

74 FIELD #21 74

This time Willie heads left, faking well off his right shoulder to keep the DBs deep, then takes off on an adventuresome run through the Americans. He's a natural-born athlete, but the Minnesota defense exhorts a price for making them look bad -- pounding him hard after a 13-yard gainer.

INSERTS

At the bottom of the pile, the linemen wrestle one another, going for the eyes and nuts, anything for the edge (AD LIBS)... Close to Willie, at the bottom, Madman growls:

MADMAN
Boy, do we got a dental plan for
you, buddy!... Payback time!

We hear the crunch of his elbow and a painful grunt from the abused party, who presumably "fishhooked" him earlier.

REFEREE #2
Get out of there, guys! Come on!
Knock it off! Climb out!

75 FIELD #22 75

The shoeless wonder boots a 45-yard field goal dead center through the uprights -- a thing of beauty as the fans revive their hopes, starting to pick up on Willie Beamen.

A75 SCOREBOARD #4 A75

MINNESOTA 31, MIAMI 34.

76 SIDELINE #26 76

Tony is just a little bit happy, finally, but can't show it.

77 OWNER'S BOX #7 77

So is Christina, turning to Johnny Polito.

CHRISTINA

Can you believe this? A third-string quarterback...? Who found him, Johnny?

POLITO

I think Arnie spotted him before he left...

This sticks in her craw -- she fired "Arnie."

78 PRESS BOX #2 78

Even in the cynical media, there is an appreciable shift of interest in the young quarterback.

JACK ROSE

(to colleague)

Can you believe D'Amato's luck? He's looking at four losses in a row and his ass is saved by this nobody? What a story!

Back to his laptop...

TIME CUT TO:

79 OWNER'S BOX #8 79

Christina seems more relaxed on the phone, discreetly to the side. The game is meandering toward conservatism, close to won, and friends have slipped back in. AD LIB chatter, food, drinks.

(CONTINUED)

79 CONTINUED:

79

CHRISTINA

... Van Ness?! Dominic, he's a hundred years old, for God's sake! Find me a quarterback who's under fifty, who's solid, been around and can get us to the playoffs...

(pause)

No, it looks like some surgery on his lower back, an L-5 I think, but there's a chance he can get back by the playoffs...

80 ON TV

80

Miami's offense is on the field at their own 29, 2nd and 8. The score reads: MINNESOTA 31, MIAMI 34, FOURTH QUARTER, 1:54 left. It looks good.

81 SIDELINE #27

81

Yet Tony prowls nervously... Trainer #2 adjusts the air in ICE HAWKINS' (tight end) helmet, who complains to Powers about the large black and blue bite on his neck.

ICE

... Goddamn motherfucker bit me on the neck!

POWERS

(examines it)

... You're lucky, he doesn't have AIDS, Ice.

(grins)

Get me a Band-Aid and some hydrogen peroxide, it'll be gone in a week or so.

ICE

My old lady ain't gonna believe that shit! She gonna think some hoe jumped on my dick.

POWERS

I'll give you a note.

ICE

She don't believe nothing she reads anyhow.

82 COACH'S BOOTH #3 82

Crozier is a little nervous.

TONY (V.O.)
Deuce Left 22 Red Beast Read.

CROZIER
Come on, Tony, they're giving us
the flat. Let's run smoke and...

TONY
Maybe they're looking for the
pick. I'm not taking chances.
Not with this ballerina.

83 FIELD #25 83

A bulldozing straight-ahead three-yard run by Washington.
Third down and five.

84 COACH'S BOOTH #4 84

CROZIER
(insistent)
I know Willie, Tony! They're
screaming for him to dump it out
there!... It's wide open!

INTERCUT WITH:

A84 SIDELINE #28 A84

TONY
That's just it. I know this
coach, Nick! And he's a prick.
It's a set-up. Run it again. Deuce
Left 22 Red Beast Read.

CROZIER
Tony, they're stacked up for the
run --

TONY
You heard me.

Crozier relays the call.

85 HUDDLE #5 85

Willie hears "the voice," doesn't like the call either.

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED:

85

WILLIE

Okay, same, same, Deuce Left 22
Red Beast Read. On two.

WASHINGTON

Money time, boys. Get me five and
we are home and dry and flyin'
high.

SANDERSON

Let the D win it, J-man, we don't
need no first down. Punt gets us
out of here.

WASHINGTON

That's how come you don't score
with the ladies, 'Two Race,' you
got no showmanship.

WILLIE

Cut the bullshit! Red Beast Read.
On two -- Ready!

WASHINGTON

(to Willie)

I'll be flyin' my F-16, dawg,
don't fuck me up!

The team breaks, Washington with a particular strut about
him, tasting victory already.

86 SIDELINE #29

86

Tony sees the Minnesota defense stacked against the run
right.

87 COACH'S BOOTH #5

87

Crozier sees the same thing. Especially from this
height, the defensive adjustments are clear.

CROZIER

... Tony, take a time-out... come
on!

(as Tony's VOICE

BREAKS UP

momentarily; under

his breath, to Willie)

Audible left, kid! Just do it.

TONY (V.O.)

Time-outs are for TV. Negative!

88 FIELD #24

88

Willie hands off to Washington, who powers into the line, seeing nothing -- his eyes wild like a horse around fire -- He rolls along the line searching for the hole -- thinks he sees one -- goes for it.

Swack! He is blindsided by the tall, reptilian defensive end, who hatchets him from high, then drives his helmet into the ball, which pops out high and loose and crazy. It is a spectacular fumble -- the kind of fumble all running backs have nightmares about -- Washington desperately dives back for it -- but everyone else is diving too, including Willie.

A swift Minnesota safety makes the snag -- racing past confused Miami players -- some 24 yards, into the end zone. Touchdown.

BRANSON (V.O.)

Oh my God! Oh no!

TUG (V.O.)

Oh yes! Your worst nightmare as a running back!

BRANSON (V.O.)

Washington was looking for that first down. Big mistake!

Willie is on his knees, unbelieving... Washington drops his head, the loneliest man in the world. A gash of blood crawls down inside his helmet from his forehead.

89 SIDELINE #30

89

Tony is not so much stunned as resigned, believing now that nothing can change his luck.

90 OWNER'S BOX #9

90

Christina and everyone else in the box mutter quietly, in retreat...

91 STANDS #2

91

The fans turn ugly, throwing things onto the field.

A91 SCOREBOARD #5

A91

flashes the new score: MINNESOTA 37, MIAMI 34, 1:32...

92 MINNESOTA SIDELINE #1 92

The Americans are ecstatic.

A92 MIAMI SIDELINE #31 A92

Whereas Miami is devastated! Their very life-force threatened by this fourth straight defeat... the gods have voted. Despair and self-pity commingle.

B92 OWNER'S BOX #10 B92

Christina watches the replay of Washington going through the line.

CHRISTINA

Two hands, you showboat! Two goddamn hands -- you...

INTERCUT WITH:

C92 ON TV C92

The fumble as highlight... Utilizing her cane, Margaret Pagniacchi leaves the room with her small, doting entourage and two white Schnauzer dogs, absorbing her daughter's passion with a detached amusement.

MARGARET

Oh, it's not so bad, honey. You'll wake up in the morning. We once lost a game -- two seconds to go on one of those stupid 'Hail Mary' passes. My lord, it just stayed up there forever and this tall Negro gentleman jumped up so high like a basketball player and picked it right out of the air... I thought your daddy was gonna have a heart attack. He was so upset, you have no idea!

(laughing)

You know, he just lost years of his life here...

(kissing Christina on the cheek)

He died because of this. Don't take it all too seriously, darling, it's just a game...

CHRISTINA

(really pissed)

Good night, Mother.

(CONTINUED)

C92 CONTINUED:

C92

She turns to her husband, Andy, who is accompanying her mother home, and kisses him.

CHRISTINA

Make sure she gets home all right,
would you, Andy? No stops.

... makes a drinking motion.

ANDY

(nods)

How 'bout me? Shall I wait up?
I have plenty of homework.

CHRISTINA

Nah, don't bother. I'd be in a
lousy mood anyway...

ANDY

(squeezes her hand)

I'm sorry... Don't forget I'm in
Boston tomorrow for two days.

CHRISTINA

(having forgotten)

Oh!?

ANDY

Maybe three. Complicated
deposition -- insurance company.
I'll call you.

CHRISTINA

(sadly, as he
leaves)

Kick their asses!

95 INT. LOCKER ROOM #4 - NIGHT

95

D'Amato walks through like an undertaker.

D'AMATO

(yelling)

All right, everybody, let's
huddle!

As the men slowly assemble in various stages of dress, pre and post-shower, some totally nude, D'Amato crosses to Willie's locker, who seems off in his own world, undressing slowly.

(CONTINUED)

D'AMATO

Let it go, Willie. You played strong.

WILLIE

I can't believe we blew it. I shoulda kept the ball myself.

TONY

Listen to me, kid...

(waits till Willie
gives him his eyes)

On any given Sunday you're gonna win or you're gonna lose. The point is -- can you win or lose like a man?... Out there today you played like a man. That's what counts.

It's hard for Willie to accept a compliment of any kind.

WILLIE

I'm sick of losing, Coach.

Tony doesn't quite understand the motivation there; the rest of the team is waiting.

TONY

When you're my age, kid, you get used to it.

(to all)

Awright, everybody, lissen up! You played your hearts out! No blame... nobody! Let's get on our knees... Father...

The team assumes a collective prayer position; Tony signals the team CHAPLAIN.

CHAPLAIN

Tough one today. I know how you're taking this. I went to my play book and the book says: The rain falls on the just and the unjust alike. You're not specifically cursed. Joy comes in the morning. There are no atheists in foxholes. Let's pray. Our Father who art in Heaven...

On a cell phone, Dr. Mandrake stitches an uneven, buckled suture onto Julian Washington's forehead -- who yelps out in pain.

(CONTINUED)

MANDRAKE

I was using a seven iron...

WASHINGTON

Ow! How 'bout another number,
Doc! This hurts.

MANDRAKE

(reaching for
the novocaine)

Doctor Caine on the way, you
pussy! No you, I was talking...

Powers, in the b.g., observes Washington's budding scar,
concerned, says nothing.

TRAINER #2

(to Mandrake)

Doc, 'Horny' won't shut up. Can
we get him some...

MANDRAKE

(irritated)

You tell 'Horny' his perk days are
over! He knows Association policy --
it's a 'schedule 5' drug. Give him
two Motrin and tell him to go to a
'witch doctor'...

(as "Horny" suddenly
makes an appearance
on his behalf)

You know you're gonna sue me anyway
for the Motrin, you skinny fuck!

HORNY, a white, runty defensive back and punter, is
rather upset at the large flap of skin hanging from his
foot, which he proudly displays.

HORNY

Look at my fucking foot! Come on,
Doc! Would you want to go on a
double date with 'Tank Top'
looking like this?

MANDRAKE

(seeing the wound)

Get that out of here.

HORNY

How do I get some attention round
here?

(CONTINUED)

MANDRAKE

(rolls his eyes)

Try suicide.

(rushing to leave;
to Powers)

I gotta get down to Cap at the hospital. They did the M.R.I., looks like the disc ruptured. They're going in tonight. Could you finish Julian for me?...

Knowing what he's left behind, Mandrake rushes out with the phone; Powers sidles up to Julian's suture.

POWERS

Hey, J, I'm not gonna shit you. I know this guy, he's a top plastic surgeon... I think I can get him to see you tonight.

JULIAN

What the fuck for?!

POWERS

(how to say this?)

You got a TV contract, don't you?

JULIAN

You know I got a fucking television contract.

POWERS

... It is on-camera?

WASHINGTON

(suddenly looking
for a mirror)

M'fucker... I'll sew his asshole to his lips!

In progress, a dozen or more press -- among them Jack Rose -- are gathered around Tony, in a lousy mood, giving out his postgame interviews from his cramped office.

ROSE

(pseudo-amicable)

... So, Coach, what's on your mind when you run the exact same running play twice deep in your own territory? You nervous about your quarterback's arm?

(CONTINUED)

TONY

You know, Jack, I've always loved the running game, but I read so much about it 'cause of you, I decided I'm gonna give it up.

ROSE

I beg your pardon. The running game?

TONY

No, reading you.
 (as they all
 laugh at Jack)
 The pass is great, but it's 2-3 guys involved. But a sweep -- y'ever really study a sweep, Jack --

ROSE

Student of the game, Coach.

TONY

Eleven men pulling together, concentrating... like a mind machine in perfect sync, hitting every block and hole, it's so damn beautiful! Football, Jack, at its purest.

ROSE

Does that mean you're in disagreement with management, Coach?

TONY

(looks at his watch)
 No, it means I'm late to see management. Tell you what, if I don't have the job tomorrow, you'll be the first one to know, Jack, okay?

He leaves abruptly.

P.R. GUY

All right, folks, that's it for today...

Grumbles all around...

98 EXT. STADIUM - EVENING

98

The quiet of the empty stadium fills the humid air. Distant ECHOES of the roaring fans fall off into BIRDSONG and FROG CROAKS out of the swamps.

97 INT. ROONEY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

97

Coach D'Amato enters to find Cap Rooney in bed, his lower back and legs supported, a morphine drip in one arm and an IV in the other, unnaturally white and swollen from the hits -- doing his stoic best to abide the searing pain in his back. Flowers fill the crevices of the room.

He's on a speaker phone with the boss, Christina -- while Cindy, his concerned and devoted wife, acknowledges Tony with a head nod.

CINDY

(to Christina)

... but did you see the wires? I mean, why is this being played up like it's the end, Christina? I just don't understand -- it's a minor injury. That's all. Can't the front office control the spin?

CHRISTINA (V.O.)

Cindy, look, stop worrying about this! The important thing is this thing, this... microdisectomy, went well, it's under control. We'll make a strong statement in the morning, okay?... Cap?

(as Cap acknowledges)

I've been researching vertebrae. And guess what? -- There's a great doctor in Minnesota. Rosen. A specialist in rehab. I'm gonna fly him out tomorrow. I found out two important things... Cap?

CAP

(mutters)

Yes?

CHRISTINA (V.O.)

One -- you can live without the L-5 disc, and two...

CAP

That's good news...

(CONTINUED)

Tony quietly tucks in Cap's sweaty, strewn bed sheets, preferring not to signal his presence to Christina. He notices a large black and blue discoloration around the point of surgical entry in Cap's lower back.

CHRISTINA (V.O.)

... And two, it all depends on you.
We got the bye week. You could be
ready as early as San Francisco.

CAP

That's really good news.

Tony gives Cap some water.

CHRISTINA (V.O.)

I want you to rest up for tonight
and we'll talk tomorrow, okay.
Night, Cap... Cindy.

She hangs up. Cindy disconnects the call.

TONY

How ya doing, Rock?

CAP

(dopey)

Man, I thought that guy's helmet
would come out through my ass. I
thought I was going to die! They
went in -- took out my L-5 disc.
No big deal ... Did we win?

(as Tony shakes
his head)

The kid didn't cut it?

TONY

Nah, Beamen did okay. It was
Julian fumbled, they beat us by
three.

CAP

Shit! Julian, man...
(shakes his head)
... What'd the kid throw?

TONY

9 of 14, for 176.

CAP

TDs?

TONY

Two.

(CONTINUED)

CAP

Holy moly!
(awkwardly tries to
sit up, screams)
Oh God, shit!!...
(then calmer)
I can beat this!...

TONY

The pain's bad, kid.

CAP

Comes and goes. I can control my
morphine intake... but I can't get
enough.

TONY

I could use a drink myself.

He pours himself some water distastefully, as Cap plays
with his pump.

CAP

(yelling with pain)
Cindy, did you call the nurse!?
Is this working! Jesus, tell 'em
I'm a football player! Pump up
the goddamn volume!
(laughs)
... and Christy thinks I'll be
ready to play in three weeks...

CINDY

(on phone)
We've been waiting...

TONY

She's dreamin'.

CAP

What is her deal? All these
flowers. I've known Christy since
she was in braces, man. If Art was
alive he'd be here, not a bunch of
flowers.

TONY

She's President now -- what's more
to say.

CINDY

She just didn't want to bother
you.

(CONTINUED)

CAP

Montana, he had something like this. I'm in better shape. A few weeks of rehab and I'll be there, Tony. Playoffs for sure.

TONY

You just gotta get over this Montana thing, Rock. You're never gonna be that good.

CAP

Screw you. If I had a decent coach, I'd be...

TONY

Take it easy, will ya! Don't overachieve. Breathe. Even at 50 percent, there's nobody better out there...

CAP

Playoffs... I'll be ready.

Tony touches Cap gently on the head.

TONY

It's late. I'll stop by in the morning. Get some rest. 'Night, Cindy.

She acknowledges him.

CAP

Tony...

(as Tony turns back)

Don't give up on me.

TONY

(beat)

You're like a son to me, Cap. I'll fight for you till the day I die.

He exits as the PHONE RINGS and Cindy follows Tony out.

CAP

Cindy! Can you get the phone!

CINDY

Finally! What do you do for heart attacks? Wait till they pass? 20 minutes ago we rang...

Cap closes his eyes. He can't find a spot of stillness -- the pain boiling up again.

98 INT. WILLIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

98

In a high-rise apartment above the bay, sporting a glorious view of the curve of the city against the ocean, shadows play off the balcony from the TELEVISION within -- a MUTED "End Zone Weekly" plays (NOTE: This is not Jack Rose's "Sports Corner," rather an ESPN-type national show).

WILLIE

(on the phone)

Mom, I didn't know I was going in... sure I woulda called you... She wants to talk to you.

He laughs and hands the phone to his attractive girlfriend VANESSA STRUTHERS on the couch next to him -- a longtime sweetheart, she is studying marketing.

VANESSA

(into phone)

Mrs. Beamen, hi!... Yeah he was great!... No, I think he was just nervous...

WILLIE

(UN-MUTING the TV)

Tell her I'm on again!

VANESSA

Oh, Mrs. Beamen, right now! It's on! You gettin' it?

(to Willie)

I don't think they have that cable channel in East Texas, honey.

WILLIE

Here it is. I'm about to do it.

INTERCUT WITH:

A98 ON TV

A98

Shots of Tyler Cherubini going down... Shots of Willie stepping in.

TV VOICE (V.O.)

... in stepped third-string QB Willie Beamen, and after a very shaky start, Beamen hung in to deliver a surprising game, coming up just short in the fourth on Julian 'The Slicker' Washington's catastrophic fumble. Not that Willie didn't have his own nauseating moments!

(CONTINUED)

A98 CONTINUED:

A98

The infamous vomit in the huddle on national television. Willie covers his eyes. We also hear upset SCREAMING from MOM on the phone.

VANESSA

You didn't tell me you threw up!

TV VOICE (V.O.)

... the Sharks are now looking at a 7-6 record with a very tough schedule comin' up, but Tyler Cherubini with an ankle sprain looks like he'll be ready next week. Let's hope in any case that Willie Beamen remembers his Tums for the Chicago Rhinos next week!

Willie MUTES the TV, taking the phone back from Vanessa.

WILLIE

... It was moving so fast...
you're a cruel woman, Mama!

(more serious)

Uh-huh... No probably not... No, I don't know yet.

(growing tenser)

Mama, I... look, I'm number three, there's nothing I... They don't wanna look!... Yeah, yeah... you keep prayin', okay. Say hi to everybody... Uh-huh, you too, right...

(hangs up, looks at
Vanessa, deflated)

She wants me to start.

VANESSA

Oh, baby, she just wants the best for ya.

She hugs him like his Mom might.

99 INT. BAR/RESTAURANT - NIGHT (10:30)

99

Dark walls in this high-class hangout are filled with celebrity photos, especially the Sharks and Dolphins. Caricatures of the football crowd hang over the bar where D'Amato, Nick Crozier, and Montezuma Monroe drink.

(CONTINUED)

ON TV

Jack "Ripper" Rose, the local expert on the Sharks, who seems to prove that the more you know about a team, the less you really understand, interviews a guest on his local "Sports Corner."

ROSE (V.O.)

(on TV, to guest)

... Frank, Frank, Frank, you gotta wonder why D'Amato called that play when everyone knows J-Man likes to pick his spot when he runs... and you're running the same play twice in a row? Come on! There's a reason this team has lost four in a row. Forget about the offensive line and Cap Rooney. Forget about money-grubbing greed-head Christina Pagniacchi who sold three of last year's stars. And forget about the defense -- there is none! This team is just not in sync. They remind me of my 'ex.' She had 21 different personalities. Seven of them hated me...

(as his guest laughs)

No kiddin', I think D'Amato's play books have consisted of the same 11 plays since 1971. It's gotta be a shorter list than 'The History of Jews in Sports,' but lucky for him, the Sharks have a couple of teeth left in their head, otherwise these guys would be bottom-feeding at 2-14 instead of thrashin' at 7-6...

BACK TO SCENE

Glancing away from the omnipresent television (several others dot the bar space, all tuned to sports), Tony drinks Scotch -- one of several -- his thoughts depressed and fatalistic tonight. Four losses in a row is a phenomenon that has never happened to him before.

MANDY, a young glamorous woman, sitting down the bar with a girlfriend, catches his eye.

TONY

(re: TV)

Glad he's not talking about me.

(CONTINUED)

CROZIER

(during this)

... you play safe, you lose. It's just not a theory, they can prove it. You feed a computer all the games where a coach protected a modest lead -- 10 points or less -- 300 games, 10 years, there's this guy he did this study at Harvard... it came out the coaches lost... 71 percent of the time!

MONROE

71 percent my ass! It can't be more than 40 percent, probably less. What's the information they put in those damn things?!... Shit, what're you guys gonna do next -- stick computer chips up my players' butts so you can monitor what their shit's thinking?

CROZIER

(sweetly)

That's a great fucking idea, Monty -- if you had any neuronal connections left after what -- 20 concussions? -- I might actually take that as an insult, but...

TONY

(signals the bartender)

You get any more stats in those goddamn computers what the hell you need a coach for anymore? I mean it's like we're all rushing forward here -- faster, bigger, smarter. We're all thinking too damned much... we're not even looking around at what we're passing by, leaving behind... You know what I mean?

MONROE

I sure do.

The BARTENDER pours another Scotch, beers for the others.

BARTENDER

Here you go, Coach.

(CONTINUED)

TONY

Thanks (nickname)...
 (to all, noting his
 caricature above)
 Y'know, I'm starting to look like
 that guy. That's what's fucking
 scary.

MONROE

Yeah, a little.

Crozier clears his throat, needs to talk business.

CROZIER

Y'know, Tony, I think we gotta
 simplify the playbook for
 Cherubini. These Rhino
 linebackers are fast little ATVs.
 We gotta pick 'em apart with
 precision -- Cherubini to two
 tight ends; ask the wideouts to
 go short over the middle... More
 screens, traps...

TONY

Nick, I'm not re-doing the whole
 goddamn game plan for Cherubini
 with three more games. The
 linemen aren't that quick, y'know
 what I mean?... and when Cap comes
 back for the playoffs, he's gonna
 go crazy with a whole new calling
 scheme, different rhythms,
 shit!...

CROZIER

Tony, what I'm saying is if we
 don't redo the game plan, we won't
make the playoffs... and what
 happens if Cap doesn't come back
 this year?

TONY

(starting to anger)
 Hey, Nick -- when you get your
 team, you do it your way. But
 don't let me catch you telling
anyone Cap Rooney's not comin'
 back, okay? I don't care what
 Mrs. Pagniacchi Junior says. Stay
 out of it!... I've seen Cap do
 this for years.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TONY (CONT'D)

When he sets his mind to it,
he'll walk right in there -- maybe
'gainst the Emperors -- and he'll
shine just like a new dime, that's
how fucking great this guy is!
Never underestimate 'Rock'
Rooney, okay?...

CROZIER

I'm sorry... But we need a game
plan, Tony, that...

TONY

(changes subject)
... y'know every time I drink more
than two of these, I think of
Jeanette...

MONROE

How is that gal?

TONY

(grimaces)
We try talkin' but we sound like
two undertakers talkin' shop...

MONROE

Great lady, Jeanette. You gave
her up too easy.

TONY

Y'ever try living with her,
Monty...? She was nuts. Went
fundamentalist on me.

MONROE

(finishes his beer,
to Crozier)
They say a coach needs three
things in this life -- a wife who
shuts up, a dog who licks him
whenever he wants, and a
quarterback who don't get hurt...
So, this turkey's wife took a hike
on him, his dog got run over, and
his quarterback ruptured his
goddamn back, talk about luck.
Gotta piss...

He leaves.

CROZIER

Mind if I join you?

(CONTINUED)

99 CONTINUED: (5)

99

MONROE

Only if you hold your own dick,
kid.

CROZIER

So tell me, Monty, did you really
play with leather helmets in the
good old days?

TONY

(chimes in)

You forgot the fourth thing, Monty
-- a defense! I know it's old-
fashioned to keep the other team
from scoring, but it's effective.

MONROE

Kiss my ass, D'Amato. Lemme
tell you something, kid, those
leather helmets were fucking
great! They held our brains in,
'cause back then men knew how to
hit and get hit. When they
allowed face-guards for you
punks, that was the end of the
game that I knew...

As they move off:

CROZIER

Do you defensive guys ever move
your lips when you speak? Or is
it true you all like grunting
better...?

MONROE

I like grunting better than that
techno-babble bullshit you offensive
weenies talk...

Tony's eyes wander, against his will, back to the TV.

INTERCUT WITH:

A99 ON TV

A99

Jack Rose continues to talk a mile a minute -- on camera
and then in background V.O. as we return to Tony.

(CONTINUED)

A99 CONTINUED:

A99

ROSE (V.O.)

... I tell you right here and now -- Chicago's gonna wipe us out! They got a playbook with 200 variations on the pass for chrissake! Sure D'Amato likes to act tough and 'keep it simple, stupid' for our Sharkies, and some people even think he's a genius with his book of 75 plays, but hey, a lot of us think, you know, like this is no longer the '70s and the '80s -- hey we're talking the late '60s when this guy started coaching -- and you all know by now how much of a fan I am of D'Amato getting himself a lobotomy or maybe cloned with some goat because anything... even Jack Kevorkian, would be better than what we got! Give me some smack!

(high-fives
his guest)

Give me a pound. Give me some love...

Tony's eyes have shifted back to the caricature of himself on the wall, a man fatter, older, and more degenerate than he actually looks. Mandy, the young woman he noticed earlier, slides up next to him, sits, sipping a non-alcoholic blue-ice number with a straw.

MANDY

You're that coach, aren't you?

TONY

Yeah, Tony D'Amato.

He shakes hands.

MANDY

Wow! Hi. I'm Mandy Murphy. I can't believe it. I thought it was you but I wasn't sure. You look different on TV.

TONY

You think so?

MANDY

Yeah. You look much better in real life. You're always yelling at people on TV.

(CONTINUED)

TONY
(pointing to the
caricature)
Yeah well at least I look better
than that old fart... I think?

MANDY
You do...

TONY
(starting on another
Scotch)
Thanks. How old are you, Mandy?

MANDY
How old do you want me to be?
(as he shrugs; smiles)
I don't think age matters. I
really don't. I think older guys
have a certain thing.

TONY
Oh yeah?

MANDY
Yeah. Older guys are the nicest
guys. At least in my
experience...
(she gently touches
his hand)
You know, I always wanted to meet
you... ever since I was about 17,
I was going with this football
jock -- and I saw you on the
sidelines. You were winning this
big game...

TONY
You mean the Pantheon Cup...?

MANDY
Yeah, that's it! That was wild.
(as Tony laughs)
I'd never repeat this -- only to
you, you promise to keep this a
secret -- ?

TONY
I promise.

(CONTINUED)

A99 CONTINUED: (3)

A99

MANDY
 (whispers into
 his ear)
 ... I uh... started masturbating
 to football games watching you...
 (also: AD LIBS)...

Tony's taken aback. She touches his knee, goes further.

MANDY
 ... you wanna go out with me...
 'Coach'?

TONY
 You mean like on a date?

MANDY
 Yeah, like on a date...
 (leaning close)
 I got a place -- close by,
 quiet... It's a thousand... five
 thousand for the night. You won't
 regret it...
 (pause)
 What do you say, handsome?

TONY
 Thank you. I'm flattered, but...

MANDY
 You sure? I got friends.
 (indicating Monroe
 returning alone
 from restroom)
 I could do your friends too.

TONY
 Thanks, Mandy... some other time
 maybe.

MANDY
 (disappointed)
 Fair enough. Hey, good luck with
 the team. I'll be rooting for
 you... 'Tony'

A plucky kiss on his cheek.

She slinks away, as Monroe sits, enrapt by her legs.

MONROE
 Mmmm! Dang! Don't tell me you
 passed on that, D'Amato?

(CONTINUED)

A99 CONTINUED: (4)

A99

TONY

... I must really be drunk.

MONROE

... I heard sex helps your coaching instincts. But let's get genius boy to run a stat on coaches who like hunting and fishing better than snatch, see what he comes up with...?

TONY

(laughs, segues)

... you think we're slowing down, Monty?

MONROE

Shit, we're not getting any younger. These are long days, 16 hours, something's gotta give.

TONY

... you think you can lose your coaching instincts?

MONROE

(chuckles)

You never had 'em anyway, so how can you lose 'em?

TONY

Well, that last play today, there was a moment when... I didn't know what to call... that's never happened to me like that before... in 22 seasons...

MONROE

Come on, we were on our third quarterback, Christina was throwing plays at us every five minutes, and Julian's about 10 years old upstairs.

TONY

All I have are my instincts. I lose them... I got nothin'...

(noticing)

Say, what'd you do to Crozier? Stuff him in the toilet?

The letter "L" is written with a black marker next to the Americans on the season schedule (Miami is now 7-6). There are only three games left in the regular season: Chicago, California and New York. Tony cradles a cordless phone while drinking Scotch, as a COMPUTERIZED VOICE introduces Jeanette's voice on the answer machine.

JEANETTE (V.O.)

Please leave your full name and a message after the tone and we'll get back to you.

TONY

(into his cordless)

Hi, Jeanette, it's Tony... I was hoping you'd still be awake. What time is it out there anyway? I tried to call earlier but things got... never mind. Listen...

He walks into his bedroom, emptying his pockets on the dresser. Pictures of the past confront him -- Jeanette, a boy and a girl; another of Tony with Cap Rooney and Art Pagniacchi winning the "Pantheon Cup."

TONY

... tell Tommy we gotta game in L.A. In a couple of weeks. I'm hoping we could maybe get together?... I don't have his new number but... the thing is I'd like to see him and... and you...?

(he weaves, stumbles
as he looks for
something he dropped
on the rug)

I really miss the shit outta Timmy and Melinda... Y'know, love to see them, Jesus! Grandkids, Jeanette, we got grandkids... Anyway, what's there to say? Cap got hurt Sunday. Just another heart-breaking Sunday right?

(pause)

Okay, well, bye...

He has crossed to the toilet, where he unsuccessfully tries to urinate -- all over the place. A COMPUTERIZED VOICE suddenly cuts in to tell him:

VOICE #1 (V.O.)

... Your call has been cancelled. Please leave your full name after the tone and record again.

(CONTINUED)

100 CONTINUED:

100

TONY

Aw shit!

EXT. PRACTICE FIELD #1 - NEXT DAY

(NOTE: Potential one of three football practices -- a brief montage set to music, that leads us to:)

101 EXT. CHRISTINA PAGNIACCI'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS ACTION - DAY 101

Tony drives up to a beautiful mansion on one of Miami's bays in an older, elegant car. As he talks into an audio-video monitor, the gates roll open.

102 INT. CHRISTINA PAGNIACCI'S OFFICE/HOUSE - CONTINUOUS ACTION - DAY 102

In a large cross-shadowed private office, Christina and Johnny Polito listen to Ed Phillips on the phone -- noticing Tony's drive-up on the indoor monitor... The walls reveal pictures of Christina with various high-powered individuals in the city; an MBA from Stanford; others that are competitive at tennis and golf, on safari and skiing with her husband; shots of her as a young girl with her dad. In these images of fishing, riding, hunting, perhaps one senses that Christina was raised as an only son by Art Pagniacchi and forever embodies the hardness of that fate.

ED PHILLIPS (O.S.)

(into phone)

Well, we think 100 million is extortion too, Governor... Then will you file a friend-of-the-court brief on our behalf if we go up against the League's transfer fee?... Great!

CHRISTINA

... you're sure? No public bond issues -- no extra tax assessments?

ED PHILLIPS

(waves her off,
nodding)

... couldn't ask for more than that... good talking to you, Governor. Say hi to Teresa. And Christina sends a big kiss! Okay.

(CONTINUED)

Hangs up.

CHRISTINA

(excited)

So let me get this straight: the Governor of California's saying there's nothing for the public to vote on, right?

ED PHILLIPS

(pleased)

That's what he's saying. He's got a way to finance a new stadium in Hawthorne, with lottery and casino money! As long as we partner with this realty company he's pushing...

JOHNNY POLITO

Sure. He owns all that shit land he wants to get rid of.

CHRISTINA

... he gives us the full concession, parking, signage, sponsorship money?

ED PHILLIPS

(nods)

... and 100 percent from the luxury boxes and club seats!

CHRISTINA

(amazed)

My God, L.A. is a dream! You realize they're giving us the world, Ed?!

ED PHILLIPS

(downplaying it)

Well, it's certainly good enough to leverage the City of Miami into a new stadium.

CHRISTINA

Oh, Ed! It's more than that...

(pause, seeing Tony's car pull up)

I just don't trust Smalls backing this stadium bond. Dad always said he was a thief in a tuxedo...

She glances at a picture on her desk of her late father. Beneath it in the silver frame she has had engraved: "Whatever It Takes."

(CONTINUED)

ED PHILLIPS

What do you expect? Smalls is an asshole, but he'll deal. He always has. And he knows we've got a big glitch anyway.

CHRISTINA

We don't really, Ed, we can...!

ED PHILLIPS

You keep underestimating the power of the franchises, Christina. They don't want us! They want an expansion team in L.A. which they can make a lot more money with!

JOHNNY POLITO

Bullshit! They want an established team with a fan base. A new stadium with a multiplex theater shopping mall. We're in the entertainment business, Ed. Think football in the 21st Century.

ED PHILLIPS

Johnny, have you got some sleazy little side deal I don't know about yet?

JOHNNY POLITO

Ed, you're getting old.

ED PHILLIPS

... And you're getting greedy, Johnny.

CHRISTINA

The Association will listen to reason. L.A. is an entertainment empire! It can easily handle two teams. Here, what? The wrong fan base. No Hispanic players, no Hispanic fans...

(off silence)

Ed, if ever you owed Dad a favor, make it this one! This team will be born again in L.A.!

ED PHILLIPS

What about the Rosenthal bid?

CHRISTINA

(thinking about it)

\$250 million?... It's so low.

(CONTINUED)

ED PHILLIPS

Wasn't so low when your dad and I started.

JOHNNY POLITO

With a new stadium and a winning team, Ed, we could sell the team for 800 million.

ED PHILLIPS

(disbelieving)

You're like your father that way, darling -- a dreamer... My advice to you is, sell the goddamn team. You don't really want to own a football team, Christina. You're still young -- start a family.

Christina, conflicted, watches as her housekeeper shows Tony in.

CHRISTINA

I still like this business. Let's keep this quiet for now, Ed, can we?

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION - DAY

Tony looks hungover and bumps into something, as Christina crosses into the giant-sized living room.

CHRISTINA

Come in... Morning, Tony.

TONY

Christina... Ed. You know, I keep looking for the A.T.M. machines in these houses...

JOHNNY POLITO

I never find one that works.

CHRISTINA

Alka-Seltzer?

TONY

(rolls his eyes)

No. I already had breakfast... at four this morning.

CHRISTINA

... Hell of a loss, we were so goddamn close.

(CONTINUED)

102 CONTINUED: (4)

102

Remote in hand, she flicks on a state-of-the-art video screen.

A102 ON TV

A102

The shot of Washington fumbling in excruciating slo-mo.

CHRISTINA

You know, I can see why my mother somehow got herself into a drunken stupor watching football games all her life... but this kind of play makes you want to jump out the fucking window!

TONY

You can run that play a million times, Christy, but it ain't gonna change a thing. On any given Sunday...

CHRISTINA

(overlapping)

'You either gonna win or you gonna lose. The point is can you win or lose like a man?' Dad said a lot of catchy things.

TONY

Actually I said it, but...

CHRISTINA

But he never could stand losing, could he!

(as Julian fumbles again)

... But J. just couldn't resist going for his bonus yards?

TONY

Blame me, not Julian. It was my call.

CHRISTINA

... I know it was, Tony -- but I'll tell you this -- Julian wasn't thinking about you, he was thinking about the extra million dollars he gets when he hits 1500 yards...

(glancing at Ed)

Which, by the way, definitely helps blow out our fucking salary cap for next year...

(CONTINUED)

A102 CONTINUED:

A102

TONY

You're the one who negotiated his incentive clause.

CHRISTINA

... which is why I'd like you to sit him out -- then maybe he'll get his head into the game. And save us some dollars in the bargain.

TONY

Pretty smart move, Christy. You want me to bench my All-Pro back? Any other suggestions?

A testy edge to the dialogue, as Christina freezes the image of Julian fumbling. She shows him the sports section of USA Today -- folded to a condemnation of the team, specifically Tony. Although raised to treat Tony like an "uncle" in a large Italian-American family, the team comes first and foremost.

CHRISTINA

Sarcasm is not a solution. Four in a row, Tony. They want your head. Without Cap, it's gonna take a miracle to make the playoffs.

TONY

(re: the newspaper)

... Your father'd laugh at this jerk, Christy. We're a solid team, and we're gonna get to the playoffs. This is not the time to panic.

CHRISTINA

I'm not 'panicking' -- but no surgeon I know in the country is saying Cap'll be back by playoff time -- even with the bye week...

TONY

(waves it off)

Doctors are like lawyers, always protecting their asses against malpractice!

(CONTINUED)

A102 CONTINUED: (2)

A102

ED PHILLIPS

Tony, without the playoffs there's no more TV money. And frankly, I don't think we have a chance in hell of getting this new stadium bond issue through...

CHRISTINA

(wearying of Tony)

... the economics just don't work -- the fact is this season is a disaster, a write-off. It's over!

Now Tony's headache is getting worse.

TONY

It's 'over'!? The hell it's over! We been there before -- I can pull this out. I always have. Worse things than this have...

CHRISTINA

Dad used to say, 'No intensity, no victory.' Where the hell is your intensity, Tony!? We were always in the playoffs. Four years ago the only thing we worried about was winning a third Pantheon Cop! Now what? We're a second-tier team, Tony, that's what!

(as he objects)

... No, admit it! You're not being honest, we're the fifth, sixth team in this league. We just don't get the respect anymore. For chrissake, Tony, just four years ago we won the Pantheon Cup! Do you remember! We beat the pants off Massachusetts! Dad would be shocked to see this mess we created...

Tony is fuming, but a part of him knows she's right.

TONY

(darkly, pacing)

I was there, Christy -- remember? We're solid, we're just not inspired. We got too many free agents...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

A102 CONTINUED: (3)

A102

TONY (CONT'D)

(indicating the
frozen tape)

... Julian's a 'merc' who's here for the money and he brings that attitude with him to the team. The end of the season, he goes. And we rebuild our running game and...

CHRISTINA

(pissed)

Running game!? Okay -- you always talk about a running game. But who cares as long as you win! People want to watch passes, touchdowns, high scores! That's the game now, Tony!... We paid a lot of money to get Nick Crozier here from Minnesota specifically to modernize this offense. But when I look down at the field I don't see any new play calling, I don't see him doing what he does best. And frankly, what is most disturbing, is I don't see you even listening to his calls from the booth...

TONY

Football is played on the field, Christina, not in the goddamn boxes! You knew that when you had candy stuck in your braces. When'd you forget it?

CHRISTINA

(bristles)

So you know everything about everything, right, Tony?

Another silence. Ed coughs. Christina regrets the atmosphere, throws up her hands and paces.

ED PHILLIPS

(excusing himself)

Listen, why don't you two...

CHRISTINA

(in a yielding tone)

Ed, stay...

(to Tony)

You gripe about Julian Washington but you completely ignore the problems with Cap and Shark? I don't get it.

(CONTINUED)

A102 CONTINUED: (4)

A102

TONY

If we'd gotten the linemen I wanted in the first place, our first two quarterbacks might still be walking.

CHRISTINA

Think about the future. Do you know what we could get for Cap right now? Probably a first and a third draft choice. He's still got an arm, and people respect him. We know he's finished but if we're smart, we can...

TONY

No, I don't know that, Christy, I don't! Cap's got two, maybe three great years left in him. This is football. Today guys in their 40s are playing...

(a silence)

Do I gotta remind you he helped build this franchise, which you benefitted from? That he's a hero to the working people of Florida. And one of the greatest pressure players of all time. You just don't cut a man like Cap Rooney!

CHRISTINA

Excuse me -- Cap and Shark were great, but memories don't pass and tackle like they used to...

TONY

Shark changed linebacking forever! He made a quantum leap in the game!...

CHRISTINA

... And we can say good-bye to both of them with dignity! With class! We'll give 'em positions in the front office, retire their numbers. A going-away day that...

TONY

(angry)

That goes without saying. But I am not cutting Cap Rooney or Shark Lavay. No matter how much 'class' you do it with.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

A102 CONTINUED: (5)

A102

TONY (CONT'D)

My contract is very clear on this point, Christy. I coach my way. I never tolerated interference from the front office and your father never interfered when...

ED PHILLIPS

(politick)

Tony, Art spent money like water. He never really cared about the bottom line. He wanted to win at any cost. In the modern game, with marketing costs high as they are...

CHRISTINA

Tony, I am not re-signing a seven-million-dollar-a-year, 39-year-old quarterback no matter how big he was.

(pointing to a stack
of budget sheets on
her desk)

I crunch those numbers every month till my fingers bleed. We make less money than 90 percent of the other teams. The economics simply don't make any sense!

TONY

(intense)

Fuck the economics! Your father, you hear me! Your father never interfered! He made it work!

CHRISTINA

(equally intense)

... Because you were a fighter then! You had intensity, Tony! But today he'd cut your ass! Because that's just the way the game is now. I love this team as much -- if not more -- than you. I was born into this goddamn business, so don't try to make me out to be some heartless bitch in a skybox bleeding my players dry...

TONY

What's your point, Christy?

(CONTINUED)

A102 CONTINUED: (6)

A102

CHRISTINA

(drawing up)

The point is... as much as I respect... my famous 'Uncle Tony' -- the team's just not responding to you, and I'll be damned if I'm going to let everything my father fought for slide down the drain with you at the helm. I will do anything -- you hear me, anything -- to bring this team back to greatness!

TONY

I guess I had nothing to do with that. It was all your dad... Am I excused now?

He throws a hard look at Ed, who looks away. Tony stalks to the door.

CHRISTINA

(after him)

Who's playing the child now, Tony? Do I have to remind you of what kind of ground you're on? Everybody's got to negotiate... you too.

TONY

(at the door)

Are you saying my contract's up at the end of the year? And the 'economics aren't there'? Is that what you're saying, Christy?

CHRISTINA

... You know, you're not offering me a whole lot right now, Tony... 'Whatever it takes.' I'm just doing it the way he did it.

TONY

You're not even close... You know how your dad and I used to negotiate my contract? We had a beer and we shook hands.

CHRISTINA

I don't drink beer, Tony.

TONY

(exits)

No, I guess you don't.

Christina shares a look with Ed. She shakes her head: "Beer?"

103 EXT. "SHARK" STADIUM - GAME 2 - CHICAGO RHINOS AT 103
MIAMI SHARKS - FIELD #1 - DAY

Miami QB Tyler Cherubini releases his throw far over the head of Sanderson. The crowd boos.

TUG (V.O.)

... this has been a tough start for Tyler Cherubini, who has yet to find his rhythm.

BRANSON (V.O.)

... only two for eight so far and sacked three times. Ouch! 14-3 Chicago. Second quarter. Eight minutes left...

104 STANDS #1 104

Shark fans are sullen. Signs read: "D'Amato is a Dinosaur"... images of D'Amato in Thanksgiving turkey feathers, etc. The capacity, again, is at best two-thirds.

105 SIDELINE #1 105

Coach D'Amato talks quietly with Tyler Cherubini and Cap Rooney, using a cane in civilian clothing.

Willie, ignored, watches from the bench, not warming up. As Cherubini wanders off, the QB Coach fetches Willie. D'Amato's eyes now flash on him...

TONY

Get Beamen.

106 FIELD #2 106

Shark rages up and down the defensive line, faking a blitz, baiting the young Chicago QB.

SHARK

Hey you, white-bread! Got your cup on? 'Cause I'm gonna runneth it over!!

(to Chicago
lineman)

I'm gonna stomp you, B.J., and then I'm gonna stomp your million-dollar bonus baby white-ass quarterback and then I'm gonna go up in the stands and stomp both your mommas!

(CONTINUED)

106 CONTINUED:

106

The Chicago QB, made a little nervous by Shark, bobbles the ball slightly... Shark, reading the trap, finds a lane through the Chicago line for a crushing hit on the baby-bonus QB, who pops the ball loose... Miami's "Beast Man" instantly pounces on it.

Shark, congratulated by his teammates, rises hurting, and hiding it... In a brief, micro-moment:

HIS POV

reveals: BLURRING (SPX) ON teammates and stadium.

107 SIDELINE #2

107

Willie, in his oddball way, walks up to the edge of the sideline, with Tony.

TONY

How do you feel?

WILLIE

I always feel good.

TONY

Feel like throwin' up?

WILLIE

Hell no!

TONY

Hey, last time you puked you had a hell of a game.

WILLIE

That was last time.

TONY

Make a ritual out of it and people'll respect it... Go right at 'em. Go with the spread. What I want from you is concentration. Focus. Downfield. Every inch. See it before you do it. You see it, you do it.

WILLIE

I got it. I feel it.

TONY

So... What are you waiting for? Make me a believer.

(CONTINUED)

107 CONTINUED: 107

Willie heads out onto the field.

TIME CUT TO:

108 FIELD #3 108

WILLIE

Set Black 33, Black 33, go!

Willie, on a play action pass, takes off running, gesturing to his blockers, directing his flow like an experienced back... He is slammed hard after a big 32-yard gain to the Chicago 43 yard line; the crowd roars with lusty approval.

Julian Washington eyes Willie wearily as he bounces up. Is this kid going to be another runner in his backfield?

109 COACH'S BOOTH #1 109

Crozier on the headset upstairs:

TONY (V.O.)

Will you teach the kid how to slide, for Chrissake, Nick!

Before he kills himself! How many times I gotta tell you, I don't need another Julian out there --

TUG (V.O.)

There must be a reason why this kid was cut from so many teams. Sooner or later these kinds of quarterbacks get themselves hurt with wildman stuff like that! For a few extra yards it sure doesn't make sense... but that they gotta learn...

TIME CUT TO:

110 FIELD #4 110

At the Chicago six-yard line, Willie surveys the defensive alignment.

WILLIE

Set, Green 68, Green 68, go!

Julian rushes forward left of Willie for the hand-off -- but Willie doesn't give him the ball -- Julian breaks for a confused micro-moment, then throws himself forward into the pile -- as Willie races right, as if to run, then loops a high, curving pass to the second wide-out in the end zone. Touchdown!

A110 SCOREBOARD #1 A110

reads CHICAGO 14, MIAMI 10. THIRD QUARTER. 02:41...

111 SIDELINE #3 111

The stadium PA SYSTEM explodes a triumphant "SHARK THEME" as Willie jogs past Tony on his way to the bench, crossing the kicking unit on their way in...

CROZIER (V.O.)
(into helmet)
Good play, baby! Good call!!

TONY
(to Willie)
What the hell was that?!

WILLIE
Bootleg.

TONY
I know it was a goddamn bootleg!

Julian passes Tony, shaking his head... Willie gulps down Gatorade as Tony comes after him.

TONY
... Bootleg? Very creative. I never thought of that in a million years. In fact, I didn't call that! I called a goddamn Double Tight Regular 22 Fox. You know what that is, son?

WILLIE
Yeah, I know what that is.

Tony gets right in his face, indicates the game plan in his hand. There is no backing down.

TONY
You run the plays I call -- you with me, son?!

WILLIE
I'm with you, boss.

TUG (V.O.)
Glad we don't have a microphone down there, folks, 'cause I wouldn't want to be on Tony D'Amato's dark side now, would you?

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED: 111

As Tony stalks away, Willie's expression is one of quiet anger.

TONY
(on headset)
Is he fucking with me, Nick, or
doesn't he know the play!?

MONTAGE #1 (WILLIE BEAMEN AS QB)

MUSIC is UPBEAT, as Willie slices and dices the L.A. defense:

112 FIELD #5 112

Willie steps back and throws a precise 25-yard spiral, aimed for the pocket on Chicago's 5-yard line -- it sails perfectly to a place where Jimmy Sanderson accelerates to reach that sweet spot in time where ball and man meet -- sailing right PAST US into the end zone, the Chicago safety trailing. Touchdown!... Willie races down to the end zone for a celebration.

113 SCOREBOARD #2 113

CHICAGO 17, MIAMI 17. FOURTH QUARTER. 7:03...

114 MONTAGE #1 - FIELD #6 114

Willie fires a crisp bullet of a pass to the tight end in the chancy seam of the zone.

115 HUDDLE #1 115

VOICE (V.O.)
(helmet)
Hustle Right Switch 60 Bravo.
Hustle Right Switch 60 Bravo.

WILLIE
(to team)
Okay, Switch 60 Bravo -- hold it.
What's Switch 60 Bravo?

WASHINGTON
Sprint draw regular group.
It's moneytime.

(CONTINUED)

115 CONTINUED:

115

WILLIE

'Sandman,' your guy's laying back --

SANDERSON

All day.

WILLIE

How about 88 Turbo?

SANDERSON

That's what you want, money,
that's what it is.

WASHINGTON

Hold it -- that my play.

WILLIE

That was your play. These guys
are done! Let's kill some Rhinos.
Twins Right 3 Zig 88 Turbo. On two.
Ready?

They clap and move to the ball, Washington upset.

116 SIDELINE #4

116

Tony watches the new formation, amazed.

TONY

(headset)

... Now what in the holy see is he
doing... Crozier?!

A116 COACH'S BOOTH #2

A116

CROZIER

(actually delighted)

Hell if I know, Tony...

117 MONTAGE #1 - FIELD #7

117

WILLIE

Set, Red 88, Red 88, go!

Sanderson races for the left corner -- Willie not taking
his eyes off him, he pump fakes the ball to him -- but
once the Chicago defense commits to his sleight of hand,
Willie bootlegs it towards the right end zone. Two
defensive backs reverse and run right at him. It's going
to be a race to the wire.

(CONTINUED)

117 CONTINUED: 117

STUNT

The DBs have him beat by a yard or so. But Willie leaps into the air at the 2-yard line to avoid the diving tacklers. Then, finding himself having to go yet higher, he flips in mid-air, taking himself over their heads, pads and all, into a somersault, landing scot-free in the end zone. TD! Amazing!

118 OWNER'S BOX #1 118

Christina can't believe what she just saw, looking at the:

A118 TV REPLAY A118

Willie's somersault is something that is going to make the highlight reel for a long time to come -- his second week in a row!

TUG (V.O.)

Kev, did you see what I just saw?!

BRANSON (V.O.)

I sure did, Tug! And Miami goes ahead, 23-17.

CHRISTINA

(to Ed, genuinely
puzzled)

Where's this kid been all this time? In D'Amato's doghouse?

119 PRESS BOX #1 119

Jack "Ripper" Rose also senses a turn in the destiny of his team.

HIS POV

downstairs AT Willie --

BACK TO SCENE

-- inspires him to rap excitedly at his laptop, a poet in disguise describing a new major athlete... Insert (TBD).

120 MONTAGE #1 - SIDELINE #5

120

Willie trots off the field, looking for D'Amato, about 15 or 20 yards away, with daring in eyes that say, "You want to win or not? Go fuck yourself!"... Cap, next to Tony, reads the situation, but the rest of the team, standing and milling, is simply awed by this new discovery.

TUG (V.O.)

If I'm Tony D'Amato right now I'm
looking to the football gods
saying, 'What did I ever do to
deserve this?'

BRANSON (V.O.)

You bet! Tony must've been good
to a lot of widows and orphans
over the years. A back-up
quarterback like this?

121 ON TV

121

Tony watching, deeply perturbed at having his plays changed by this young, arrogant enigma. He keeps it inside.

END OF MONTAGE #1.

DISSOLVE TO:

122 OMITTED

122

EXT. MANSION (MIAMI) - BOAT DOCK - NIGHT

The stars are out tonight. Establishment Miami meets football jocks meets business supporters meets politicians, meets sex and alcohol. It's also a charity event, designed by the Sharks' P.R. Department to deliver a Children's Needy Fund some million dollars a year, most of which is being raised tonight -- with, naturally, the colorful Mayor Tyrone Smalls in attendance.

Julian Washington ROARS up to the dock in a dramatic CIGARETTE BOAT -- product logos for his sponsors all over it. Four gorgeous girls cling to him. Flashbulbs explode, the paparazzi eating this up as much as Julian.

123 INT. MANSION - CONTINUOUS ACTION - NIGHT

123

Cap Rooney and his gorgeously-attired wife Cindy now enter, the glamour couple of the party, though Cap still struggles with a cane. The photographers descend on them, clicking.

(CONTINUED)

123 CONTINUED:

123

Watching all from a discreet corner is Tony, interrupted by three FANS/BUSINESSMEN coming up to him for autographs; unsuccessfully, he tries to duck away.

FANS

Hey, Tony!... Coach!... How 'bout an autograph? etc.

124 EXT. MANSION - PODIUM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

124

A banner reading: CHILDREN'S FUND OF MIAMI. Flashbulbs and camera idolize Christina presenting a check to MAYOR TYRONE SMALLS, a boisterous Afro-American in his 60s.

CHRISTINA

... So, on behalf of the Art Pagniacchi Foundation,
(with a glance to
her mom)

I'm glad to present D.A.R.E. with this \$250,000 contribution...

Much applause.

MAYOR SMALLS

(dramatic)

The city of Miami would like to thank Christina Pagniacchi, you are a great Miamian! You have done as much as anyone to eliminate drugs and crime from our city streets...
... and your Sharks have provided wonderful role models for our inner-city youth to look up to.
I'm all for it, honey, now let's get down and party!!

Raucous laughter. People have long come to accept the Mayor's idiosyncracies. Smalls greets Christina's mother, a blitzed Margaret, on the podium, escorted by Ed Phillips. Also there is Andy, Christina's yawning, tired husband.

Observing this in the crowd are Willie and Vanessa, who feels herself out of place and underdressed for this affair. She excuses herself to the ladies' room... as Willie walks over to Sanderson and Julian.

WASHINGTON

(at Christina)

Definitely some nice hams -- like to pork her when she ain't lookin'...

(CONTINUED)

SANDERSON

She don't want your ass, man! That husband dude of her's got her snatch locked up like Fort Knox anyhow...

WILLIE

... If you gonna be with a white girl, might as well pick the right one, got some pull, the one on top.

WASHINGTON

(overlapping)

I'm already on top. I just want to fuck her.

SANDERSON

(re: Margaret)

The ghost, baby. The High Priestess of the Paycheck! Oooh, tell me there aren't some fine-looking 'dimes' here! I gotta get me some phone numbers 'fore Heather closes me down. What about you?

(looking)

Vanessa policing your ass?

WILLIE

Don't worry your little brain none, 'Sandman,' I got a skeleton key end of my dick fits all locks.

Fans now envelop them, singling out Julian... Vanessa, returning from the bathroom, her makeup even worse now, can't help but notice Willie openly gazing at women of beauty, with finer clothes and jewels.

TIME CUT TO:

A124 EXT. MANSION - GARDENS OFF VERANDA

A124

Shark sits next to Dr. Mandrake's girlfriend TRISH, a buxom 20-year-old, talking with a very rich ELDERLY COUPLE and several OTHER COUPLES, who don't notice Shark's hand finding its way beneath the table between Trish's thighs...

SHARK

(to Elderly Couple)

... The point of the game, see, is really about contact -- the more intense the better.

(CONTINUED)

A124 CONTINUED:

A124

OLDER WOMAN (V.O.)

Does it really hurt when you hit someone?

SHARK

Sometimes, but it's all good!

Trish squirms in her chair.

125 OMITTED

125

126 INT. MANSION - BAR AREA

126

Christina is trying to get the Mayor's attention, surrounded by his entourage.

CHRISTINA

So, Tyrone, can we talk now...?

MAYOR SMALLS

(for all)

So, where is that bold and beautiful quarterback of yours, Christina?

Christina, put off, turns impatiently to Cap and Cindy, approaching.

CHRISTINA

Cap, say hello to his Honor.

CAP

Pleasure to see you again, sir.
You know Cindy...?

They shake hands, AD LIB. As photographers snap pictures.

MAYOR SMALLS

(to Cap)

Show me some love!...

(to Christina,

sotto)

... I meant the other quarterback.
You know -- the black dude.

CHRISTINA

Who?

CAP

(overhearing)

He means Willie.

(CONTINUED)

126 CONTINUED:

126

CHRISTINA

Oh, of course.

(sweetly)

Cap, do you think you could find him...? Thanks. Cindy, you look beautiful.

Cap and Cindy share a look of disappointment as they go.

127 INT. UPSTAIRS GALLERY

127

Tony and Margaret Pagniacchi, leaning against an upstairs railing, take in a view of the party below; Margaret commenting on the AFFA Pantheon Cup ring that Tony wears tonight, part of his formal wear.

TONY

... These kinda places I keep looking for an A.T.M. machine...

MARGARET

... do you wear it often?

TONY

(offering her the ring)

Nah. Just special occasions. Looks too weird. I get on a plane, I gotta check it...

MARGARET

(holds it lovingly)

Art wore his in bed. You know he spent hours designing it himself...

(ambiguous)

... he cut my cheek with it once. I bled.

Tony is unsure how to respond.

TONY

Margaret, we need someone... a football person out front who can...

MARGARET

Tony, stop. Christina's in charge now. It's the way Art wanted it.

This catches Tony off guard.

SHARK

... it's like, have you ever seen
a woman giving birth? -- lotta
blood, sweat, and tears, right? --
Well, football's a man's way of
having that baby!

Trish's hot, flushed face says it all. She adjusts her
panties under the table, allowing better access for
Shark's hand. The others listen intently to Shark.

ELDERLY MAN

(impeccable accent)

What was your best hit, Mister
Lavay?

SHARK

... Well, one time playing in
pouring rain, I'm deep...
(his hand moves)
... deep in the zone... They're
on top, driving. Their fullback
is stuffing the ball down our
throat every play...

Murmuring slightly, Trish stretches, wrapping her lips
around a strawberry from her dessert plate.

SHARK

He comes inside again... I'm
jamming full force into the
hole... wham! Fumble!

TRISH

(breathless)

Ohhh! Right there...!

SHARK

Oh yeah, right then and there!...
Now the ball's bouncing free. I'm
groping for it, fingers all
slippery wet...

Dr. Mandrake approaches the table.

SHARK

The fumble comes my way... only a
few seconds left on the clock
and...

He sees Trish's look. He sees Mandrake's distance.
Racing the geometry!

(CONTINUED)

ELDERLY MAN #2

... Well, did you score?

Trish orgasms just in time -- sinks into the chair, muffling her sounds with a napkin.

SHARK

Hell yeah, I scored!

Mandrake sits next to Trish, sensing something. Trish conceals her expression when he fondles her.

MANDRAKE

What do you say we hit the road, hon?

TRISH

... Oh come on, Harvey, don't be a fuddy duddy! You're always in pajamas by...

Mandrake protests. Shark has removed his hand, but notices Madman nearby, coming on strongly to one of the local society dames who impresses him with her face jobs and jewelry. His pregnant, pathetic mouse wife sits alone in a corner, wanting to cry.

SHARK

(rising, to the table)

Don't go away!

(indicating Madman)

This guy's turning into my night job. I'll be right back.

He moves towards the dance floor...

MADMAN

(to the lady, AD LIB)

... What's wrong, let's you and me cut the rug, honbun!

(pause)

C'mon, I'm not good-looking enough for you? What do you think, I'm a damage case...?

Shark grabs him by the lapels and smacks him fairly hard across the face -- not discreetly. Madman registers it, then wants to kill, but when he sees Shark, he grunts docilely...

(CONTINUED)

128 CONTINUED: (2)

128

SHARK

Yo, Madman! I can't take your ass
nowhere!...

(emphatic, as if to
a schizophrenic)

Patrick's wife is in the corner,
Patrick! It's not the time to be
'Madman,' is it?

Shark looks sheepish.

129 INT. MANSION - BAR AREA

129

Mayor Smalls embraces Willie in an extravagant bear hug,
as Christina and others look on.

MAYOR SMALLS

Be proud! You are the future of
football in this country, son!
You are a model for your people
now, Willie Beamen! A black man
unafraid! Stand tall and gimme
some sugar, boy!

Willie laughs, hugs the Mayor back.

WILLIE

You're pretty cool yourself,
Mayor...

A photo op develops. Vanessa goes unIntroduced -- She
feels very hurt, not understanding why Willie would
ignore her or is he that embarrassed by her? She
wanders for the wrong solace over to Cindy and the other
wives, chatting in a small group.

130 INT. MANSION - BATHROOM

130

The once pristine bathroom has deteriorated. Guest
soaps are crushed on the floor, towels in the tub.
Julian and Sanderson cavort with some girls.

131 EXT. GARDENS OFF VERANDA

131

Drs. Powers and Mandrake walk together.

POWERS

Sanderson's been after me for
stuff?

(CONTINUED)

MANDRAKE

He's like Jell-O. Just say no and he'll ooze off. Guy's got an insecurity complex the size of China.

POWERS

What's he on?

MANDRAKE

(shrugs)

I don't know. Rits, vikes. End of the season I'm gonna put him in 'the laundry bin'

(off Powers, puzzled)

... clinic...

(for Powers' benefit)

... quietly, Allie...

Mandrake senses Powers doesn't understand his approach.

MANDRAKE

Y'ever play hurt, Allie?

(off his puzzled
look)

College, high school, whatever?

POWERS

Not really. I played baseball at U.C.L.A.

MANDRAKE

Ugh! I hate baseball. Nothing happens. Bunch of farmers standing around scratching their nuts looking for fly balls. In football, we all go one way till we get there.

POWERS

Where's that?

MANDRAKE

Who the hell knows, but what counts is...

POWERS

Sounds like socialism. Y'ever see spikes fly in your face, Harvey -- or a line drive coming at you 100 miles per hour?

(CONTINUED)

MANDRAKE

(teasing)

U.C.L.A. baseball, ooh, brutal sport!

(seriously)

Allie, we gotta work together more -- make sure the guys get there, know what I mean?

POWERS

(pause, concerned)

... We've always kept our patients informed, Harv, it's part of the deal...

MANDRAKE

Where, in Palm Beach? This is Zaire here! These guys are stealing hubcaps while you're writing prescriptions. They have four years to make a million dollars, that's it. A short life but it's a goddamn glorious one! -- as long as you don't mess with their minds!

POWERS

I don't understand. What'd I do?

MANDRAKE

You messed with Zanucky telling him he'll be ready in two weeks. What if he's ready in one week? Then because of you he'll be thinking he's not really ready.

POWERS

Well, he asked me, and I...

MANDRAKE

You what?! You know, Allie, I know young guys would die for this job. You're making me think I made a stupid mistake, and I'm gonna be embarrassed here...

POWERS

Oh, come on, Harvey! I gave up a lot of income to come here, I...

(CONTINUED)

131 CONTINUED: (3)

131

MANDRAKE

Did you now? You still don't get it, do you, sport? This is not F. Scott Fitzgerald in white bucks time! This is a privilege to be here! This is a spectacle of gladiators with brains for the masses! It's a fucking brilliant concept! And I don't care if every one of 'em has to play hurt -- you, me, the team, we all play hurt, that's life, sport...! So do me a real favor and get off your high horse, and get down where the worms feed...!

132 INT. MANSION - LOGGIA

132

Crozier tries to snag Christina's attention span.

CROZIER

(changing subjects)

... Can I be honest with you, Christina? It's a waste of my time. I come up with the edge we need -- the stats, the probabilities -- and he just looks at them and shrugs -- it's like he doesn't believe it.

CHRISTINA

I know.

CROZIER

It's really frustrating. It's all gotta be him -- little Napoleon with his 'instincts'!

CHRISTINA

(looking for the Mayor)

Be patient, Nick, when the time comes --

CROZIER

I just want you to know I'm getting offers, Christina, you gotta know that. I want to stay, but I won't waste another season under Tony.

She now sees the Mayor free! and goes quickly.

(CONTINUED)

132 CONTINUED:

132

CHRISTINA
 (cryptic, to Crozier)
 You won't...! I promise.

133 INT. MANSION - TEA ROOM - NIGHT

133

The WIVES hold court.

HEATHER
 If my husband doesn't get it five
 or six times a week, we have
 problems at home.

PREGNANT WIFE
 We were at that pace, but we've
 slowed down a little.

ANOTHER WIFE
 Except on game day.

CINDY
 That's when I want it most --
 but with everything he's on...

WIFE #1
 Dexamethasone?

CINDY
 And extra-strength hydrocodeine.

HEATHER
 Ooh, that mix makes Jimmy crazy.
 Can't get it up.

MARY
 Count your blessings. What's it
 called again?

Cindy, at the top of the food chain, takes notice when
 Vanessa appears.

CINDY
 Willie managing to keep his food
 down tonight?

VANESSA
 (doesn't get it,
 smiles)
 He's just fine! Hi. I'm Vanessa
 Struthers.

(CONTINUED)

CINDY

Jack had such a laugh about that!
I'm Cindy Rooney.

HEATHER

Jimmy had to order new shoes.
(shaking hands)
Heather Sanderson.

Vanessa now understands the reference to her fiance.

CINDY

Are you and Willie married?

VANESSA

No, but we've been together for --

CINDY

Doesn't count until you're
married, honey -- and your name
appears in the paper as 'and wife.'

MARY

And not even then, most of the
time.

They all laugh.

CINDY

Do you have a job?

VANESSA

No, I'm still studying for an
M.B.A. in sports marketing. At
Dade Community College. But Willie
and I have had to move so many
times to...

CINDY

Marketing? You're a smart one, I
can tell.

VANESSA

And what do you do?

CINDY

Me? Oh, I'm married to the best
quarterback in the A.F.F.A.,
that's all. I consider myself
part of a team really...

VANESSA

(not sure of her
attitude)

Oh, that must be very fulfilling
for you...

134 EXT. BOAT DOCK VERANDA

134

Christina is at last alone with the slightly-inebriated Mayor.

CHRISTINA

Why have you been ducking me?

MAYOR SMALLS

I always forget how pretty you are, Christina.

CHRISTINA

Cut the crap, Tyrone.

MAYOR SMALLS

What's this bug you got?

CHRISTINA

... I want the 250 million you promised me...

(he looks like a sphinx)

You know I can get the rest with the bond. You said you'd give me 100 percent support and now you're getting cold feet just because...

MAYOR SMALLS

... how you gonna pay it back, darlin'?

CHRISTINA

I already told you -- we'll split revenue on the club seats, the corporate boxes, all the concessions, the stadium-naming rights, and the increase in ticket sales. There'll be 10,000 new parking spaces. And we'll be pulling in almost 40 million in personal seat licenses over ten years... The concept of a new stadium, T.J., funds the whole deal. Without it, no...

MAYOR SMALLS

(mocking)

'Personal seat licenses' -- that's the biggest bunch of bullshit! -- how the hell can you sell the same seat twice? I seen some pretty smooth scams in my time, but only a white man could come up with that one. The fans gonna burn you, honey.

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINA

(patiently)

... All the fans really care about, Tyrone, is winning. And if I don't have the money I need to stay competitive, then this team is finished! That's the bottom line!

MAYOR SMALLS

There ain't no bottom line, baby. It's an endless fucking pit!

(genuinely)

Your team's not doin' what the Dolphins are doin'. The schools're howling for money, roads need redoing, a new stadium's the last thing on the city council's mind...

CHRISTINA

I'm not asking you to vote, T.J. I'm asking you to deliver! We've been backing you since Dad's time, getting your people passes and money they never dreamed of. We were there for you, and...

(delicate)

... and if you're not there for us, T.J., I'm telling you this... we'd seriously consider leaving this town.

MAYOR SMALLS

(smiles infuriatingly)

Sweetheart, you outta here when the city and the county says you outta here. Your lease ain't up for two years so don't start setting fires you can't put out...

CHRISTINA

(sure of herself)

Oh, there's 'loopholes,' Tyrone. Like the goddamn stadium is falling apart, you know -- you haven't contributed one fucking penny to maintenance on that relic! I remodeled the practice facility out of my own pocket. I...

(CONTINUED)

MAYOR SMALLS

(smiles)

Now that's the Pagniacchi I believe! I see your teeth! Get down, girl!

CHRISTINA

(resisting)

... We're a pro team, T.J., and we're playing in a college stadium built in the '30s, and we're losin' a ton of fucking money. When are you...

MAYOR SMALLS

Yadda, yadda, yadda! Daddy's girl, you are a relative baby in this town. Go slow. First you get along... then you go along...

(puts an arm around her)

Come on, honey, you and I known each other too long. Your roots are here in Miami. Why would you want to leave? Your dad created such love, such a foundation...

CHRISTINA

Tyrone, I'm telling you again -- time is running out and you are playing with fire.

MAYOR SMALLS

(grins)

That's the only way I play it.

CHRISTINA

(grins back)

Then we'll see how you like it.

She leaves, pissed. It looks like L.A. for sure.

TIME CUT TO:

The party is getting rowdy as Julian, Sanderson, Madman, Shark, and others heat up the dance floor.

Cindy turns to a NASTY WOMAN whose breast implants are as big as her hair.

(CONTINUED)

135 CONTINUED:

135

NASTY WOMAN

Nice dress. Nice party.

CINDY

(bored)

Thank you. Did you come here with Julian?

NASTY WOMAN

(threatened)

No, but I'm leaving with him. So don't even think about it, honey!

CINDY

Oh please.

136 EXT. BOAT DOCK VERANDA - NIGHT (FOLLOWING)

136

Montezuma Monroe intersects Mayor Smalls; they know each other.

MONROE

Hey, Ty.

MAYOR SMALLS

What's up, brother?

MONROE

(indicating Christina)

Hi, Ty... Couldn't help hearin' that Christina conversation...

MAYOR SMALLS

(shaking his head)

Same old story, brother. Owners crying broke, y'ever met an owner who ain't losin' money? These guys make extra sure the team loses money.

They share a knowing laugh.

MONROE

I tell ya I wish I had a fraction of those stadium rights -- I'd take the concessions and parking and tickets -- that's some real bread there...

(CONTINUED)

MAYOR SMALLS

Stadium's where it's at. Now they invented these 'naming rights' and 'P.S.L.s'. It's all tricky doo. We don't have the money for that stadium. You guys gotta fight through it till you have a successful season. That's the reality... 'Lady Di' there thinks she's pulling the wool over my eyes and going to L.A.

He laughs.

MONROE

(cautiously)

... Now I did hear somethin' about that?

MAYOR SMALLS

(grins)

... She ain't going nowhere. Keep it tight, Monty. Either way, you got a job here a long time to come.

The Mayor returns to the party as Monroe looks down into the gardens for Tony. MUSIC WAFTS OUT from the party.

Margaret Pagniacchi's holding onto Tony's AFFA ring, alone with him; he's had a little too much to drink.

TONY

'Life begins with a kick-off,' Art used to say that... He was a great man, Maggie. He was there at the beginning. His kind, forget it! -- dust! Now they're all...

(sees Christina approaching)

know-it-all-E.S.P.N. analysts.

CHRISTINA

Hi, Tony... We better get going, Mom. It's getting late.

Margaret rises, handing the ring to D'Amato.

MARGARET

Yes it is...

(to Tony)

... too late.

(CONTINUED)

137 CONTINUED:

137

Christina wants to connect with Tony as he toys with his ring.

CHRISTINA

... I remember when my dad designed that...

(an awkward
silence)

I guess I'll have to wear mine on a chain around my neck, huh?

TONY

How 'bout you win one first?

CHRISTINA

I was just trying to --

TONY

(getting up)

No. Win one first.

He walks away.

138 EXT./INT. WILLIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

138

Willie and Vanessa are fighting, tension in the air. The TV is ON to the Jack Rose's "Sports Center" as Willie tries to analyze his playbook, an icebag wrapped tight around his right shoulder.

INSERT - PLAYBOOK

Shows the complexity of the system, the number of plays, the mumbo-jumbo, which would be tough enough for any student of the game to learn -- but for Willie, who is unschooled, it comes hard; his frustration mounting, as is Vanessa's.

BACK TO SCENE

VANESSA

(volatile)

... were you embarrassed by me, were you ashamed to introduce me to the Mayor? Is that it... Willie?

(as he doesn't respond)

Was it my dress...? ... what the... Willie?!

Willie changes the subject, indicating the playbook.

(CONTINUED)

138 CONTINUED:

138

WILLIE

Goddamn book! Thinking is dying
on that field. Doing is feeling.
Feeling is what it's all about...

(flipping pages)

I think like this, I'll get killed
out there! I gotta play my way --
like 'I'm the shit'! You don't
believe that, you are...

A138 ON TV

A138

Meanwhile, the deranged Jack Rose is going on and on to
his guest.

ROSE (V.O.)

... At his press conference yesterday
-- and with a straight face -- Coach D.
says that there was no problem with the
plays and that Beamen audibled only
twice during the game. Uh-huh!... We
all know Tony the Tiger's a demonic
dude who combs his hair every which
way but up, but I tell ya this guy
could put a positive spin on toxic
waste. Is he for real? Or is it
just me who feels he was probably
coaching the day Ray Nitschke
dislocated Y.A. Tittle's shoulder?
Scary? You starting to get the
picture here, Joe?...

138

138

VANESSA

... You're 'the shit' all right,
Willie, lemme tell you joined a
whole lotta shits on that team!
Did you see the way that Cindy
Rooney talked to me? Was my
dress too cheap? Did you give
a shit!... She just about made me
feel like a field hand! Who the
hell does she think she is!

WILLIE

What's her ass gotta do with your
ass? Jealousy look ugly on you,
Vanessa.

(CONTINUED)

VANESSA

(stung)

Oh? What was I so jealous of her about?

WILLIE

I tell you what -- you're jealous of anything! You're jealous any woman who walk in a room with a better rap or a bag or a fuckin' hairdo! 'Cause it's always 'bout class with you.

VANESSA

Class!? You're talking shit! I got more class than 90 percent of those skinny wrinkled bitches in that bullshit party of yours!

WILLIE

Sure you do...

VANESSA

Oh, Mr. Bad Ass Willie! I seen you in action tonight, chasing the tail on that Heather Sanderson.

(as he protests)

Why didn't you introduce her to the goddamn Mayor, Willie, you too ashamed to introduce me...

(near tears)

... after all these years!
Goddamn your ass, Willie Beamen...

WILLIE

Baby, I wasn't even thinkin' about the Mayor. And I don't care about any of those crackhead hoes! I got one thing on my mind and one thing alone! I gotta concentrate on the game or I ain't gonna be around too much longer, ya hear! It's my shot, baby, I've gotta grab these chips while I can.

VANESSA

So whatcha really saying, 'baby' -- I don't look so good to you anymore?

(CONTINUED)

WILLIE

No, you ain't listening, you...
I'm sayin' this is my time -- now!
I gotta rope the ring and that
means I can't be fucking dealing
with you running these bullshit
numbers in my head.

VANESSA

No! What you mean is I'm not good
enough for you, Willie, that's
what you mean!

WILLIE

There you go again! Man, for a
college graduate you are plumb
dumb! 'V,' you got so many damned
problems, you gotta blame everybody
else but yourself -- Cindy Rooney,
Heather Sanderson, me! Baby, you
gotta learn to chill!

VANESSA

(infuriated)

'Chill'!? Jesus Christ, Willie,
you know when you get finished
sucking your own dick and playin'
'bad ass football nigger,' give me
a call sometime?

WILLIE

(blowing up)

You mean your ex-fiance give you a
call! You wanna come at me now!
When I'm facing this...
(hits the playbook)
Get the fuck outta here!

Willie stands, slams the playbook shut, stalks to his
bedroom. She tries to grab him and they struggle.

WILLIE

Watcha want!... Don't touch my arm
like that or I'll bust your ass!

VANESSA

You gonna hit me? Oh it's like
that now? Yeah! Go ahead -- get
real, motherfucker!

WILLIE

'Real'!? Gimme a break! Lemme
the fuck alone! (AD LIB)

(CONTINUED)

138 CONTINUED: (4)

138

VANESSA

I see you turning into one of them
'shits'! I tell you this, I'm
gonna call your mama!

Willie looks at her, disgusted.

WILLIE

Tell my mother what! Don't let my
success get to your head, bitch.

(as she protests,

"bitch!")

Go right ahead! And while you're
at it, go find yourself some
'wigger' who'll put up with your
petty, 'educated' hype, 'cause you
gettin' on my nerves!

VANESSA

Yes I am educated and you can't
even read a goddamn playbook,
Willie Beamen, 'cause you're
nothing but a big-ass Mama's boy
and you can take your football --
it's the only ball you got anyhow!
-- and shove it up your stuck-up
ass! 'Cause my big, beautiful ass
you can kiss good-bye, baby!

(at the door)

And you know what! -- I will find
me a smart, m'fucking gentleman!
I'm gonna be sleeping at Darlene's
from now on. She might fuck
better'n you anyhow!

WILLIE

You got an ugly mouth on you,
woman! I'm real glad I gotta
chance to see it 'fore our kids
heard it. Get your lesbian ass
outta here!

She slams the door violently on her way out... Willie is
really upset.

139 INT. CHARTER PLANE - DAY

139

D'Amato wanders back from the first-class section through
the aircraft. Some nap, others mingle in a subdued
atmosphere. He spots Willie sitting near the back of the
players' section by himself, wearing his headphones. He
approaches, waits.

(CONTINUED)

Willie finally sees him, or pretends to, takes his headset off, clears his CDs from the empty seat.

TONY
Mind if I sit down?
(as Willie nods,
Tony sits)
Whatcha listening to?

WILLIE
Rap.

TONY
Anyone I know?

WILLIE
Biggie.

TONY
(shakes his head)
Y'ever listen to jazz?
(as Willie shrugs "who?")
... Coltrane, Monk, Miles Davis,
Billie Holiday?

WILLIE
(doesn't know them)
Don't go much for that old stuff.

TONY
Maybe I'll put together a tape for
you -- my favorites...?

WILLIE
I don't use no tapes. I got CDs.

TONY
So, we'll forget about that... How
'bout your mama, she ever gonna
come to a game?

WILLIE
... She thinks Sunday's for church.

He waits on Tony, who goes the extra yard.

TONY
... I don't know if you know this,
I lost my dad when I was young, too...
(waits)
... in World War Two...
(waits again)
... if you ever want to talk about
stuff like that, I'm around...? Okay.

(CONTINUED)

139 CONTINUED: (2)

139

WILLIE
I'll get at 'cha.

TONY
You know where to find me...

Willie nods, mumbling something incoherent.

140 IN FRONT SECTION

140

D'Amato rejoins Dr. Mandrake, reading his Wall Street Journal.

TONY
Hell if I can figure him out.

MANDRAKE
Who?

TONY
Beamen. I look in his eyes and I see... nothing.
(beat)
Man never even heard of Miles Davis.

MANDRAKE
Tony, he probably never heard of Joe Namath. You look like shit. You sleeping?

TONY
I'm too tired to sleep.

MANDRAKE
I got some great new samples for that.

TONY
I bet you do.

141 INT. HOTEL COFFEE SHOP (CALIFORNIA) - SUNDAY

141

Tony, in his game suit, has breakfast with his son, TOM, a bland mid-level executive in his late 20s, with a Christian fish on his lapel.

TONY
... Really, it's no problem getting tickets?

(CONTINUED)

TOM

(uneasy)

Well, he's really more into
basketball now.

TONY

(defeated)

... Yeah? How old is Timmy now --
nine, ten?

TOM

Eight. But we don't really call
him Timmy anymore...

TONY

Oh, okay... and Melinda? How's she?

TOM

She's fine...

TONY

You look good.

TOM

I'm trying.

TONY

You talk to your mom lately?

TOM

Dad -- what do you want?

TONY

What do I want? I wanted to see you.
You're my son, for chrissake.
What do you mean?

TOM

I haven't talked to you for a
year. A year ago Christmas...

TONY

... Christ, gimme a minute, Tom,
okay? I haven't seen you in
what...

TOM

Six years.

TONY

You never picked up the phone
either -- so don't...

(CONTINUED)

TOM

Why would I?

TONY

All I ever did was...

TOM

(on edge)

Please don't!... When you do that you sound like a broken record, Dad. I get really upset...

Tony looks at him, wondering what he's wrought. They hush as the WAITRESS brings coffee and danish.

WAITRESS

Coffee, danish? Why the long faces?

(off no response)

Enjoy your breakfast.

She leaves.

TONY

... You know I'll never forget a big mistake I made once as a coach. I hurt someone and... I couldn't change what I did, so I denied it. Threw some money at it... and then tried to forget it, block it out.

(beat)

You know what? It never goes away.

TOM

(now he's upset)

No it doesn't and it's too late, goddamn it, okay! It's too -- excuse me for my foul thoughts, Lord! They come not out of me -- but it's too goddamn late for that! My son and daughter are doing fine and you had nothing to do with that, and that's all there is.

TONY

Tom, come on, I... I'm sorry. I...

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED: (3)

141

TOM

Where were you on my Sundays,
when I was playing ball? Just...
just don't even try, okay!

TONY

(now at the end
of his rope)
Can I just... see them? They're
my grandkids, Tom!... Please?

TOM

(a grim pause)
... With a child psychiatrist...

142 INT. CALIFORNIA STADIUM - DAY

142

Game 3. Miami Sharks at California Crusaders.

FIELD #1

The Crusaders' wide receiver runs deep against the Miami
DB, nearly catching a 50-yard pass at the Miami 5-yard
line... A yellow penalty flag flies through the air.

A142 SCOREBOARD #1

A142

MIAMI 7, CALIFORNIA 14. SECOND QUARTER. 4:49...

BRANSON (V.O.)

Interference on Miami. That will
hurt! A tight game here! Looks
like a man's down now... At the
line of scrimmage, it looks like
the 'Shark' -- Luther Lavay!

143 SIDELINE #1

143

Tony is livid at REFEREE #1, not noticing Shark.

TONY

Where was the interference??!!...
Do you realize... No!... You are
giving away 45 yards! Get the
replay! I'll trade you a time-out
for it, you... ugh, ugh!

REFEREE #2 trots by Tony, who jogs alongside, to get his
attention.

(CONTINUED)

143 CONTINUED:

143

TONY

Charlie, give me a goddamn break.
I know this is L.A., I don't know
nobody here, but give us a chance
anyway!

(indicating Referee #1)

Where's that guy from? El Cajon,
Hawthorne, Beverly Hills, what?

REFEREE #2

Get back in the coaching box...

Tony shares his frustration with Cap Rooney, in street
clothes for the game, and Crozier upstairs; Cherubini is
relaying the signals to Willie on the field.

TONY

What can you do? What can you do?
The system's fucked! I mean games
are being decided by zebras in
stripes. It's just not fair!

(then)

What the fuck is 'fair' anyway?

144 FIELD #2

144

Shark lies on the field, moaning. Mandrake, Powers and
Trainer #1 test his joints.

MANDRAKE

Squeeze my fingers.

(as Shark does so)

Great! Do you know where we are?

SHARK

(woozy)

... I know it ain't Munchkinland.

MANDRAKE

Who we playing against?

SHARK

Those ugly motherfuckers.

MANDRAKE

Who's your quarterback?

SHARK

That pretty motherfucker.

(CONTINUED)

144 CONTINUED:

144

MANDRAKE

Well you don't see me playing
possum, do you, Shark? I think
you can get up now.

SHARK

Fuck, this is embarrassing! Doc,
don't let me pull a Willie Beamen.

Powers and the Trainers help drag Shark to his feet.

145 SIDELINE #2

145

The crowd cheers for Shark, coming off, as...

TONY

(at Monroe)

What the hell is going on, Monty!
They're leaking and you don't know
where. Fix it, goddamnit. Don't
yell and don't make faces and all
that bullshit! Just fix it!

He leaves Monroe a study in total, betrayed
frustration...

146 HUDDLE #1

146

Willie feels loose.

WILLIE

(singling out
Sanderson)

Okay, 'Sandman,' they should show
cloud coverage here and lock Ice
on the cross. The middle will be
open. Right deuce gun, F-shoot,
60 Snake Eyes. On three. Ready!

WASHINGTON

Hey, man, we can't run Snake Eyes
in the red zone!

WILLIE

J-man, you can get on my page or
you can shut the fuck up! On three.
Ready!

They break. Sanderson hangs back a beat.

SANDERSON

How the hell you see that?

(CONTINUED)

WILLIE

I see things better, brother.
I see the future. Your guy
trailing you on your inside
route. Bend a little and hit the
slim post.

As they move to the line of scrimmage, Madman is lost.

MADMAN

I block the outside backer?
Les'... help me?

McKENNA

You got the nose guard.

MADMAN

Nose. Face. Yeah.

WILLIE

Set Blue 468, Blue 468! Hut!
Hut! Hut!

Montezuma Monroe is rampaging up and down before his
unit, pissed beyond words.

MONROE

They think you're a bunch of low-
brow Neanderthal shitheads! They
think they're gonna gut you and
leave you lying on the highway
with your insides hanging out for
the buzzards -- !

SHARK

(a huge migraine
of his own)
Coach, you're gonna have a stroke.

MONROE

I don't GET strokes, motherfucker,
I GIVE 'em!

A cry of grief from the crowd stops him. Monroe spins to
the field to see a mad brawl of players for a Shark
fumble -- a Crusaders player comes up with the ball!

And worse! At the line of scrimmage, Leslie McKenna, the
right guard, is down.

148 SIDELINE #4

148

As REFEREE #3 signals the California first down to a joyous echo from the home crowd, Tony is screaming at Referee #3 who jogs over to him.

REFEREE #3

(wearily)

What is it with you, Coach?!

TONY

Goddamn it, Sammy, his knee was down! He was down by a mile. Both knees were down. Give me a goddamn break in this town -- that was no fumble!

REFEREE #3

To be honest, Tony -- I didn't really see it.

TONY

(a beat, shrugs)

To be honest, Sammy, neither did I.

Referee #3 shakes his head and runs back to the field as Mandrake hurries over to Tony.

MANDRAKE

Tony -- bad news! Looks like McKenna's got a distended knee, torn everything, bloody nightmare -- he's out!

TONY

How long?

MANDRAKE

If he's lucky -- Easter.

Tony hurries towards Leslie McKenna in great pain -- being helped off the field by Dr. Powers and trainer #2.

149 SIDELINE #5

149

Julian and Willie are going at it hotly.

WASHINGTON

The play was Snake Eyes Right -- Right!

WILLIE

I knew the goddamn play! -- Couldn't you see them adjusting?!

(CONTINUED)

WASHINGTON

You didn't audible shit!

WILLIE

I called the color, man! You just missed it 'cause of that wax in your ears. Hey, 'Sandman,' didn't I audible?

SANDERSON

I dunno, man. Don't get me involved.

Tony approaches, dominates.

TONY

Knock it off -- all of you! This goddamn screw-up cost us McKenna for the season! Why don't you both think about that for one goddamn minute! Sit down -- the bunch of you!

(walking away, to Crozier, on the headset)

Goddamn it, Nick, you do your job and get him under control before he gets anyone else hurt!

He notices a film crew in his face, recording all of this; this brings him to the very edge.

TONY

Whatta you doing!! Get outta here before I kick your butts!!... Get 'em out!

Security quickly closes down the lens.

TIME CUT TO:

The Crusaders sweep towards the Miami sideline, its big offensive line leading. This time the Miami defense penetrates them and gang-tackles the running back.

TONY

(to Monroe)

Awright! More like it! You look alive!

(CONTINUED)

150 CONTINUED: 150

He turns away, eyeing the scoreboard, as his offense runs out.

MONROE
(sarcastic)
Thank you, boss.

A150 SCOREBOARD #2 A150

CALIFORNIA 21, MIAMI 10. THIRD QUARTER 8:57...

151 HUDDLE #2 151

Willie suddenly breaks from it and pukes quietly, into the turf, clears his throat.

TUG (V.O.)
Oh my God. He's done it again!
(needling Kevin)
You know, that reminds me of the night...

Willie walks back to the huddle, to his teammates.

WILLIE
I apologize -- I had to get that out of my system.

WASHINGTON
Hey, man, if that's your thing, just stay off my shoes...

WILLIE
Okay. Let's go. Deuce Right Dog 90 Smoke. On three. Jimmy one, Andy two, J-man outlet flat.

SANDERSON
Right. Don't force it in if --

WILLIE
I got it! I'm there! I'm a righteous motherfucker! On three! Ready?

FIELD #3

They break and move to the ball. Willie scans the defense, loose, enjoying himself.

(CONTINUED)

151 CONTINUED:

151

WILLIE

Set Green 21! Green 21! Hut!
Hut! Hut!

Willie checks off his receivers as they speed downfield, pumps once; the offensive line protecting him strongly.

Two L.A. corners blanket Sanderson -- but Julian is open, waiting in the flat.

WASHINGTON

Willie!!

Willie ignores him, his eyes downfield -- a Crusaders' lineman is almost on him when Madman slams him aside at the last moment... Willie takes the shot -- it's a dead perfect pass, threading the microscopic gap between two Crusaders' defenders. Sanderson spins in midair so that the nose of the ball crosses the goal line just as he is slammed backwards by the backs -- too late -- the Ref's arms shoot up -- touchdown!

Willie races down the field and grabs Sanderson, both of them breaking into a funky dance.

A152 FIELD #4

A152

Upfield, Julian, not very happy, heads for the sideline.

153 SIDELINE #7

153

As Willie comes off, Tony hugs him in a familiar, paternal way, which surprises Willie. Cap Rooney witnesses.

TONY

Don't fuck with a man's ritual,
right?

WILLIE

'Blaze the hot sands.'

TONY

I never understand a goddamn word
you say.

WILLIE

It's all good, boss.

TIME CUTS TO:

154 OMITTED

154

155 FIELD #5

155

Willie runs an option pass for 26 yards, and when he is pounded into the turf, jumps right up and taunts the defense.

WILLIE

You gotta hit harder than that,
baby! I can't feel it!

Which makes them want to kill him -- but Madman and several others step in to separate Willie.

FIELD #6

Willie, pursued by linemen and almost off balance, throws an incredible long bomb, hitting his third receiver; the ball travels almost 60 yards in the air. The receiver runs it in for a touchdown!

TUG (V.O.)

Wow! As the Sharks go into their bye week, the story here has got to be Willie Beamen! He's running -- he's throwing -- he's rockin' and rollin' and shuckin' and jivin'. He's flat out steamin'. This magic Sunday, he's 'Steamin' Beamen'!

152 GUEST OWNER'S BOX #1

152

Christina, with local friends, studies her new phenomenon.

SCOREBOARD #3

MIAMI 24, CALIFORNIA 21.

156 INT. VISITOR'S LOCKER ROOM (L.A.) - LOCKER ROOM #1
- 6 PM

156

The Shark locker room seems too small to contain the combustible energy of these larger-than-life men. Sanderson and other "Dawgs" rally to the BOOM BOX. Perhaps Willie joins in briefly...

Coach D'Amato circulates, congratulations all around... Cap doesn't have much to do, hanging. In the b.g., the doctors and trainers are busy.

(CONTINUED)

156 CONTINUED:

156

Madman opens a locker which is a shrine to the band Metallica. Madman puts one of their CDs on a portable player.

SHARK

Oh, man, not that shit again!... I don't know why I even acknowledge this m'fucking psycho!

MADMAN

(to Shark)

Metallica are gods! We live to serve them! We should bow!

As the MUSIC of "SO WHAT" CRANKS, others protest loudly (AD LIB). Madman ignores them all, banging out the rhythm on his locker.

Elsewhere, Smitty, the Christian, walks up to Willie.

SMITTY

(coming up to Willie)

Say, Willie, some of us guys, we have a little Bible study group that meets every Monday. It's no big deal, we just read some and talk. They say 'There's no atheists in foxholes.'

(chuckles)

We'd sure like it if you could join us?

WILLIE

No.

SMITTY

Oh super!... May I ask if you're a Christian?

WILLIE

Fuck you, Smitty.

SMITTY

What?!

WILLIE

How long I been on this team -- six months? In all that time you ever spoke to me? Now I win two games and you want me to join your Bible study group? Fuck you.

Smitty moves off...

157 JULIAN WASHINGTON

157

is throwing on his \$3,000 suit, busy on his cell, while Willie watches nearby.

WASHINGTON

Forget Doritos! I can do Ruffles, too. One's a corn chip and the other's a potato chip, don't you get it? Tell them I got two different burger franchises and they don't give me no static like that!...

Willie catches Julian before he exits.

WILLIE

Hey, J-man, can I talk to you a sec?

(off no response)

Say, good game today. You know if I'm faking the hand-off to you, it looks stupid you don't act like you're getting the ball, money...

WASHINGTON

Whatcha you saying, you...

WILLIE

Y'ever see a movie? You know, there's the king, right? But he ain't no king till the other actors bow when he walk in the room, right? He's just this actor dude... same with us, J. I'm the Q.B., but you gotta act like I am the Q.B., you get it, 'cause if you ain't pretending, it's a fake, it make me look like some dumb-ass turkey out there runnin' around trying to throw a pass they all know is comin'...

WASHINGTON

Who you talkin' to, you afro m'fucker! You a king in your own mind, bitch! You out there 'bowing' to settle your own bullshit, don't ever approach me again, faggot!!

158 TRAINING AREA #1

158

Dr. Mandrake stitches Sanderson's cut chin, pulling out a tray of bandages:

(CONTINUED)

SANDERSON

(agitated)

I gotta come down, Doc. My teeth are ice cubes, man!

MANDRAKE

Try sex, you're making me look bad. League's already questioning my benzo prescriptions.

SANDERSON

Man, you're useless! What the fuck we need a doctor for then?

MANDRAKE

You don't! We're just corporate automatons anyway. No fault. No choice. No lawsuit. The way all society is going. It's you overpaid m'fuckers wrecked the party anyway -- 'my body is worth 50 million in bones, muscle, and tissue, blah blah blah!' You prescribe some spoiled crybaby the wrong thing and you're on your way to re-education camp in Hanoi.

SANDERSON

Hanoi?

MANDRAKE

Vietnam?... Never mind. Or is it New York now? Corporate culture, baby! I'm actually one of the few good guys left -- I stretch it a bit for you boneheads.

SANDERSON

(reacting to stitch)

Ow!! You sure stretching this stitch, man!

MANDRAKE

(musing aloud)

You have no idea what it was like in the old days, 'Sandman' -- nobody'd give a shit. I mean we were kings. No goddamn random urine tests, no 'spook police'...

(laughs)

Shit we'd force you to take the pills -- like candy. You could walk onto the field with a syringe in your ass and nobody'd notice... but it's over -- like the weather.

(CONTINUED)

SANDERSON

Weather?

MANDRAKE

El Nino!... Current change? Global warming?... Hello?

SANDERSON

You out of your mind.

MANDRAKE

... All 'cause the association's worth too much money -- now it's bigger than Coca-Cola or Disney...

(as Sanderson is puzzled)

Forget it.

(re: the bandages)

So what do you want -- Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Tweety?

SANDERSON

You got Spiderman?

MANDRAKE

If I had Spiderman I woulda said I had Spiderman. I got Batman.

SANDERSON

(brightening up)

Oooh, fox alert at 4 o'clock!... Daddy's girl ambulating... Queen Christina is here!

The mood in the locker room shifts quickly as Christina Pagniacchi enters, escorted by two security guards in suits with earphones -- along with her VPs. In a good mood, she passes most of the no-name players, signalling or calling out to some of her stars (AD LIB)... Cap notices her not "seeing" him; Joe Polito makes up for it, coming over to him, as she approaches Willie.

CHRISTINA

(at her charming best)

Willie, congratulations, you were great! Really exciting to watch out there!!

(CONTINUED)

WILLIE

(a winning smile)

I thrill to chill, ma'am.

CHRISTINA

Two in a row! 'Whatever it takes'
-- right. You make me excited
about the future again...

Others look on at the two of them.

Willie, in his jockstrap, is coming on to Christina in a cheeky, street way, showing off his muscles. Christina, accustomed to locker rooms and not seeing her players in any way as competitive with her husband, ignores the fact he doesn't add one stitch of clothing to his jock. Willie senses this gulf and will come to resent it as another synecdoche for the owner/player class structure.

WILLIE

(quietly)

... I hope you don't mind, but you handle yourself real good in business and all. I don't B.S., Miss Pagniacchi, but you do it to me. How'd you like to hook up for a drink, or something quiet...?

CHRISTINA

(a little surprised)

... I'm flattered, Willie, I really am, but I'm married. I've just never dated players. It gives the wrong impression.

WILLIE

You mean you're influenced by what other people think?

CHRISTINA

I think we all are, in business, Willie... So, come by tomorrow and we'll talk. I think you'll like what you're gonna hear... okay?

(smiles, corrects
his punctuation)

Pagniacchi.

She exits. Her eyes catching Tony, on the fly, through a cubicle window -- huddled with Rooney, Crozier, and Julian in the cramped visiting coach's office.

WASHINGTON

... Reebok got this whole ad campaign ready to go the minute I hit 2,000 yards. But it's ABC, man, I don't get the ball -- I don't get my stats -- I don't get my money -- and I like gettin' my money.

CROZIER

This team isn't about your damn stats!

TONY

For that matter, you're lucky we're not keeping track of your blocking 'stats,' J...

WASHINGTON

What's that mean?

TONY

What's that mean? It means y'ever try blocking for a change, J? It's not that bad an idea...

WASHINGTON

I'm sick of hearing that shit! I'm tryin', but blocking's for those Clydesdale horses, man. You don't use a thoroughbred to block. You run his ass.

TONY

That's a winning attitude, kid.

WASHINGTON

How much you payin' that 300-pound blocker, man? Let him block, 'cause he sure can't run.

CAP

(to Tony)

... Look, J-man's got a point -- Beamen's not doing his homework. He isn't studying the playbook, he doesn't come in to look at any films, he doesn't even know the damn names of the defensive players he's facing. He doesn't give a geewhiz about anything or anybody! He just wants to make the plays by himself --

(CONTINUED)

160 CONTINUED:

160

CROZIER

He's young! He doesn't know how to 'read' like you do, Cap.

WASHINGTON

Fuck that! He's changing the plays, man -- all the goddamn time!

TONY

What? What do you mean he's changing the plays?

WASHINGTON

I said he's changing the plays -- in the huddle. The plays you designed that I loved. Just does what he likes.

TONY

In the huddle?

WASHINGTON

I'm not talking audibles, Coach. Today he did it all day long. Kid's dissing this play, that play, saying, 'I gotta better play.'

CROZIER

Hey, guys, we won. What's the point here?!

Tony's thinking about it.

161 SHOWERS #1

161

Players dance to a BOOMBOX PLAYING in the shower... Madman tries to join in but looks ridiculous and they trash him cruelly. Willie showers next to Shark, who, unseen, seems to lose his balance, grabs onto a shower head...

WILLIE

(to Shark)

So guess what? Coach suddenly asks me to dinner. Orders me morelike.

(CONTINUED)

SHARK

(after a pause)

Hey, that means you made it, kid! When Coach D. thinks you're the real deal he brings you over to his house and shows you his trophies and shit and makes the most godawful jambalaya you ever tasted. One thing though, you better bring flowers -- Coach gets really pissed off if you don't bring flowers.

WILLIE

Flowers?

SHARK

Some petunias or something. Trust me... When?

WILLIE

Saturday.

SHARK

That's cool, I'm having a bash at my place for bye week. Wife and kids are up North. Gonna be a lotta trim, so don't go bringin' no sand to the beach, dawg...

WILLIE

Hey, I'm a born again ladies man!

Madman now retaliates, throwing a baby ALLIGATOR into the shower, the tiny reptile terrifying most of these behemoths with its HISSING jaws.

Cap Rooney catches Willie's eye as the latter throws on some frayed jeans, a beeper and cell phone hooked to his belt. Adjusting his shades and headphones, he's about to leave when:

CAP

The thing about a team, kid, is you can try to lead 'em. But will anyone follow? You don't play for the team, the team's not gonna play for you. Go out there on your own, you'll die out there on your own... 'kimmo sabe'?

(CONTINUED)

162 CONTINUED:

162

WILLIE

Say, Cap, how old are you now?

Willie rolls on out -- barely avoiding the press -- who gather around Shark. Shark, in his underwear, puts his sunglasses on, bothered by the camera lights.

SHARK REPORTER

Say, Shark, what were you thinking when you came out of that concussion?

SHARK

What was I thinking? What're all these white guys doing standing around here looking at me, that's what I was thinking, what a dumb-ass question! Next?

Which cracks up the reporters.

163 TRAINER'S OFFICE #1

163

Cameras mounted, the room lit, Jack Rose has the first go at Tony, a tiny tape recorder in his palm.

ROSE

So what were you telling Beamen on the sideline, Coach?

TONY

(warily)

I was telling him how much I loved him.

They laugh.

ROSE

("friendly" smile)

Follow-up question. You think your boys could've won the game without him, Coach?

TONY

Why is it every time you ask me a question, Jack, it sounds like, 'So, did you beat your wife?' You goddamn know I don't have a wife, Jack, and you know I don't play golf and I hate fishing, barbecuing, and boating. I guess... wall-staring, I'm pretty good at that.

(CONTINUED)

163 CONTINUED:

163

ROSE

You still didn't answer the question, Tony...?

It's like a routine between them -- on the edge of danger.

TONY

No I didn't because I tell you what, this is what I got to say to you about the game, Jack: Fuck you, you stink, you know you stink, you wouldn't know the truth if it was in your own shit -- so go talk to one of these poor innocent schmuck kids you can misquote and destroy... Okay?!

(loud, walking away)

Hey, didn't we win! Didn't we beat L.A.! Two in a row! We're back!

The reporters are somewhat stunned by Tony's erratic behavior.

164 INT. TUNNEL - TWILIGHT

164

Dr. Mandrake is exiting quickly, but Dr. Powers manages to catch up to him.

POWERS

(to Mandrake)

... There's something wrong with Shark.

MANDRAKE

Wow! Brilliant deduction! Did you go to medical school for that?

POWERS

He's having trouble focusing. His hand-eye coordination's deteriorating and his memory, when I...?

MANDRAKE

He's fucked up! They're all fucked up! Their job is getting fucked up! The crazier they get, the more the crowd likes them.

(CONTINUED)

POWERS

(undeterred)

Harv, this is not professional wrestling. He needs a head M.R.I. and M.R.A.

Mandrake stops.

MANDRAKE

You're not even here six months, Allie! You're gonna order a 20 thousand dollar test for every nutcase on this team?

POWERS

He could have a subdural hematoma, intracranial bleeding...

MANDRAKE

Or he just could be a crazy fucker, okay! Listen, every Sunday these guys walk out onto that field, they only got one thing and one thing alone going for 'em -- their confidence!

(beat)

You start chipping away at that with a bunch of unnecessary testing and we can kiss the playoffs good-bye.

POWERS

Who's 'we,' Harv?

MANDRAKE

'We'! The team! Heading into the playoffs, you... you innocent! Television income triples. Yes! Bonuses! B.M.W.s! 'We,' -- the team, what's wrong with that?!

Mandrake, agitated, resumes walking. Powers follows.

POWERS

Are you saying I can't give Shark the tests?

MANDRAKE

Jesus Christ!... I'll take care of it, I'll get you the results!

(as Powers starts to object)

I've earned their trust, Allie. You haven't. Good night.

165 EXT. CALIFORNIA CRUSADERS STADIUM - TWILIGHT

165

Madman now walks out, wearing an upside-down jockstrap around his forehead. The waiting fans and miscellaneous REPORTERS love it, snapping pictures... Willie, following, is surrounded and held back by a mob of fans and shouted questions, requests, photographs (AD LIBS). He tries to accommodate, but is overwhelmed.

TUNNEL REPORTER #1

Willie!... You got 100 yards rushing today, how 'bout that?

WILLIE

(over the kids)

Ain't it amazing how fast a human body can move when it's being chased by 4.6 raptors who weigh more'n my mama!

They're laughing.

TUNNEL REPORTER #2

Hey, Willie! What's it feel like one day to be nobody, next day the whole world knows you?

The question gives Willie pause. He fields it gracefully.

WILLIE

I was always a star, you just didn't know it. But who says it's 'the whole world'? -- How important's football when two billion Chinese never even heard of it?

He has a natural charm and the press seems to like him for now... Other players walk by, ignored -- Shark among them, with Monroe, spotting Willie.

SHARK

Baby, the sharks are in the water.

166 MONTAGE #2 - WILLIE BEAMEN'S RISE

166

Set to a RAP SONG, "I'm Willie Beamen."

E166 EXT. SOUTH BEACH - DAY

E166

The Met-Rx image tied to Willie appears on the side of a Miami bus as Willie exits a beautiful hotel, two babes in tow, and enters his shiny new yellow Suburban, accompanied by a new agent, Wayne Mercer. Pointing to the moving bus:

(CONTINUED)

E166 CONTINUED:

E166

MERCER

Y'see, while you're sleeping I'm working. There he goes! Bus boy!... Creamin' Beamen!...

They can't help laughing at the hugeness of it all.

A166 MONTAGE #2 - EXT. SOUTH BEACH - CONTINUOUS ACTION - DAY A166

As the SONG CONTINUES, our players fool around at a touch football game against a group of sexy beach girls. Goofing off, Willie -- the cynosure of many eyes -- suddenly pulls up, grimacing, his throwing shoulder cramping on him. He conceals the pain and continues on.

B166 MONTAGE #2 - INT. MEDICAL FACILITY - CONTINUOUS ACTION- DAY B166

The flash and THROB of MEDICAL MACHINERY as Dr. Mandrake supervises Shark undergoing his MRI...

MANDRAKE

American women don't fuck 'cause they're too fucked up to begin with...

(removing the comic book Shark's reading)

We don't want to confuse your brains with Spawn's, now do we?

D166 MONTAGE - INT. CAP ROONEY'S HOUSE - GYM - CONTINUOUS ACTION - NIGHT D166

In his state-of-the-art home gym, a sweating Cap Rooney is going through an intense workout -- fly- motions and windmills on a Swiss ball. A supervising, sleepy trainer #3 reads a magazine in the corner, as Cindy Rooney enters in a sexy nightgown.

CINDY

Yo, Rocky, enough! You're gonna hurt yourself...

Cap ignores her.

CINDY

You're gonna hurt yourself...

(CONTINUED)

D166 CONTINUED:

D166

Cap comes off the ball, checks his body fat and heart rate on an intricate sports computer showing him at 7.5 percent body fat.

CAP
(finally)
... kid's breathin' down my neck.

CINDY
(confused)
He's not even close! You're the man.

Cap looks at her hard, his look saying: He's closer than you think.

C166 MONTAGE #2 - INT. MIAMI PRACTICE CENTER - GYM -
CONTINUOUS ACTION - NIGHT

C166

Willie works out with a crew of powerful teammates...

Later, he is still there, alone. His eyes burn into the wall-size mirrors with compulsive determination.

166 MONTAGE #2 - EXT. HOTEL SWIMMING POOL - CONTINUOUS
ACTION - DAY

166

Willie now shoots a "Met-Rx" commercial. He's in a bathing suit, body beautifully chiseled as girls by the dozen surround him... singing his own rap song.

WILLIE
(song TBD)
'My name is Willie... Willie
Beamen... an' I keep the ladies
screamin', oh yeah!... creamin'
for my semen. Say hey, I'm
Willie Beamen! etc...

As the SONG and MONTAGE #2 END AT...

167 EXT. PRACTICE FIELD #2 (#2 OF 3) - DAY

167

Coach D'Amato and the QB Coach watch Willie and Rooney throwing side-by-side. Cap is still feeling pain in his lower back and legs; his passes are off, and he realizes it; whereas Willie's passes are on the money, sometimes too much so. One bullet pass bounces out of Sanderson's gut, burning his fingers, cursing.

(CONTINUED)

TONY

(to Willie)

... less on the ball, Willie! You want a cool, tight spiral... and don't pat the ball, you...

WILLIE

Tight as fish pussy, Coach. 'I'm the man'!

TONY

'You're the man.' I repeat, don't pat the ball so much. They can see it!

(to QB Coach)

What'd he say?

WILLIE

Said I'm as tight-ass cool as the other side of my pillow, Coach...

Tony shakes his head as Willie this time completes a hard, precise spiral to his tight end.

TONY

(to QB Coach)

I need an interpreter... Awright, Cap, sit it out.

CAP

I'm fine.

TONY

You got the balls, we all know that -- now take a rest.

Rooney, pissed, moves to the sidelines, Tony, sensing his unrest, follows... as Christina, keeping an eye on her new star, arrives with Willie's agent in tow...

TONY

What do you want! You're off, but...

CAP

Hey, I've been on for twelve years and two rings, gimme a break. I've played hurt before. No big deal.

TONY

We're gonna go with Willie against the Emperors...

(CONTINUED)

CAP

Are you kidding me?! Are you...
(wants to swear)
kidding me -- ?

TONY

Rock...

CAP

I'm ready to play, Tony!
Goddamit!

TONY

Listen to me. I want you to rest
up until the playoffs. It doesn't
mean enough against the Emperors
for you to risk...

CAP

Home field advantage don't mean
enough? Since when...?

TONY

It's not the big one, Cap. We can
win at home or on the road with
you. You know it's the smart thing
to do. And one thing you always
were was smart, Cap -- smarter than
you were dumb.

CAP

Is this how it starts, Tony? I
know the way your mind works, man.
'Rest up.' Let the kid take a few
games. You were great, but time
marches on, huh?

TONY

That's not what I'm saying --

CAP

The heck it's not! I know the
game of football!

Cap walks away, crossing Willie on his way off the field.
He slaps the back of his helmet hard.

CAP

Get all pretty for the cameras,
poster boy!

WILLIE

What the -- ?!

(CONTINUED)

167 CONTINUED: (3)

167

CAP

... They love you today but a season's 16 games, kid. It's how you live through the bad ones that makes you a quarterback, not a punk!

168 INT. SHARK CENTER LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION - DAY 168

Mandrake walks alongside Christina, through an empty locker room.

MANDRAKE

... the bottom line is Rooney's some kind of medical miracle. He really could be ready for New York.

CHRISTINA

You told anyone, Harvey?

Mandrake, thinking she would be pleased, shakes his head, realizes what she's really thinking.

MANDRAKE

... 'Course he'd have to take a lot of pain and his ankle's not 100 percent. But he will. He's got the mind of an ox. He's so freaked about Beamen stealing his job, he'd probably play with a fractured neck.

CHRISTINA

Harvey... could you slow him down? Tell him he's not responding to rehab well enough -- just till the playoffs. Give Beamen his shot...?

MANDRAKE

(pause)

Well... everyone knows herniated discs are 'iffy.' I could recommend...

CHRISTINA

(moves on)

What about Shark?

MANDRAKE

He's still woozy, got bad migraines. Post-concussive syndrome.

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINA

Can you clear him?

MANDRAKE

(almost laughs)

... you mean which shell is the real peanut under?

(hesitates)

Three concussions the last five months? There's no way to predict what another head-hit would do, Christina...

CHRISTINA

How come Dallas had their quarterback practically in a coma last month just before he played one of the greatest games of his life...?

MANDRAKE

(backtracking)

... Well no question he wants his tackle and sack bonus bad.

Theoretically, his brain's at increased risk, but it's theoretical, and I can pump him full of cortisone to catch the swelling and let him finish out the season... without a malpractice suit of course --

(off her look)

I'm joking. I don't really think anything's gonna happen... but I'm not a complete prick, you know, Christina, I do have some kind of conscience.

A168 EXAM ROOM #1

A168

If she thinks so, Christina stays cool-eyed about it. They enter a small exam room.

CHRISTINA

I'm not looking to screw him, Harvey. But I gotta have him in the playoffs -- and he wants to play for chrissake, so everyone comes out...

MANDRAKE

... long term?... What are you thinking?

(CONTINUED)

A168 CONTINUED:

A168

CHRISTINA

(a beat, eye to eye)

I'm thinking we'll probably cut him in the off-season. The word's already out there, everyone's seen him take the hits. No one's gonna take him at his price... I think he'll be happy just to have his old job back at 30 percent of what he makes. That's if we want him back.

(off Mandrake's waiting look)

Dad always used to say, 'To make money, you got to spend money.' You do the math, Doctor. What you help save us we won't forget at contract time.

MANDRAKE

Smart man, Art. But you got him beat by a Miami mile, Christina... What do I tell Tony?

CHRISTINA

(exiting)

Tell him what he needs to know. Shark can play. Cap can't.

169 OMITTED

169

170 INT. TONY D'AMATO'S HOUSE - LATE DAY/NIGHT

170

Tony's in his kitchen when the DOORBELL RINGS, laboring over a pot of jambalaya, wearing an apron reading: "Kiss My Chef." A BILLIE HOLIDAY RECORDING PLAYS. He goes.

AT FRONT DOOR

Willie waits, carrying flowers.

WILLIE

Hi, got you flowers.

He thrusts the flowers forward. Tony looks at them, a little taken aback; then takes them and shows Willie into the living room.

(CONTINUED)

170 CONTINUED:

170

TONY

For me? Thanks... I guess I better put these in water or something. Come on in.

Tony goes to the kitchen, looking at the flowers. Willie now gets it.

WILLIE

(to himself)

Shark, you motherfucker!!

TONY

Sit down.

WILLIE

Nice place.

TONY

You wanna beer?

WILLIE

Sure.

TIME CUT TO:

171 SAME SCENE - LATER

171

Tony brings beers to Willie, glancing at Ben Hur on television; the irony slave ships and gladiators is not lost on Willie.

WILLIE

The gladiators of their time...

(to Tony)

Cute apron.

TONY

(removing it)

My ex-wife got it for me. It was a joke. I don't cook so great -- so don't expect anything too...

WILLIE

Don't worry. I'd be happy with a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. When'd you divorce her?

(CONTINUED)

171 CONTINUED:

171

TONY

Almost twenty years now...

(off silence)

Same old story, she got fed up with me working so hard. You know where they served the divorce papers? On the sidelines of the divisional playoff game in New York.

WILLIE

(chuckles)

That's cold.

TONY

Fuck her, we won the game.

WILLIE

That's what it's all about.

TONY

You ready?

Tony leads Willie into a dining room, Willie glancing around, noting many football photos that grace the walls.

TIME CUT TO:

172 DINING ROOM

172

Tony and Willie eat from two steaming plates of jambalaya.

TONY

... my own recipe. Sort of adapted from Paul Prudhomme's. Ever been to his place in New Orleans?

WILLIE

(disguising his distaste)

No.

TONY

Maybe get 'em next season. Like no place on earth, New Orleans. How you like it?

WILLIE

Hot! It's terrific, thanks.

TONY

... Well, thanks for coming by.

(CONTINUED)

WILLIE

You're going to yell at me, aren't you?

TONY

No... no. I just wanted to talk...

(a beat)

Willie, look, if I've been an asshole I'm sorry. Cap going down was really tough for me and maybe I've been taking some of that out on you. I know you're still learning the system and the pressure's incredible --

WILLIE

I can handle it.

TONY

I know. But we need to talk about this. I think you got a great future in football but first off we gotta deal with some basics. Like if the play book is too complicated we can simplify it for you --

WILLIE

Man, that book is too slow. When I am out there on the field I just gotta feel it. I can't be thinking about nothing but the juice. I got to let it out.

TONY

Listen, you're too fast out there as it is. You need to wait for the plays to develop. Our offense was built up over years, it's like Chinese water torture, taking apart the other team a little at a time, it's the death of 1,000 cuts.

WILLIE

I like things I guess a little more muscular, suits my style...

TONY

(stops eating)

Is that why you been changing the plays?

(CONTINUED)

WILLIE

I'm trying to read the defense,
Coach, it's...

TONY

I'm not talking about audibles...
Look, I know you like making the
big plays. I understand that.
But our game plans are the result
of a lot of work and a lot of
experience.

WILLIE

I know that --

TONY

I know you do. When you change
plays you're showing disrespect to
a lot of people in this
organization --

WILLIE

I don't mean to --

TONY

People who've worked for years in
this club and around the League.
People who've sacrificed more than
you will ever know to be in this
game.

Willie sees where this is going.

WILLIE

I'm trying to win, Coach! I been
warming the bench ever since I got
to the pros, and I don't plan on
going back there. I don't wanna
disrespect nobody but... winning
is the only thing I respect.

Tony looks at Willie with a singular, quiet intensity.

TONY

Okay, son, listen to me very
carefully and remember what I'm
going to tell you. You can forget
every other goddamn thing I ever
said if you remember this, because
someday you're going to realize
it's the truest thing you ever
heard: This game has got to be
about more than winning.

(CONTINUED)

172 CONTINUED: (3)

172

Willie says nothing.

TONY

(relaxes a little)

... I guess that's what I wanted to say. You're part of something here! A tradition. Lombardi, Uinitas, Tittle, Sammy Baugh, hundreds of great players! Those men on the wall, you're part of that now. And along the way I want you to cherish that... 'cause when it's gone, it's gone forever, and...

WILLIE

You know, I look at all these pictures and trophies and stuff and it just makes me... sad. Like the room is full of ghosts. When I'm done with the game, or the game is done with me, I don't wanna be no ghost up on a wall. I want more'n that.

Tony takes a long moment.

TONY

... Looks like Cap's gonna make it back in time for the playoffs... I'm gonna start him.

WILLIE

(long icy pause)

Yeah, I figgered. That's why I'm here, right? I knew you was gonna sell me out.

TONY

Cap's a leader... a team player. You need a team to win in the playoffs.

WILLIE

Bullshit! He's not half the athlete I am! Look me in the eye, Coach, and tell me Cap's the better player...

TONY

Cap's the better player.

(CONTINUED)

WILLIE

(derisively)

Sure! I guess that was another guy winning the last two games. I put points on the board! He lost four in a row. I lead by doing!

TONY

You kicked ass, kid, but Cap Rooney has been 'doing' it for years and he goddamn deserves his day in the sun, so don't start...

WILLIE

And I deserve the bench, right?!

TONY

... He's been the quarterback of this team as long as...

WILLIE

And his time is over! And yours is too... 'less you start taking some risks! Start playing the game the way it is now. It ain't all those pictures on the wall anymore --

TONY

(seething)

I've lived this game for three decades, kid, I know football. Those men --

WILLIE

Wanted to win -- just like you do! You can feed the press and the fans all that 'sacrifice and glory, grand ol' man of the game' crap! You sell it good, everyone bought it. But I been there, Coach, I seen a long line of guys like you from college on with that bullshit halftime speech!

TONY

(furious)

It's bullshit, huh! You think you...

(CONTINUED)

WILLIE

Yeah, it is! And you know it is! 'Cause it's really about money. Rakin' in the TV contracts, fat-cat boosters sittin' in their skyboxes and coaches upp'in' their salaries, all of 'em looking for the next black stud to get 'em in the Top Ten, put 'em in the bowl games -- It's just like the pros, 'cept in the pros, the field hands get paid...

TONY

Don't play the race card with me, kid. Twenty-five years I've worked with men of your color. You're good because you're different, not because...

WILLIE

Maybe it's not racism, maybe it's placism, but the black man still gotta know his place, right, Coach?

TONY

What are you saying? You don't trust anybody 'cause of what happened to you in college? You knew the rules, Willie, you broke 'em.

WILLIE

Broke 'em?! How'd I break 'em?

TONY

You broke 'em. That's how you broke, 'em.

WILLIE

Man, I lost a million-dollar signing bonus 'cause a booster gave me a three-hundred-dollar suit to go to his kid's wedding. I didn't even know the guy. Hell, everybody was getting something! How's a black man supposed to get through college when he don't got the money to get clothes, go on a date? They all had their hands out but it was me they suspended.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WILLIE (CONT'D)

I dropped six rounds in the draft 'cause of that. And the coaches rapping me 'troublemaker,' 'arrogant,' 'won't play ball,' all that corporate shit they hit the brothers with when they won't kiss the money. Shit, I coulda made millions of dollars if I'd kissed that big ass Julian's kissing all the time. You talk about 'sacrifice'? I sacrificed about ten million dollars is what I sacrificed, 'cause of those dumb rednecks like your coach friend at San Diego who makes me corner back 'cause I got fast feet! It was him separated my shoulder, fucked up my throwin' arm tackling some 250-pound bullmother. I was a great football player but nobody gave me the time of day or the season I needed to heal that shoulder. They traded me right outta there!

TONY

Blame anybody but yourself, Willie! Y'see, that's what a leader is about, the times he's gotta sacrifice because he has to lead by example, not by fear or...

WILLIE

(challenged)

Fear?! Who you talking to?! I hung in there when nobody gave a shit about me. I rode the bench for five fucking years! And now I get my one lousy shot, I'm 26 years old -- half my football life is over -- and now you tell me 'You go on back to the bench, son.' 'Cause you gotta sacrifice for the greater glory of Cap Rooney.' Well, fuck you, Coach! I'm not buying that brand, 'cause you're some scared old man who won't let me play my way 'cause I might just win! And then what the fuck was your life all about?!

Tony fights to control himself. Outside, the evening crawls through the twilight.

(CONTINUED)

TONY

(quietly)

You're not some flash-in-the-pan receiver or corner back or even Julian Washington, kid, you're a goddamn quarterback! You know what that means? It's the top spot, kid, the guy that takes the fall, the guy who everybody's looking at first, the leader of a team, who will break their ribs and noses and necks for you 'cause they believe! 'Cause you make 'em believe! That's a quarterback.

WILLIE

(caustic,
overlapping)

Yeah, I'm the leader of your team till Cap's back up! Then I'm back on the bench. Shit, you ain't said two words to me all season 'til Cherubini went down -- then it was...

(imitating D'Amato)

'Son, just pretend you're throwing a pass on the street in the 'hood and your mama's ringing the dinner bell' -- all you done is talked at me, man, never listened to a goddamned thing I said! So don't have no coronary 'cause I'm gonna stay who I am -- 'Steamin' Willie Beamen!' 'Cause with the time I got left I'm gonna play my way and I'm gonna get my dollars up there so's when you motherfuckers trade me, waive me, injure reserve me, or whatever the fuck you do to me, I'm gonna be worth ten times what I was worth before!

A long pause. Tony's eyes, moving past ego, scrambling to understand.

TONY

I don't know... you are a very, very young man. And you are very, very stupid.

WILLIE

Tell me I'm wrong.

(CONTINUED)

172 CONTINUED: (8)

172

TONY

You're wrong. I know better than you think, Willie...

WILLIE

You don't know one thing about me... You couldn't even begin to imagine me.

He leaves Tony -- drained.

173 EXT. SHARK'S HOUSE - THAT NIGHT

173

Valet parkers attend to the numerous expensive cars and limos that pull into a circular driveway, unloading beautiful laughing women and exuberant football players...

Willie drives his Suburban right up onto the front lawn, enraging the valets.

174 INT. SHARK'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS ACTION - NIGHT

174

Willie is met with a ferocious explosion of MUSIC and mayhem; players dance and drink and pursue the opposite sex through the house... Shark bounces up to him:

SHARK

Make yourself at home in 'The Pit,' Dawg! Blowjobs upstairs. But if you want to hit the skins, trawl the beach. Whatever you do, don't mess up my sheets, cause my old lady's comin' back Tuesday and she gonna kick my butt she see any semen or blood round here!!

In a lively mood, Shark stumbles off. Willie makes his way through a packed living room... women immediately perk when they see him, whispering, some predatory...

A174 INT. SHARK'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BALCONY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

A174

Willie gravitates to Washington, Sanderson, a few others: The dialogue is fast, overlapping.

SANDERSON

What up, Willie B?! Coach give you the Vince Lombardi speech?

(CONTINUED)

A174 CONTINUED:

A174

WILLIE

He's in my face like I lost the goddamn game! Mother...

SANDERSON

Told you! Hey, he's having a shit year, what do you...

WILLIE

You know straight up we'd be top dog this season if the defense would step up --

WASHINGTON

Hey, lay off the D, man. Shark hear that shit he'll tear you a new asshole.

WILLIE

You think I give a fuck! Hey, I wanna win games, not kiss some overrated loser's ass. But what do you care anyway, J? You ain't playin' for this team. You playing for yourself, like everybody else round here...

WASHINGTON

Who you talking about, punk?! Watch that mouth of yours or I'll kick your fucking ass! You gotta earn the right to diss someone on this team, boy!

WILLIE

Team? Shit. All I see of this team is a bunch of rich superfly brothers tripping in this white man's world, driving their BMW, getting their dicks sucked by 100 dollar hair jobs... and the clock's running and no one's giving a shit 'cause they're all dying inside... You were a great athlete, J, but you become a joke! You're playing, but it's like you're dying inside.

Willie walks off -- his thoughts contradicting what he said at Tony's place; a troubled man, his confusion brewing to the surface. Julian, on the other hand, is a furious man, restrained by Sanderson and the others.

(CONTINUED)

A174 CONTINUED: (2)

A174

WASHINGTON

What the fuck you mean 'dying inside'?! Kiss my Armani ass, m'fucker! Talking to me like that! Who the... does this nigra know WHO I AM?! What I done for this team?! I'm gonna kill you, motherfucker!

175 EXT. SHARK'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS ACTION

175

In the hot tub, players are cavorting with the women, and Shark is telling stories, as Powers listens in.

SHARK

... So then Madman loses it -- starts reaming this guy out and then decides this hotel has GOT TO DIE! Stomps into the hall, grabs a fire ax and starts chopping through the wall. By now Styne, he grabs him, he's about to eliminate Madman right then and there, so I gotta jump in, I got to protect my baby, be the hero and save the fuckin' guy, when whap! thwack! Styne throws two quick punches that weigh about 150 pounds each and nails me right in the fucking head! Cracks my fucking skull! Check it out...

(indicates his temple area)

... Bitch! From then on, guess what? Styne and Madman are like this dynamic evil duo who...

POWERS

(interrupting)

He cracked your skull?

SHARK

Yeah. So those two sonofabitches decide they're gonna rule the world...

POWERS

Hold on, Shark. He actually cracked your skull?

(CONTINUED)

175 CONTINUED: 175

SHARK

Yeah, Doc. I hate when that shit happens... So now we got these two locos on the offensive line and Coach D'Amato is about ready to call an exorcist when...

Dr. Powers, disturbed, leaves without being noticed.

A175 INT. SHARK'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - SAME TIME A175

A dozen beauties are lined up at the giant mirror, making themselves up, "doing blow," chatting, gossiping...

B175 EXT. SHARK'S HOUSE - BACK YARD B175

Julian, still angry, slides up to Shark.

WASHINGTON

Beamen disrespecting you, talking shit about you and the D...

SHARK

Are you kidding me? Are you fucking kidding me?! He goes after my D, I'm gonna break him off!

WASHINGTON

Motherfucker punkin' every damn one of us. We need to smack the m'fucker!

Shark thinks a beat, then:

SHARK

What's that motherfucker drive?

176 OMITTED 176
& &
177 177

178 INT. SHARK'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BALCONY 178

RAY FIELDS, former star linebacker, now using a set of canes, approaches, Crozier, talking to Willie. Fields' wizened face and eyes are a little too desperate for attention.

(CONTINUED)

FIELDS

Hey, Nick. How's it hanging?

CROZIER

Young and hung, Ray.

FIELDS

Steamin'! My man -- lookin' good.
Does my heart proud to see a young
brother in the pocket.

WILLIE

(interrupted, doesn't
know him)

Havin' fun, baby.

FIELDS

(checking out Willie's
chick)

Yeah, yeah, havin' fun. I hear
ya. Say, Nick, I was meaning to
talk to you 'bout some new plays
I got --

CROZIER

Not now, Ray. It's party time,
okay?

Willie notices the dominant Pantheon Cup ring on Fields' hand.

FIELDS

Yeah, yeah -- party time, uh huh
-- not the right time...

(catching Willie's
eye)

Yeah, Pantheon Cup twice -- '79,
'81.

Fields emits a strange, oxen-like laughter -- they split looks, Willie horrified; Fields knows it, refers to his emaciated fingers.

FIELDS

Gotta get a chain for this one,
try to buy 'em off me all the
time. Had to sell one of 'em, but
no way I was gonna let this sucker
go. Without this, shit! You
wouldn't even know who the fuck I
was, now would you? I been
there, Willie. Done that. You
'steamin'' now but this is one
dance they all play the same last
song...

(CONTINUED)

CROZIER

Hey, Ray, give it a rest, willya -- enjoy the party. It's his time... You had your time, it's his time.

FIELDS

Sure, Nick, but you a coach --
 (pointed)
 If you ain't helping him, you're hurting him...
 (to Willie)
 Don't bull with the shit, righteous, there's plenty of it.
 (again that humongous laughter)
 Ha ha ha ha!
 (high fives)
 Stay cool, little brother...

WILLIE

(gives it back)
 You too, Ray...

His eyes burning like candles, Ray shifts his intense, almost blind gaze off Willie, and staggers back into the chaos of MUSIC and flesh on his canes.

WILLIE

That really Ray Fields?

CROZIER

Used to be Ray Fields.

WILLIE

Man! I watched him on TV growing up. Every Sunday. Like Tarzan. He was huge!

CROZIER

Yeah. Like he said, he was just too long at the dance. Like the rest of 'em... Thank God, those days are over...

WILLIE

He give you plays?

CROZIER

(shrugs, dismissive)
 ... I humor him. Gives him something to do.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

178 CONTINUED: (3)

178

CROZIER (CONT'D)

Guy took a lotta hits -- lost everything to booze, painkillers -- his family, all his money, typical shit... was out on the street for a while, then the press got hold of it and management gave him a few bucks. He gets by... Don't get down, Willie... I'm pushing real hard for another OT or pulling guard in the draft.

Moved, Willie's eyes remain on Fields, talking to someone else; he's also rethinking Crozier's attitude towards the players.

WILLIE

I like it, sounds like some big changes coming next year, Coach. Maybe you be stepping up...

Washington strolls up to him.

WASHINGTON

Say, Willie, that your 4 X 4 outside?

WILLIE

You mean my Sub? What's up?

WASHINGTON

Well, it's more like a 4 X 3 now.

Smiling, he strolls back out the front door. A beat. Willie follows fast.

179 EXT. SHARK'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

179

A LOUD, GRINDING, BUZZING sound. Partygoers are assembled.

Shark bestrides Willie's Suburban with an enormous CHAIN SAW in his hands, literally SAWING the VEHICLE in two halves. Sparks shoot out, upholstery, plastic, and metal fly... Willie can't believe, then rushes Shark, wanting to kill him! (AD LIBS)... but others jump him; it takes several strong players to restrain him.

The car now tears open at a jagged angle. Shark TURNS OFF the CHAIN SAW, removes his safety goggles... to Willie:

(CONTINUED)

179 CONTINUED:

179

SHARK

Kid, in football you got an offense...

(jumping down, points to the severed front of the car)

And you got a defense...

(indicates the back half)

You don't got one without the other, do you...? Respect will be paid. Now call this m'fucker a cab and get him the fuck outta my house!

180 INT. BAR - SIMULTANEOUS ACTION - NIGHT

180

Tony sits with Monroe at his favored sports bar. Monroe is drunk.

TONY

... I just can't get through. Used to be I could take anyone -- rookie, vet, bad-ass parolee -- didn't matter -- I could make them... see what I see.

MONROE

(more revealing than usual)

It's a new world, Tony! In my day we were just happy to have the goddamned job. I shoveled liquor in the off-season, used cars, insurance. Some guys used to wrassle... Now, shit -- Prima dawgs! Bodies are year-round great but break like china!

Mandy, the young beautiful woman who approached Tony previously, enters with a friend. Tony notices, as does Monty.

TONY

TV... It changed the way we think -- forever. First time they stopped the game because they had to cut to a commercial was the end of it. I mean it was our concentration that fucking mattered, not some fruitcake selling insurance...

(CONTINUED)

180 CONTINUED:

180

MONROE

... Getting those big salaries, the bonuses, these rooks come in here thinking they deserve respect before they play a goddamn down --

TONY

(passionate)

Damnit, Monty, I don't know what more I can do. I've sweated blood for these men. I've given up my wife and my children for these men. I've given up everything I have to be on that sideline every Sunday. Everything! The game is all that matters to me. 'Cause it's pure! Four quarters. You cross a line, you score. It's sane. Life isn't, it isn't... It doesn't make sense for me not to have a home, a life... you tolerate the madness for the game... but if that's not enough, then this game is asking for too goddamn much!

MONROE

It always did, Tony... I coulda held on another two, three seasons. But one day in Chicago, the wind was blowin' off the lake -- man was it cold! I cracked my head right up against that frozen turf, and I knew -- right then -- I wasn't gonna do this anymore.. shit, it wasn't any fucking fun! -- You gotta know when to get out, Tony. 'Fore it takes your soul.

A180 ON TV #1

A180

Willie's commercial explodes over the bar, with LOUD MUSIC -- stylish, slick, sexy.

MONROE

-- Speaking of the devil!

180 BACK TO SCENE

180

They watch for a moment, then Monroe drains his beer.

MONROE

Gotta get out of here...

(CONTINUED)

180 CONTINUED: (2)

180

TONY

Come on, Monty, one more.

MONROE

Can't, Tony. Lady's got a curfew out on me.

TONY

(snorts)

Curfew! How the hell do you and Sheila do it anyway?

MONROE

Well, we came to an agreement early on. All day long I live, breathe, and shit football. The moment I come home, I live, breathe, and shit family.

TONY

(shakes his head)

... It's impossible!

MONROE

(rises)

Hey, who the hell wants to think about blitzes and crossblocks when you're holding your grandkids in your arms...?

(pointed)

You gonna miss your boss embarrassing you in front of your players?

(as Tony doesn't acknowledge this memory)

That's why I want to coach high school, it's back to basics, the kids don't want nothing but to play. Like you say, it's pure... See you tomorrow, my friend...

He goes. Tony sits for a moment, and then glances at Mandy.

181 INT. TONY D'AMATO'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

181

Tony gazes at one of three wall TV's; Mandy on an exercise bike in the corner, semi-naked in his pajamas.

(CONTINUED)

TONY

... So Jeanette was 20, 21, I was just making it as a lowball assistant with San Diego -- Jock Harris was running the place then -- and one day we been romancing a year about and I says to her, 'So what about marriage?' And she says, 'What about it?' And I says to her, 'Well, I gotta see you backpedal first.' And she says...

MANDY

Backpedal?

TONY

You know. Quarterback gotta be able to drop back -- ? Run backwards? You shoulda seen Jeanette's face. She gets up -- bless her Albanian soul! And she does it! She backpedals for me. In high beautiful heels too! All the way! Jeanette! Can you do it? Don't try -- I'll marry ya!

MANDY

(crossing to bed)

Your genes, her genes... did you get a quarterback out of it?

TONY

Nah. Not even close. I had an insurance executive.

(as they both laugh)

How can you have one of them? Came out with a briefcase.

(beat)

... Nah, he's a beautiful kid.

MANDY

(props herself
over Tony)

You know what you need?

TONY

... yeah, a pump.

MANDY

You need to be... young again!

She attacks him, tickling him all over. Like a boy, Tony giggles; it's been a long time since he'd been tickled.

INTERCUT WITH:

A181 ON TV

A181

Willie, wearing gold chains and a new diamond stud earring, is being interviewed by Jack Rose on "Sports Corner."

WILLIE (V.O.)

(on TV)

... The coach in Houston didn't dig black quarterbacks too much, he was kind of a redneck dude...

(laughs)

Thought black people's brains were about the size of his dick (bleeped)... Then at San Diego -- that coach was a real genius -- he makes me into a corner 'cause he says I got fast feet...

(a bitter edge to his laughter)

Then I got injured and that screwed up that year. By the time I got to Oakland my third year, they didn't know what the fuck (bleeped) I was!

ROSE (V.O.)

(on TV)

Sounds like 'a conspiracy,' Willie! Are you saying black people are being dissed here?

WILLIE (V.O.)

(shakes his head)

'Conspiracy'?

(laughs)

Man, you is media-believing. Just let the facts speak for themselves, Jack -- 70 percent of the League is Afro-American and how many black head coaches? A few. How many black owners? Zero. You do the math, my man... But I ain't bitchin'. Fair's not what I'm looking for. 'Cause nothing's 'fair' in this here life.

ROSE (V.O.)

Come on, kid! It's a free country! Black dudes can buy teams. You have the green, you can buy a team. Black, white, or inbetween.

(CONTINUED)

A181 CONTINUED:

A181

WILLIE (V.O.)

Football teams are corporations,
Jack, but black kids are raised to
be individuals, stars -- they
don't learn to work together...

181 BACK TO SCENE

181

Tony, made happy by Mandy, gets out of bed, puts a robe
on with his name emblazoned, like a fighter's, on the
back, about to turn off the TV.

MANDY

Leave him on. He's cool.

TONY

(mocking)

'Cool'? My quarterback? He
thinks he's Joe Montana already.

MANDY

I like him. He doesn't buy into
the bullshit... I like his eyes.
He's sure of himself -- makes him
sexy.

Tony looks at Willie, wondering. Being with someone as
young as Mandy permits him to understand. He pulls a
blank check from his robe.

TONY

Thank God I'm old. Check alright?

MANDY

(laughs)

Is it good? Prefer credit card or
cash, but this one time -- okay...

TONY

(filing it out)

You want a nightcap or something?

MANDY

(starting to dress)

No, I don't think so, but
thanks...

TONY

How 'bout some coffee then?...
Just stay for some coffee. Five
minutes.

(CONTINUED)

181 CONTINUED: (2)

181

MANDY

(senses his need)

Okay. Coffee'd be great.

He goes as she continues to dress, watching.

WILLIE (V.O.)

... I like looking downfield, Jack. I'm a big play guy. That's what the fans want. Sometimes the old timers like 'Coach Stone Age,' they don't go for that, but the scoreboard don't lie, Jack...

ROSE (V.O.)

'Coach Stone Age'?, that's terrific!

WILLIE (V.O.)

That's my little nickname. Don't mean no disrespect to the man, but to me it's all about winning. That's what this country's all about. Being number one. Every kid can grow up to be President, right? Who the hell wants to grow up to be Vice-President? There ain't no number two in football. You tell me who lost the Pantheon Cup last year? You tell me who came in second in the 100 at the Olympics? Where I come from you're number one or you ain't shit (bleeped)! This country was built on kicking immigrant ass. African ass, Chinese ass -- don't-matter-who ass. Only reason I made it out of Dallas is I wanted it more than the other guy. There ain't no grey area! Either you make it and get the big car and the nice home or you're on the bus and in the funeral home, 'cause losin' is dying!

ROSE (V.O.)

... But 'Coach Stone Age,' you smack me! So truthful, brother... Gimme a pound.

He tries to high five Willie, who doesn't respond... Meanwhile, Tony crosses back with the coffee.

183 OMITTED

183

184 TONY'S BATHROOM #1

184

Mandy is on a cell phone to her service (AD LIB), brushing her hair, closing the phone as Tony enters.

TONY

I hope you like cream with your coffee... Mandy...? I like you. I'm wondering if we could maybe make this a more regular thing?

MANDY

Sure. I've got a few clients like that. We can book a regular time. I'll give you my service number and they can set it up direct with...

Writing...

TONY

I sort of meant... not like that. Without money.

MANDY

Oh, honey...

TONY

I know, but --

MANDY

You don't really wanna do this.

TONY

I really like you.

MANDY

I like you too, Tony, but you really don't want to do this.

A beat. She gives him her business number in lipstick.

TONY

You got pretty hair, you know...

Tony lingers for a moment, then sets his coffee down and leaves. Mandy watches after him in the mirror.

TONY'S BEDROOM #2

Tony crosses OUT past:

(CONTINUED)

184 CONTINUED:

184

ON TV

ROSE (V.O.)

No doubt you're chewing up the gridiron, but on the sidelines it seems like you and Julian Washington got pretty heated during the Texas game?

WILLIE (V.O.)

No, J-man and me are just fine. I'll bet you a hundred bucks and that ugly tie that he'll have another 2,000-yard season.

INTERCUT WITH:

182 EXT./INT. JULIAN WASHINGTON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

182

Sanderson talks on a cell phone, feeding the numerous sharks in J-Man's specially-designed pools, as he heads inside, accompanied by a frightened beauty... At the party, there are no men -- only some 20 beautiful women, most in lingerie, dancing and making out among themselves.

A182 INT. JULIAN'S BEDROOM - FOLLOWING

A182

Upstairs, at the controls is Julian, propped on his bed, with several more girls, watching Willie on TV coolly.

WASHINGTON

Not without getting the ball, you lying prick!

INTERCUT WITH:

ON TV

ROSE (V.O.)

... But isn't this an awesome Emperor pass rush coming up Sunday? I mean these guys don't need much of an invitation to eat the greenery? Is there fear there?

WILLIE (V.O.)

Jack, I told you, they ain't gonna touch me, ain't gonna see me, ain't gonna smell me. Don't matter if it's T-Rex or Terminator out there, I'll just turn on the invisible juice and steam right by 'em!

185 INT. MADMAN'S HOUSE - FOLLOWING

185

ROSE (V.O.)

Willie, you are indefatigable!

Madman, on his cell phone, is heated as he watches the TV, amid an atmosphere of CRYING BABIES, BARKING PIT BULLS, and a pregnant, miserable wife.

MADMAN

You selfish asshole! If you don't think you're gonna get touched, I'm dancin' on a moonbeam!

186 INT. TV STUDIO - FOLLOWING

186

ROSE

(in closing)

... Well good luck to you,
'Steamin' Willie Beamen' -- what a great young kid!

187 EXT. SHARK STADIUM - NIGHT (RAIN)

187

(Game 4. New York Emperors at Miami Sharks.)

FIELD #1

Willie goes smashing into the mud, taking the hit on his throwing shoulder. A painful sack, he drags himself up... Dazed, Willie goes after the linebacker who nailed him... The 49er players sprint over to protect their teammate, but the Shark team does nothing to help their QB.

TUG (V.O.)

Welcome back to the Monsoon Bowl, folks! The Emperors have been eating Shark patties all night long. Smashmouth football -- this is what it's all about!

On the way to the huddle, over the DRIVING sound of RAIN.

WILLIE

Can I get some fuckin' protection here! If you're not going to block -- could you at least stay the fuck out of my way?!

Madman goes for him, Sanderson and the others holding him back.

(CONTINUED)

187 CONTINUED: 187

MADMAN
Loudmouth, showboating,
MOTHERFUCKER! Where's your steam
now?

A187 SCOREBOARD #1 A187

EMPERORS 25, SHARKS 7. FOURTH QUARTER. 5:13...

188 OMITTED 188

190 SIDELINE #1 190

Coach D'Amato glares at the field, the rain pouring over his face.

TONY
(to line coach)
Get 'em to stand up and block,
goddamnit, Hank! What's going
on?!

TIME CUT TO:

189 FIELD #2 189

As the Emperor offense sets up, Shark urgently calls for a defensive realignment -- Miami players hustle for new positions -- the veteran Emperor QB sees this and quickly barks out an audible --

A quick handoff -- the Emperor running back shoots through a hole in the confused Miami defense -- Shark tries to make the diving tackle but his knee gives and he goes facedown in the mud, as the running back splashes right past him for 25 yards. Touchdown!

TUG (V.O.)
What is with the Miami D of late?
They are going belly up, fins
flapping. Glug-glug-glug!

BRANSON (V.O.)
Shark Lavay just can't find the
old magic down there.

The running back turns back to the downed Shark and his D, and points his fingers like a gun -- Bang! Bang! Bang! The trainer and doctors run out to Shark, grabbing his knee in fierce pain.

- A190 SCOREBOARD #2 A190
 EMPERORS 32, SHARKS 7. FOURTH QUARTER. 1:33...
- 191 HUDDLE #1 191
 Willie, reading a signal from Cherubini on the sideline, takes the team on with a dead stare.
- WILLIE
 Y'all want to make it tough okay,
 I can take it, m'fucker! 'Cause I
 know come contract time there
 gonna be some big changes round
 here -- and, baby, it's either
 gonna be you or me! The call is
 Twins Right 90 Ringo Slide. On
 one! Ready!
- 192 FIELD #3 192

WILLIE
 (yelling over the RAIN)
Set! Black 671, Black 671! Hut!

 Willie splashes back through the mud to pass -- an Emperor defensive end slips through full speed -- Willie is blindsided, his helmet goes flying off, he crashes to the turf, his face slammed once more into the mud.
- 193 SIDELINE #2 193
 D'Amato is wholly demoralized, can't look... Neither can Cap Rooney, now in uniform, recognizing something he'd rather not. Or something he'd perhaps forgotten -- the sheer, frightening violence and impossibility of the QB position.
- CAP
 They won't play for him, Tony.
- Tony looks at him, frustrated.
- TONY
 (walks away)
 Then let him fucking learn!
- 194 OWNER'S BOX #2 194
 The visiting Mayor Smalls shares his feelings with Christina.

(CONTINUED)

194 CONTINUED:

194

MAYOR SMALLS

Shucks! There goes that black
dynasty you been promising me,
darling...

195 FIELD #4

195

Blood seeps down Willie's face from a scalp contusion as
he pulls himself slowly to his feet.

BRANSON (V.O.)

... And there goes home field
advantage for the Sharks!
Although their season ends on a
low note, there is still life
after death. Two weeks from now,
look for the underdog Sharks in
the playoffs in 'Toughtown U.S.A.'
-- Dallas, Texas -- football
capital of the world -- on that
fast astroturf that never forgets
to break a bone or two!

196 INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

196

The locker room is silent and depressed as players
undress and shower.

BATHROOM/SHOWER #1

Willie, dazed and steaming with anger, crosses Shark.

SHARK

You lead. But did anyone follow,
nigga?

Willie ignores him, but not Julian on his other side,
when:

WASHINGTON

Whatsa matter, boy -- forgot your
'invisible juice'?

Willie explodes, takes a wild swing at the big man.
They struggle. They slip... players pull them apart,
Willie bleeding.

Tony storms into the shower with Monroe, sizes up the
situation.

(CONTINUED)

TONY

All right! Stop this now! Stop it!

Players freeze. Showers continue to run.

TONY

This kind of bush league crap doesn't cut it with me! Anybody who thinks otherwise can pack their bags right now! 'Cause this shit is never gonna happen again! Ever! Is that clear...? You don't do that out there! Men get killed out there!

(pause)

... Thirty years in football, I never seen something that stinks like this! This is a violation! ... Today -- out there, you embarrassed yourselves and you embarrassed me. Today I am ashamed to be your coach!

He stalks out.

Unnaturally bright lights are on Willie and Cap Rooney in pads, side-by-side. They wear TV smiles, surrounded by a gang of children in Shark jerseys. Willie's cheek is stitched.

CAP

... So please give generously to your Child Fund of America.

WILLIE

... And let's make every kid feel like a superstar!

CAP

Because giving -- like football -- is a team sport. Thank you.

They smile. And smile. Finally:

VOICE (O.S.)

That's a wrap, thanks, guys.

Rooney and Willie split in different directions... we PULL BACK to reveal a small TV crew shooting a public service commercial. Christina talks with the Sharks' PR director and a TV producer.

(CONTINUED)

197 CONTINUED:

197

Julian Washington watches the shoot from the bleachers, brooding, upstaged by Beamen.

The children from the commercial follow Willie for autographs. Willie's agent notes this to Christina as they leave.

Rooney crosses to Cindy.

CINDY

You should've fought for that superstar line.

CAP

No -- 'giving' -- 'team sport' -- those are the lines.

CINDY

(noting the kids around Willie)

Meanwhile... You used to do this spot alone.

CAP

(uncomfortable)

Okay... you finished?

Walks away.

In the bleachers with the rest of the media, Jack Rose observes with his two-man TV crew.

Julian studies the kids, who seem to adore Willie. An OLDER KID, 11 years old, intersects.

KID #1

Hey, J-man! Is it true you making 10 million a year?

(as J-man smiles, nods)

... That true then 'bout you not blocking no more? It's part of your contract? That's what my Dad says. He says you don't have to catch no passes over the middle either 'cause you don't want to get hurt? It's also in your contract... Right, J?

WASHINGTON

(a look)

... Yeah, your dad's got it down, kiddo...

198 INT. SHARK CENTER - D'AMATO'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS
ACTION - DAY

198

Tony sits with Dr. Powers, Monroe and Shark Lavay -- his MRI's spread on Tony's desk, the mood glum.

TONY

... So what are the odds?

POWERS

There's no telling. It's an 'odontoid fracture'...

(off their looks)

Basically, he broke his neck and it never healed right. Coming after the 20 to 30 concussions he's had over 14 years, you can't predict this type of thing, but I can say this: the wrong hit could result in paralysis, Parkinson's... even sudden death.

SHARK

Hey, what else is new...?

POWERS

In my opinion, he shouldn't be out there...

(pointed at Shark)

You could be braindead, your speech slurred or you could have weird personality changes for the rest of your life... you understand what I'm telling you, Luther?

SHARK

(offset by his sanctimony)

Luther do, but 'Shark' don't, Doc! I been playing with fire since you was shitting in your diapers, and right now I need one sack and three more tackles and I get my bonus. Then we'll talk, okay, motherfucker!

MONROE

(to Shark)

Y'ever seen an old punchdrunk boxer, stumbling around and drooling -- no memory of what he done in his lifetime... you want that life, Luther?

(CONTINUED)

Shark looks from Monty to Tony, who is conflicted, holding his feelings close.

TONY

I can't make this decision for you, Shark.

SHARK

I don't believe this... You need me against Texas, Coach?

TONY

(pause)

'Course I do, Shark, but no, not at this price... no.

SHARK

(pleading to play)

Look, you goddamn know well as me she gonna cut my ass anyhow in the off-season! And no one's gonna pick me up for any kinda money. I'll be back here begging to play for field wages, Coach...

Tony doesn't deny it, silent.

SHARK

I gave you 13 years of my best, Coach, you know you owe me... For a million bucks, shit! I'll shake like a coconut tree the rest of my life if I got to... just lemme play... please?

TONY

(pause)

You'll have to sign a waiver, Shark.

SHARK

(relieved)

Bring it on...

Monroe shakes his head, disappointed. As he goes out with Shark:

POWERS

(to Tony)

We need to talk about Harvey, Coach...

He pulls out an envelope with X-rays.

199 EXT. PRACTICE FIELD #2 (3 OF 3) - CONTINUOUS ACTION - 199
DAY

Mandrake's on a cell phone on the sidelines with his new girl friend COURTNEY, when Tony walks up on him, furious, followed by Powers. Christina has long left the practice field.

MANDRAKE

(into phone)

... honey, don't believe a word
your mother says... don't ever say
your Pappa didn't believe in you --
Me too. I...

TONY

You evil motherfucker -- !

MANDRAKE

Tony, what are you...?

(to daughter)

I'll call you later, princess.

Tony pulls him out of ear-shot.

TONY

Shark's film! I know what you
pulled, switching the results so
Powers wouldn't pick up on it!

MANDRAKE

(realizing)

... Granted. It could look like
that to a lay person, but to be
honest, Tony...

TONY

I want you outta here. Today.
Now.

MANDRAKE

Oh, I see -- you're taking the
high road! Who's bullshitting
who here, Tony?

TONY

Did you bother consulting him!
He could get killed out there!

MANDRAKE

(overlapping)

I knew his answer!... And getting
killed? Maybe, maybe not! It's
one chance in a thousand, 'but
nobody blitzes like the Shark,'
right, Tony?

(CONTINUED)

TONY

You walk off this field and you get into your car and you go far away -- I never want to see you near one of my players again. Do you understand me? Never.

MANDRAKE

Come on, Tony, most of them couldn't piss in the morning without pills.

TONY

No more -- !

MANDRAKE

So now you're gonna play innocent?! You know something -- fuck your innocence!

This explosion draws looks from the team. Jack Rose tries to move closer to hear, but is blocked by Monroe.

MANDRAKE

You're better than me all of a sudden?! You're better than me?! What about Beyer?! What about Nielstrum and Manzicki... and Logan... and Krause?! All these years you been turning a blind eye!

TONY

I will not have this discussion. Get out!

MANDRAKE

Sure, Tony, don't ask the question if you don't want the answer, right?

Mandrake glares at Powers.

MANDRAKE

... And you, you fucking snitch! Did you ever think about him putting food on the table? Or his kids going to college?

POWERS

You lied to me!

(CONTINUED)

MANDRAKE

(mocking)

Oooh, I lied! The President lies all the time, Allie!

POWERS

... and you lied to the players, and doping them, changing X-rays and --

MANDRAKE

And making them heroes! That's what I been doing. Who am I to tell these men they can't live their dream? These are big boys. This is triage out there, asshole! Let the man die a goddamn hero if he wants.

POWERS

Oh, Christ! You didn't give him a choice, Harvey, you gotta give him his choice. It's a doctor's ethics.

MANDRAKE

Since when?

POWERS

The Hippocratic Oath, that's when...

MANDRAKE

You mean the one that starts: Do no harm...? With all due respect, I didn't have to ask him. I knew his choice. Was there any doubt whatever what this man must do? These players are freaks of nature -- they will not live with shame like you. These men are gladiators, warriors! And long ago they made that choice, not me. Or you! And I'm not taking that responsibility of standing between them and...

(switching the approach)

Did you ever have a fucking dream, Allie?

POWER

(a beat)

... I'm living it, Harvey.

(CONTINUED)

199 CONTINUED: (3)

199

TONY

(quietly)

This I mean -- get out.

Mandrake is genuinely sad to leave; he looks at Tony, not without affection.

MANDRAKE

(quietly)

... Oh fuck it! But hey, we won the Pantheon didn't we, Tony? See you around the nursing homes...

(to his girl friend

watching)

Come on, sweetie.

COURTNEY

No, I wanna stay, Harvey... Please.

Dr. Harvey Mandrake smooths out his expensive jacket and walks away with some dignity, leaving Courtney behind.

200 EXT. PRACTICE FIELD #3 (3 OF 3)

200

Tony heads back to his office, unfortunately intersecting Jack Rose with his crew, and several other reporters.

ROSE

So, Coach D., what's up now -- mutiny in the medical ranks?

TONY

(blind and sudden)

Get the hell out of my way, you piece of...!!

He shoves Rose out of his way and storms past. Rose slips into the dugout, smacking his head on the bench. Tony doesn't turn around, but everyone else tenses, expecting trouble.

ROSE

Hey!... Hey!... That's just great!...

(to his crew)

Did you get that!?

201 HUDDLE #2

201

Cap Rooney claps his hands, breaking the spell. Madman and Sanderson have been watching this, worried and confused, their doctor suddenly exiled from their lives.

(CONTINUED)

201 CONTINUED:

201

CAP
Awright, guys, wake up!

A201 PRACTICE FIELD #4 (3 OF 3)

A201

They move to the ball. The team is running light contact scrimmages, Crozier supervising on the sideline... Rooney scans the defense.

CAP
Blue 44. Blue 44. Hut!

The snap -- the red-shirted D comes with a blitz. Rooney paralyzes, showing a moment of pure terror in his eyes as "Beast Man," the DB, pulls up short; the WHISTLE SHRIEKS.

BEAST MAN
(reassuring him)
C'mon, baby, nobody's gonna hit
your pussy ass!

CAP
Yeah -- shucks -- I know. Got happy
feet. Must be gettin' old.

But Rooney's grinning eyes speak of a sea change churning in him.

202 INT. SHARK CENTER - STEAM ROOM - DAY

202

Willie makes his way through layers of steam. There is only one other player in the bath -- Shark Lavay. Willie considers leaving but sits... Shark gazes dispassionately at Willie, who won't look at him.

SHARK
... You know punks come and go in
this league. They get picked up
right out of the 'hood 'cause they
can run or fight, 'cause they're
fast and strong and big. And
suddenly they got all the money
and the foxes that chase the money
-- and they get to live 'the dream.'
But for every sucker who makes it
-- for every Jerry Rice and Barry
Sanders -- there are a hundred
nigras you never heard of.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

202 CONTINUED:

202

SHARK (CONT'D)

And when they get a step too slow
 or a year too old -- baby, the game
 tosses them back onto the street
 with nothing and just keeps on
 going like nothing happened.
 Sure, the game's taught 'em how to
 strut their shit and talk trash
 and hit -- but what else?...
 Suddenly there's no more money, no
 more women, no more applause... No
 more 'Dream.'

Shark knows it's ending for him.

SHARK

(quietly)

This is what I'm saying to you,
 Willie: when a man looks back on
 his life, he should be proud of
all of it. Not just a few years
 in pads and cleats. Not just
 memories of when he was... great.
 That he gotta learn in here...

(indicating his
heart)

... or he ain't a man. He just
 another punk.

Willie listens, lets it sink in.

203 EXT./INT. CAP ROONEY'S HOUSE - NEXT DAY

203

Cap Rooney cooks hot dogs on the outdoor barbecue of his
 massive suburban home. The lawn is far removed, as most
 of the outdoor activity takes place on concrete. The
 three Rooney kids (two boys, one girl) are tricycling,
 screaming, running through doll houses -- as a busy
 Cindy Rooney surveys it from an upstairs balcony on
 the cell phone.

TONY

(entering)

Hey, kids are growing, Cap.
 Johnny's already got big hands
 (the kid corrects his name, TBD).

JOHNNY

My name is Johnny, Coach.

TONY

I forgot, Johnny, sorry, I got so
 many names in my head.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

You never remember my name, Coach.

TONY

Don't shoot me.

CAP

Keep your hands off my kids
willya! I'm gonna teach 'em
some golf...

The kids mumble chaotically, as Rooney serves early dinners on some strange space-age plastic table.

CAP

Who wants the mustard on their
hot dog...? You see the news? This
guy Rose says he's gonna sue you for
a million bucks!

(laughs, shakes
his head)

If it was me, I would've left him
so he couldn't remember zip -- in a
coma. Think they're gonna suspend
you, Tony?

TONY

... Do me a favor. I'd get some
sleep... So, Doc Powers cleared you
for Sunday.

CAP

Yeah? Great!
(calling out for
help with the kids)
Cindy? A little help!

Cindy acknowledges.

EXT. CAP'S HOUSE - SUNSET

Tony and Cap walk around the edges of a man-made lake facing the house. During the dialogue, they approach a veranda area.

TONY

Papers got us as six point dogs,
you believe that? I can't wait to
strap it on and stick it to Dallas
like we used to. Show 'em what
this game is all about. Right
there in the playoffs!

(CONTINUED)

CAP

Yeah...

Tony picks up on a vulnerability in the air.

TONY

You okay?

CAP

Sure --

TONY

(suddenly)

The Doc got it wrong about your back?!

CAP

My back hurts a whole lot more than I thought, Tony, I pushed it too hard.

TONY

We all play hurt, Cap. You just need the needle.

CAP

Yeah, I'm sure that's it.

(laughs)

Maybe you oughta go with Willie though? You know, I been off -- my passing -- the whole deal --

TONY

I seen you in practice, Cap. You're ready now. What is it?

EXT. VERANDA - TWILIGHT

Cap doesn't respond or look at him. He sits on a swing. Tony is stunned as the realization hits him.

TONY

Cap, you don't want to go in? What is it?

CAP

Tony, it's not that, it's that...

(CONTINUED)

TONY

... You didn't get any phone calls
I didn't know about did you?...
from Christy?

(as Cap shakes
his head)

... You seeing a psychiatrist or
something?

CAP

No...

TONY

Then where the hell is this coming
from, Rock?

(raising his voice)

You wanted to play. I fought for
you! Why didn't you tell me
something, do you realize what I...

CAP

I'm sorry... I didn't know.

TONY

... I went out on a long limb for
you, man! I took on Christina. And
Willie. And the media. And you
do this to me?!? I had four weeks,
I woulda gone another way...

Rooney swinging back and forth, proceeds with great
difficulty:

CAP

I didn't know! I didn't know...
You don't know how much I wanted
to come back, Tony. You have no
idea. This is all I have in my
life. Everything. It's not fun
anymore. I'm not what I was.
Tony, the first time I got hit in
the pros I thought my heart was
going to stop. You're never the
same after that. After all the
hits and concussions, I have these
blank spots in my memory. I
haven't been able to straighten my
good leg for years, even on a good
day I shake... Sometimes I can't
even hold a spoon right.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CAP (CONT'D)

And I'm on pain killers all the time 'cause of my elbow and my ribs and my neck and my torn thigh and now my ruptured disc. But even now, with all that, I'd go back in a second... if I could only be what I was. But if I go out there, I'm gonna fold... in front of everybody. The team. My family... You.

(struggling)

I just can't do that. It's my body. It's my body.

Tony's disgusted and moved at the same time; relents and puts a comforting hand on Cap's shoulder; his quarterback's breaking down right in front of his eyes -- he's never seen him like this. But Tony, ever the coach of men, won't allow Cap -- or himself -- to quit.

TONY

The things you're saying are in your head, Rock -- they're not real... You know you've got it in you, because I know you do!

CAP

Tony... if I could only be what I was? It's my body, Tony, it's just not there... Please...

TONY

I need you, Rock -- to lead this team. The team needs you. I need you...

Cap dries his eyes, looks at Tony hard.

TONY

One last time. You and me. Together... Trust me.

CAP

(finally)

... You need me, Tony, I'll do it for you.

Ridden with doubt, Tony hugs his boy, tightly.

204 INT. ROONEY HOUSE - BEDROOM - FOLLOWING - DAY

204

In their screening room, alone:

CINDY
(carefully)
I don't get it... Jack?

CAP
I'm saying... I got my rings, we took care of our money, the kids are all right -- we had a good run... I just think it's time for me to get out... after the season...

CINDY
And do what?

CAP
I talked to the guy from one of the networks --

CINDY
You're a football player.

CAP
Cindy -- will you hear me out?

CINDY
You are a football player and you have two, three years left in you!

CAP
Honey, you're missing the big picture --

CINDY
There is no 'big picture'! You are the goddamn quarterback of the Miami Sharks! You are a legend and you're talking about quitting?!... You know what that means to the kids! To me!

CAP
My whole fucking life I've always done what other people told me to. Ever since college... what do I do? This is my decision, not yours!!!

She suddenly slaps him across the face.

CINDY
I will not hear this bullshit from you! I will not!

Four sexy women in short killer skirts sway like vampires into the next club... Miami. A world outside American culture.

Willie entertains his agent, Mercer, at an outdoor club overlooking the beach. Two beautiful models accompany them. Attractive people stroll by. Various ETHNIC MUSIC PLAYS, a warm, highly-artificial setting that Willie senses, as he listens absently to the dialogue at the table, a vocabulary reduced to words of expansion, contracts, and greed. On the table are covers of Sports Illustrated and ESPN sports featuring Willie.

MERCER

... they'll do it, you know why?
They want you!... and we'll make
'em swallow the beer
distributorship too... the thing is
no one really knows how good you
are, man, Willie. You get in the
playoffs and you score, you get
your moment? -- You can forget
about this team -- they gonna lose
anyhow -- but you get that one
shining moment when they notice
you, 'money, when they really see
you -- then you are a 'star' in
this culture, baby, and you are
looking at five million serious
dollars next year someplace,
anyplace! Maybe L.A. I'm
talking intensely to L.A. Shit,
Christina'll extend you right now
at two million for the year... but
we're gonna wait! That's why you
got me, Willie B. To think about
these things...

MODEL #1

(to Wayne)

Honey, let's go dancing... I'm
bored.

Willie muses at the passing parade.

WILLIE

(absently)

I hope you're doing a lotta
that, Wayne, 'cause what if
I'm not made of steel?

MERCER

Say what?

(CONTINUED)

WILLIE

You know, what if my arm starts hurtin'?

MERCER

(flummoxed)

Where you coming from with that?

MODEL #2

Baby, that arm's gonna last you forever.

Willie suddenly spots his old girl friend, Vanessa, moving towards the ladies' room. He jumps up, follows.

WILLIE

(catching up to her)

Vanessa...?

VANESSA

(turns, afraid)

Willie...?

WILLIE

(shy)

Hi... been a while.

VANESSA

(awkward beat)

Yeah... So, congratulations!...

WILLIE

Yeah...!

VANESSA

You getting what you wanted...?

WILLIE

Yeah, but I was pretty stupid about it...

VANESSA

No, I don't think so. You were just...

WILLIE

I blew it, Vanessa. I was a fool... I'm sorry. You know it all happened so goddamn fast. I just wasn't ready for it...

Vanessa looks over Willie's shoulder. He realizes, follows her glance to a well-dressed, middle-aged African-American businessman waiting at a table.

(CONTINUED)

205 CONTINUED: (2)

205

WILLIE

... Vanessa, I'd really like to talk to you -- when you have a...

VANESSA

I don't think so, Willie. No.

WILLIE

Okay. I understand... or do I?...

VANESSA

I really don't think we belong together, you're just too volatile for me, Willie. I'm a simple girl, I like simple things. Truth be told, I don't like football. I just liked you... I'm sorry.

She goes, sadly. After a brief moment of indecision, Willie follows.

206 INT. RESTAURANT - LADIES' ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

206

Vanessa sort of expects Willie to follow.

VANESSA

Willie, get the... outta here!

WILLIE

Vanessa, listen to me, please!

At the mirror, an older woman, with a bushel of white hair, looks disapprovingly at Willie.

WILLIE

Whoa, Barbara Bush!? Willie Beamen. You know, I always wanted to meet you 'cause I always had this thing for...

Despite herself, Vanessa laughs. "Barbara Bush" exits in a huff.

WILLIE

That's it, baby -- let me see that smile!

VANESSA

(smiling)
You are such a jerkoff...!

(CONTINUED)

206 CONTINUED:

206

WILLIE

I know. Just tell me I can call you, Vanessa, come on! You gotta tell me here and now -- or I'll leave you here alone and never call you again...

VANESSA

(laughs)

You bullshitter! Alright, call me -- if it'll get you the hell out of here!

WILLIE

(jubilant, goes)

I'll be callin' you, sweetpea, you hear me? 'Cause that date of yours...

(makes a face)

... look like a pallbearer and that worries me...

VANESSA

At least he's tall. You're just jealous... Oh, I'll just be sitting by the phone, waiting...!

She laughs to herself when he's gone, delighted.

207 INT. SHARK CENTER - D'AMATO'S OFFICE - LATE NIGHT

207

Tony's desk is covered with play diagrams. He's drawing new routes, as an old JAZZ RECORDING plays softly on the CD PLAYER... Crozier enters with a pile of computer printouts.

CROZIER

I took the probabilities on Texas. Some really promising stuff on the weak zone coverage. They run left 85 percent in the red zone when...

(noticing the diagrams)

What's this?

TONY

(snorts)

Nothing! I been trying to come up with some plays that Willie can't possibly fuck up.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TONY (CONT'D)
(as Crozier laughs,
sits)

Nick, I don't know what the hell to do? I've tried talking to him every way I know -- yelling at him, reasoning with him, inspiring him -- the whole bit.

CROZIER
Have you tried listening to him? Try to be sensitive to what he's --

TONY
'Sensitive'? I don't know from 'sensitive'! I only know one way to coach. Sooner or later they've got to start acting like men.

CROZIER
... Someone comes at you with a chop block, chief, and you stiffen, you gonna get hurt. You gotta bend... like bamboo in a monsoon.

Tony doesn't answer, fingers Crozier's printouts.

TONY
All these fucking numbers -- he runs left 18 percent faster than he runs right. He plays better on odd numbered days. Next we're gonna calculate the angle of his dick! What're we here for, Nick? We're technicians!

Unexpectedly, HEELS CLICK down the corridor, and Christina suddenly walks in, furious -- throws USA Today Sports across the desk.

CHRISTINA
Congratulations! Was I the last to know? My own team?

TONY
If you're talking about Rose, I'm gonna bar his ass from here to fucking...

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINA

We'll see about that! I'm talking about Willie! What the hell are you doing startin' Rooney? He hasn't played in six weeks and you're going to throw him into the playoffs against the best pass rush in the league?!

TONY

Cap's my starter, Christy.

CHRISTINA

And if we lose this game because...

TONY

(raising his voice)

I'll do you one better: in the off-season I'm gonna trade Willie!

CHRISTINA

(stunned)

You what?! That is not your option!

TONY

Yeah, it is. The kid can sell a lot of T-shirts, Christy, but he is tearing this team apart!!

CHRISTINA

Then you hold it together.

TONY

I can't! Not with him.

CHRISTINA

Then I'd say we have another problem!

CROZIER

(standing)

I think I'll --

TONY

(rising instead,
to the door)

Sit down, Nick! You want the big chair, get used to it first...! Hey if you feel that way about it, Christy, I don't know what the hell I can do for you -- except take a leak.

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINA

Will you stop this... posturing!
Where are you going? I'm not
finished. The Commissioner just
called me.

(as Tony stops)

He's gonna fine you a 100 grand...

TONY

(stunned)

For what?! Shoving that talking
turd out of the way? A hundred
G's!

CHRISTINA

... And he wants a public apology
from you to Jack Rose!

TONY

That'll be a cold day in hell,
baby!

CHRISTINA

You will apologize, Tony. The
days when 'Uncle Tony' could just
do what he wants -- calling all
the shots, firing Mandrake when he
wants, smacking sportswriters --
those days are over! You start
Willie on Sunday and you make the
adjustment to modern times -- or
you're out, Tony! And that's...

TONY

(explodes)

You think you're gonna tell me
what to do?! Your father never
told me what to do! AND YOU'RE
NOT GONNA START NOW, YOUNG LADY!

CHRISTINA

(not backing down)

Will you stop using my father as a
scapegoat! Do you think you don't
have to deal with me by raising my
father all the time? When are you
going to listen to me! 'Cause I'll
tell you this right now -- I'd
cut my father's ass if we were
losing like this!

TONY

I bet you would, too!

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINA

... And you know what? I wouldn't lose a night's sleep over it. 'Cause like you he was sentimental. And I can't afford to be. I'm in the business of holding this team together. That means selling! Selling tickets, skyboxes, players. Selling. That's why Willie works for me. He sells tickets. And that's why he's starting Sunday.

TONY

You know, I'm really sick and tired of you calling me an old asshole! Your father was no genius. He acted like he was. And he took a lot of credit for things he didn't do. But let me tell you something, he at least respected me and he respected the concept of the coach coaching and the owner owning. I can't even imagine what he'd think of you right now with this... 'act' you're putting on, but my hunch is he'd be ashamed!

CHRISTINA

(in a danger zone)

Here we go again! You don't listen, do you --

TONY

Ashamed!

CHRISTINA

Why the hell do you think he left me in charge, you bullheaded moron?! He could've made you General Manager -- but he didn't, did he?! Why? Because he knew you didn't have the guts to do it without him when he was gone alright! He told me so himself. Right there on his deathbed. That's why, Tony -- because he didn't trust you anymore. Because you got old!

These words cut Tony hard. He puts on his game face.

(CONTINUED)

207 CONTINUED: (5)

207

TONY

(deadly quiet)

Well, this old asshole has a
playoff game in two days. A game
which Cap Rooney is going to start
and finish. Both of you -- get
out.

Crozier stands, a glance to Christina. They go. Tony is
alone.

A207 EXT. PAGNIACCI MANSION - NEXT DAY

A207

Christina walks along the tennis court and enters the
house through the back door, bypassing the housekeeper.

CHRISTINA

(to housekeeper)

Beatriz, I'll be in Dad's
office... Don't bother Mom.

B207 INT. PAGNIACCI MANSION - FATHER'S OLD OFFICE - DAY

B207

Christina sits at her father's desk, living in the past.
We FLOAT PAST a large portrait of her father TO the
living room, where we overhear the VOICES of Tony and
Margaret.

208 INT. PAGNIACCI MANSION - PARLOR - DAY

208

Tony consults with Margaret. The thick velvet drapes
are always drawn tight here -- banishing the blazing
Florida sun and permanently shrouding Margaret's elegant
parlor in shadows... Today she burns with an oracular
power.

MARGARET

What is it you fear...?

(pause)

You have so much fear, Tony.

TONY

I'm losing the team, Maggie. I'm
losing control. Everything in my
life is about control. I lead
men. I control men.

(a pause)

Did Art think I was past it?... Is
that why he made Christina
President? Did he think I
couldn't win anymore?

(CONTINUED)

MARGARET

I don't know.

TONY

Do you care?

(a silence)

I need your help, Maggie.
Christina is going to destroy this
team.

MARGARET

(cryptic)

Yes. In order to save it.

TONY

(bewildered)

We can't let that happen. We owe
that to Art.

MARGARET

You never understood Art, Tony...
He wanted a son more than anything
in the world...

(a considered pause)

When you truly contemplate what
Christina is, it really is a
tragedy. Believe me, she will
fire you and sell the soul of the
team -- and everything her father
stood for will die... and that is
as it should be... and neither you
nor I, or maybe even Christina
herself, will ever understand her
real motives...

Her intensity is unnerving.

MARGARET

... What will you do, Tony? After
football? What's out there for
you? With no one to control?

TONY

Stop it.

MARGARET

(quietly)

... I blame you for a lot of
things. You were, like Art, a
monster. You've gotten older...
better, but for a long time I
hated you.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

208 CONTINUED: (2)

208

MARGARET (CONT'D)

(as Tony is taken
aback)Yes, that game took my husband, my
daughter, and my youth and left
me... with what?(looks around, the
drapes drawn)The memory of a blazing sun all
those Sunday afternoons out there
at the stadium...

(disconnected)

Where time just slipped away.

Tony looks away, betrayed, hurt.

INT. PAGNIACCI MANSION - FATHER'S OLD OFFICE -
SIMULTANEOUS ACTIONChristine cries quietly, also devastated by her mother's
revelation of her character.

209 INT. D'AMATO'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

209

A SONG plays through the house, ghost-like. Tony
drinks whiskey, pausing, as he goes through his personal
mementoes in his chest of drawers, the TV turned to:

INTERCUT WITH:

TV

On "Sportscorner," Jack Rose, sporting a dramatic bandage
across his head, similar to a Revolutionary War icon,
talks to Sanderson.

ROSE (V.O.)

... Thanks, 'Sandman,' for
asking -- my head is still
hurting, got some migraines...
and the ribs are sure sore.

(grins)

But hey, I play hurt! If you look
at your monitor...The station runs the famous "shot" again, the ending
blurry with Tony "pushing" Rose into the dugout.

(CONTINUED)

209 CONTINUED:

209

ROSE (V.O.)

... You know this 'punch' was more than just aggression, it was a sign of decay I think, because...

Tony roars at the TV.

TONY

Aggggh! If I'd punched you, you'd be shitting out your teeth right now -- you vampire prick!

He picks out Mandy's lipsticked telephone number on a piece of paper and, after a pause, tears it up.

ROSE (V.O.)

... To tell you the truth -- this is me speaking from the heart now -- I feel a little sorry for Coach D'Amato. I always hoped he'd leave this game with a little dignity left.

Rose continues to rattle on in the b.g., but Tony ignores the babble of our time, removing from the drawer a small wooden box and a framed picture of a younger Tony with Jeanette, Timmy, and Melinda.

He sets the box aside and picks up the picture. It is clear now that he is crying. He looks at it for a long and difficult moment, then sets the picture down and opens the box -- in it are two glimmering Pantheon Cup rings.

DISSOLVE TO:

210 EXT. SHARK STADIUM - NIGHT/DAY (STOCK FOOTAGE)

210

The MUSIC THEME moves over a deserted field -- the night TURNING to dawn.

IMAGES slowly move. Ghosts. Men who once played the game, heroic and shimmering, a thing of glory... We don't know who these ghosts are, but we sense what they represent. Some in old leather helmets, the '30s, '40s, '50s, each era unfolds its changes... le plus ca change, le plus ca reste le meme... the diving catches, the magnificent tackles and blocks, the astounding runs and passes become really the same through time -- accompanied now by the GROWING ROAR of the FANS...

The MUSIC reaches a CRESCENDO with the dawn breaking, and the ghosts fade, and the stadium enters time present...

211 EXT. DALLAS KNIGHTS STADIUM - DAY

211

Game 5. Playoff. Miami at Dallas.

STADIUM #1

The Dallas Knights stadium, with its artificial, exaggerated green Astroturf, is spectacular. The fans are stomping in anticipation.

INGO McNAUGHTON (V.O.)

(Dallas anchor)

... Controversy swirls around the six point Shark underdogs. Willie 'Steamin' Beamen, the sensational third-string miracle-mile quarterback who's held the sinking Sharks together these last four weeks, is not starting and is said to be feuding with his beleaguered Coach, Tony D'Amato -- who is being investigated by the League for having 'hit' local reporter Jack Rose at practice earlier this week... Meanwhile, immortal but vulnerable Cap Rooney -- only six weeks off a microdiskectomy on his lower back -- is definitely starting for the Sharks against the toughest pass-rush in the league. Watch for the sparks that are gonna fly! We'll be right back!

212 OMITTED

212

213 INT. TEXAS STADIUM - BASEMENT - COACH'S ROOM - SAME TIME

213

Coach D'Amato stands at a podium in front of the large press corps. Jack "Ripper" Rose accepts his apology with a smug smile and a nicely-dressed bandage on his forehead.

TONY

... Well, clearly the tension of the season got to me and I overreacted to an innocent question from a journalist we all know to be of the highest caliber... I only hope that one day I'll truly be able to show Jack Rose just how much I treasure his invaluable contribution to the sport of football. Thank you.

(CONTINUED)

213 CONTINUED: 213

He leaves the podium, eyes down... Christina and the tall, dignified AFFA COMMISSIONER, PHIL JOHNSON, are not exactly pleased with the apology.

214 INT. SHARK LOCKER ROOM - LOCKER ROOM #1 - FOLLOWING 214

Everything we see suggests uncertainty, doubt, and tension... Willie reads X-men... Cap Rooney is stretched out, towel over his head, asleep...

215 MONTAGE #3 (MADMAN'S PREPARATION) 215

A brief MONTAGE of JUMP CUTS shows Madman's tape preparation: Ankles, knees, shoulders, jock and shorts, wrists and fingers, shoes and socks -- are heavily taped by trainer #3. In his final stage, Madman is the complete zombie warrior...

Another player (OTIS), finishes praying, crosses himself, turns to Madman.

OTIS

Hey, Madman, do you really think God's on our side these days?

MADMAN

(in his growliest voice)

No! Goddamnit, God's on the side of those who love themselves!!
Har raa!

214 BATHROOM #1 214

In the mirror, Sanderson is a wreck, eyes closed, whispering to himself.

SANDERSON

I'm the best wide receiver that ever lived! I can catch anything ... I'm the best wide receiver that ever...

LOCKER ROOM #2

Trainer #1 wakes up Cap Rooney from his slumber. He rises, stoic.

The door is closed. As the huge CROWD upstairs makes its presence known, STOMPING and ROARING, the ECHOES surging through the tunnels and pipes of the inner stadium, Dr. Powers, in temporary charge, inserts a large 18-gauge needle of cortisone directly into the swollen, scarred knee of Shark, who winces in great pain. Powers drains a straw-colored liquid into a Dixie cup.

SHARK

(hissing)

God, I hate Texas!

HORNY

(poking his head in)

Whoa! What the fuck they doing to you, man!

SHARK

M'fucker, they're taking a cyst outta my ovaries!! Now get the fuck outta here... please...

Powers now shines a beam of light into Shark's eyes, moving his finger back and forth in front of his eyes.

POWERS

How's that headache?

SHARK

It was okay till you started doing that shit...

POWERS

What about your balance?

SHARK

You talkin' my check balance? Look p-h-a-t, baby -- 'phat.'

Powers retracts the needle.

POWERS

... you're done.

SHARK

Gimme another one.

POWERS

(astonished)

Shark, you don't need it, it doesn't make any sense medically.

(CONTINUED)

216 CONTINUED:

216

SHARK
(seriously grips
Powers)

I don't give a fuck about medical,
Doc! Give me another one. Just
for this game... please!

A moment passes between them, then Powers relents, goes to get a fresh syringe. Ironically, he begins perhaps to understand Mandrake's dilemma as both a doctor and a human being.

217 OMITTED

217

218 LOCKER ROOM #3

218

Trainer #1 harnesses Cap Rooney into a flak jacket, as creaky as El Cid in his armor, stuffed and mounted for the last battle.

ALL TRAINERS
All right, everybody! Three
minutes!... Gather 'round! Coach
D. got something to say...

TIME CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

Coach D'Amato stands before the team, humbled, hiding nothing.

TONY
I don't know what to say really.
We got three minutes left till the
biggest battle of our professional
lives... It all comes down to
today. We either heal as a team
or we crumble, inch by inch, play
by play -- until we're finished.
We're in hell right now, gentlemen,
believe me. We can sit here and
get the shit kicked out of us, or
we can fight our way back into the
light; we can climb out of this
anger and this doubt and this
uncertainty -- we can climb out of
hell -- one inch at a time, or...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TONY (CONT'D)

(pause)

... I wish I could do it for you, but I can't. I'm too old. I look around at your faces and I see young men and I think I made every wrong choice a middle-aged old man can make -- my life is a long list of rookie mistakes. I pissed away all my money, chased off everyone that loved me... lately I can't even stand the face I see in the mirror.

This team has never heard their Coach take it to such a personal level.

TONY

... As we get older, some things are taken away... well, that's part of life, but you only learn that when you lose something. You find out that life is this game of inches! So's football. Because the margin for error in either game, football or life, is so small... so small, guys. One half-step too late or too early and you don't quite make it. One half-second too slow or too fast and you don't quite catch it 'cause it's half a fingertip away. The inches we need are everywhere around us, they're in every break of the game, every minute, every second. Mandrake forgot that. He was grabbing for miles when he only needed inches. And on this team there are no shortcuts. There are no more Doctor Mandrakes. On this team we fight for that inch! We tear ourselves and everyone else around us to pieces for that inch! We claw with our fingernails for that inch 'cause when you add up all those inches, that is what makes the fucking difference between winning and losing -- between living and dying... In any fight I can tell you this, it's the guy who's willing to die who's going to win that inch.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TONY (CONT'D)

And I know if I'm gonna have any kind of life anymore, it's because I'm still willing to fight and die for that inch...

(beat)

That's what living is.

(sweeps the team
with a look)

The six inches in front of your face. I can't make you do it. You have to look around -- look at the guy next to you -- look into his eyes -- and I think you'll see a guy you know will go that inch with you. You'll see a guy who'll sacrifice himself for this team because when it comes down to it, he knows you would do the same for him! That's a team, gentlemen!... And either we will heal now as a team -- or we will die as individuals...

Willie listening to these words, with new meaning.

TONY

That's football, guys.

(pause)

That's all it is.

(then)

Now what are you going to do?

Silence... The team, as if one mind, emits a roar of approval. The players hug and slap each other on the back. It is a joyous moment of sudden unification and affection, a savage release of tension.

Julian jumps up onto a table, grabbing their attention.

WASHINGTON

Listen up, listen up! I got somethin' to say!

The team falls quiet again.

WASHINGTON

Thank you, 'Coach Stone Age'!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

(laughter)

But you're right! Hey, you all know what I've been through. You all know about the money I get. I been hearin' all about people sayin' this and that about me. But lemme tell ya something: I'm sick and tired of it!... I love this game. I want to play this game with you people -- as part of a team!!

(as the team cheers)

And I know this sounds corny but I want to thank Willie Beamen, in his own fucked-up way, for makin' me care about this game again.

(turns to Willie)

Come here, you little bastard!

He grabs a smiling Willie into his bear-like hug and swings him around. This is another moment of significance. The team goes wild to see these two finally connecting... And now Monroe feels he must leap on the bench to speak his piece:

MONROE

Coach put his heart and soul out for us. Give me that nasty D!

TEAM

Nasty D!

MONROE

I want psychodrive -- I want mad dog, drooling, rabid, teeth-bared, balls-out, limb-tearing, face-shredding INTENSITY! What -- do -- we -- live -- for, defense?!

TEAM

Turn-over! Turn-over! Turn-over!

MONROE

What -- do -- we -- live -- for offense?!

TEAM

Touch-down! Touch-down! Touch-down!

MONROE

Team! What do we live and die for?!

(CONTINUED)

218 CONTINUED: (4)

218

TEAM

Victory! Victory! Victory!

The team runs roaring from the locker room. When most of the team has exited, Monty climbs down from the bench.

MONROE

(to Tony)

Goddamn! I'm too old for this
shit!

TIME CUT TO:

219 MEDIA BOOTH #1

219

Tug Kolowski and Ingo McNaughton are on the air.

TUG

And here we go, ladies and gentlemen, get ready for a classic! Here in Texas, they say God made it so big and flat so everybody could play football!

INGO

(laughs)

... That's right, Tug, years ago when Dallas was one and 15, they blamed it on God, said he was on vacation that year...

220 VIDEO FROM MEDIA BOOTH POV - FIELD #1

220

The opening kickoff as McNaughton calls it.

INGO (V.O.)

It's a huge boot from Croft...
Scanlon takes it in the end zone...
He's running it out...

TUG (V.O.)

Dangerous move...

INGO (V.O.)

Scanlon skirts a tackle... he's got a block... He's got some running room...

TUG (V.O.)

(laughs)

Uh-oh! Watch out...!

(CONTINUED)

220 CONTINUED: 220

INGO (V.O.)
 He's at the thirty... the thirty-
 five!... He's got some
daylight!... He's broken loose!
He could go all the way!!

The Dallas runner (Scanlon) races through Shark defenders and into the end zone. Dallas fans leap to their feet -- an enormous, pounding celebration, the sound heightened by the ECHOEY nature of the stadium.

221 LUXURY BOX #1 221

Christina, Ed Phillips, Joe Polito and others watch, their hopes suddenly dashed.

CHRISTINA
 It's gonna be a long day...

222 SIDELINE #1 222

Coach D'Amato claps his hands and walks down the sideline, talking to his troops, coming to a stop at Cap Rooney -- Willie close by.

TONY
 Awright, awright, no big deal. We
 still block and tackle.
 (to Rooney)
 Stick with the game plan, Cap.
 You set on the first series?

CAP
 ... Piece of cake, Coach.

TONY
 Then bring it home, Rock!

Rooney strides onto the field.

223 STANDS #1 223

The Miami section unleashes a great stomp of recognition and adoration. Huge booing from the Dallas side...

224 SIDELINE #2 224

The Shark mascot dances. Cap Rooney is back! Two Pantheon Cup rings, anything can happen in the memory. Anything!! Willie applauds as well, looking over to see:

225 OMITTED 225
& &
226 226

A226 STANDS #2 A226

His mom -- with an older lady friend and a younger sister at the 50-yard line. She waves to him, in her Sunday best, proud of him.

227 STANDS #3 227

Cindy Rooney -- with a retinue of loyal wives -- clamor for Cap.

228 HUDDLE #1 228

CAP

Guys, I missed your ugly mugs.

SANDERSON

Whoa!... Old times, baby! Hows zat disc of yours? Still spinning?

CAP

Like Jerry Lee Lewis! Okay, Blue Twins Right Ace 90 Seam. On two. And don't let that corner take away the inside, Sandman.

(grins)

Trip him, tickle his nuts, I don't give a darn.

SANDERSON

Same old, same old. He is nonexistent!

CAP

On two. Ready?

229 MONTAGE #4 - CAP ROONEY'S COMEBACK 229

FIELD #2

The ball is snapped... and we go into a SERIES OF CUTS of Cap Rooney's return -- four plays, all quick, on-the-money passes, inside and out, Cap in control, moving the team like a whipmaster.

TIME CUT TO:

230 OMITTED 230

231 FIELD #3 231

On the fourth play, Cap finds the second wide out (Owens) for a TD!

232 STANDS #4 232

A Dallas fan decks an overenthusiastic Miamian...

TIME CUT TO:

233 FIELD #4 233

Shark sacks the Dallas QB -- jumponing up and doing his "sack dance."

TUG (V.O.)

There he goes! Sack number 12 of the year -- a personal high for Luther Lavay.

234 FIELD #5 234

But Dallas stays right in the game. A short, broken-field run, 22 yards for a touchdown. (Ingo AD LIBS.) Each man obviously rooting against the other.

TIME CUT TO:

235 FIELD #6 235

Answered by a Miami 32-yard field goal...

INTERCUT WITH:

236 SIDELINE #3 236

Willie listens and watches closely as D'Amato confers with Rooney, studying Cap's style on the field. He -- not Cherubini -- is calling in the plays, which puts him in the heart of the conflict.

A236 SCOREBOARD #1 A236

MIAMI 10, DALLAS 14. FIRST QUARTER 2:48...

237 FIELD #7 237

Sharks are poised to score on the Dallas 11...

(CONTINUED)

237 CONTINUED:

237

Cap fades back -- a Dallas defender breaks through the line -- Cap scrambles out of the pocket -- no one can get open -- he tucks the ball and decisively charges the goal line.

The "old man" will not be denied in a race to the goal line. A Dallas defender zeroes in on him. Rather than slide, Rooney hurls himself into the air, inspired possibly by the younger Willie and collides head-first with a Dallas defender -- a thunderclap of sound.

The ball, tight in Rooney's grasp, is planted firmly beyond the goal line -- touchdown!

A237 SIDELINE #4

A237

The Sharks taste the old glory!

238 FIELD #8

238

Rooney pulls himself slowly to his feet, accepting the congratulations of his teammates, inwardly numb, outwardly ecstatic.

INGO (V.O.)

That is the meaning, in one sentence, of 'Captain' Jack Rooney. He will not take 'No' for an answer. I deeply admire a man of that caliber.

TUG (V.O.)

Ingo, I never seen you that moved by anything.

INTERCUT WITH:

239 SIDELINE #5

239

D'Amato watches Rooney intently, sensing the worst, but basking in the glory of it -- the aging charioteer pauses in the end zone, opens his breast to the roar of the crowd. His moment in time.

TIME CUT TO:

A239 SCOREBOARD #2

A239

MIAMI 17, DALLAS 14. SECOND QUARTER. 11:12...

240 HUDDLE #2

240

Rooney's significant pain carries over. His teammates keep a respectful silence, but he sweats and breathes with difficulty.

CAP

Awright, come on. Second and two, gang. Let's get it. Pro Left Y Switch Zig 90 Fade. On two. Ready?

As they break:

SANDERSON

(urgent, drawing a blank)

What's the color?

WASHINGTON

What?

SANDERSON

The live color? I can't remember the color --

WASHINGTON

Red for Chrissake! On two! If you're fucked up, Sandman? Take yourself out, man.

SANDERSON

(panicked)

Can't remember the plays!

241 FIELD #9

241

Cap fades back, a fake screen to Julian which deceives Dallas, then he flings it far downfield -- headed for Sandman...

Rooney thinks it's a lock... But the pass, 45 yards in the air, is overthrown by inches! -- Sanderson, perhaps a half step late on his own, stretches but cannot grasp it -- missing by an inch -- the ball implodes, incomplete, as the Miami fans moan and the Dallas fans roar.

As Cap walks to the sideline, crossing his punting unit, an eerie feeling invades a mind already fragile in confidence.

TIME CUT TO:

A241 SCOREBOARD #3

A241

MIAMI 17, DALLAS 14. SECOND QUARTER. 03:57...

242 FIELD #10 242

Rooney scans the defense, sees the signs for a full blitz. Under the center, his hands shake.

CAP
(audibles)
Set! Black 45... razor, razor...
495 max, 495 max... Hut! Hut!

The full blitz at the Miami 35 -- two Dallas speedsters come from either side -- Rooney fakes a handoff to Julian and turns upfield -- but both Dallas defenders slam into him, a devastating double hit -- his body crumples into the grass.

The ball sails from his hands -- a Dallas lineman snatching it up on the bounce and sprinting to the Miami 17.

243 STANDS #5 243

The crowd, which a few short minutes ago loved this man, has turned surly and unsure. Time is swift.

244 STANDS #6 244

Cindy Rooney knows it's over.

245 LUXURY BOX #2 245

So does Christina.

CHRISTINA
(to Phillips and
Polito)
I'm going down...

246 INT. VISITORS' LOCKER ROOM - HALFTIME 246

ON TV: The score reads Miami 17, Dallas 21.

A246 STORAGE ROOM #1 A246

In a dark and solitary storeroom, Sanderson is shaking and sweating, pathetically pleading to Dr. Powers:

SANDERSON
Doc, you're my man. I'm just
asking you this one time... Look
at me.

(CONTINUED)

A246 CONTINUED:

A246

POWERS

Stop begging, Jimmy. You're making me nervous. You'd make water nervous.

SANDERSON

It's like that, okay? It ain't right, Doc, I never asked you for nothing! M'fucker! Look at me, look at my goddamn hands...

(shaking)

Man, i live to catch passes, you understand that?! Ritalin, diet shit, anything!

POWERS

Jimmy, we been through this. I can't, I won't...

SANDERSON

You're lettin' me die out there! I can't beat 'em anymore! Half a step, it's all I'm sayin', half a fuckin' step! I'm 28, man, I'm an old man out there!

POWERS

There is a line, Jimmy. I won't cross it. You don't need it. You can win without it.

SANDERSON

Who you shittin'! It's over... If you could run, catch, feel what I feel, you'd be a whole different person, Doc. You're just trying to hold me down. It's all right, man, I'll make it without you! I'll make it without you, m'fucker...!

247 TRAINING AREA #2

247

Trainers #1 and #2 work on Cap Rooney, re-taping his bruised ribs and back, as Tony crosses in.

TONY

Can you play?

CAP

... Banged up, but I'm okay...

(CONTINUED)

247 CONTINUED:

247

TONY

Can you play?

CAP

Yeah... you bet.

TONY

Rock -- look at me -- can you
play?

Rooney looks at him. His face tells the story.

TONY

You fought like a son-of-a-bitch
out there, Rock... I will never
forget this.

CAP

... Go do your job, Coach.

248 LOCKER ROOM #4

248

Tony moves around the locker room, studying his team. He
locks eyes with Willie, who comes over. They speak
quietly.

TONY

This isn't about you and me
anymore. You've got to lead them,
Willie. When they look in your
eyes, they gotta believe.

WILLIE

I know...

Christina -- surprising everyone -- enters the locker
room, moving quickly past the players. With Ed Phillips
and Joe Polito backing her, she seeks out Tony.

CHRISTINA

What do you think you're doing?

TONY

(seething)

You got no business here -- I told
you not to come here!

CHRISTINA

Don't you see what's going on,
you...

Tony sweeps Christina by the elbow, into the small
visiting coach's locker room.

A248 COACH'S LOCKER ROOM #1

A248

TONY

(as intense as
he can get)Leave here before I lose my
temper, Mrs. Pagniacchi, do you
hear me?!...

CHRISTINA

I don't care what your problem
with him is -- alright!? Cap
Rooney is over! You're the only
one that's failed to see...

Outside, the players listen silently.

TONY

NEVER -- NEVER -- talk that way in
front of my players! Do you
understand!... or I'll spank the
living shit out of you, little
girl!!

CHRISTINA

(scared)

Don't talk to me like that! It's
MY team too! And I don't give a
fuck if Willie's changing the plays!
You let your ego get in the way of
this team, and it is going to cost
us the game!

TONY

GET OUT! GET OUT NOW! Before I...

He throws a chair. Willie enters tentatively...

WILLIE

Miss Pagniacchi...? I'm sorry
but...

(as Christina waits)

... Coach D'Amato -- he already
told me I'm going in.

A pause. They all share looks.

TONY

(quietly)

Jesus Christ, Christy... What the
hell happened to you...?

Christina exits, her dignity intact.

(CONTINUED)

A248 CONTINUED:

A248

CHRISTINA

(nods to Willie)

Good...! Prove 'em wrong, Willie...

She crosses to the main locker room, her entourage following.

249 EXT. DALLAS STADIUM - TUNNEL - NIGHT (SECOND HALF)

249

Tony is talking fast to Willie as they move down the tunnel. The sound of the CROWD GROWING...

TONY

... Take control of the huddle, get 'em in and out quick. Take advantage of the box while the speaker's hot.

WILLIE (TBD)

Yup.

TONY

Keep an eye on the front four. Make them work sideline to sideline, they'll slow down, and when you see them, take a knee, lookin' for some air, they're losing it. Then you go right at 'em. Control the line of scrimmage, and you're gonna control this game.

WILLIE

Yup.

TONY

Stats don't mean shit to me. Get me five yards on first, and they'll have to worry about stopping both you and Julian. Possession of the ball -- that's all I want. Move those chains.

WILLIE

Yup.

TONY

Read the safety's drop, if he's flat footed or in his backpedal, we go downtown. Keep 'em honest with your eyes. The longer you look them off, the tougher it is for them to make their break. Surprise 'em, make it sudden, Willie.

(CONTINUED)

WILLIE

Yup.

TONY

What are you, Gary Cooper?

WILLIE

Who?

TONY

Forget it. Remember, keep them off balance with the hard count. That will slow the pass rush and buy you more time. If you see their arms shaking and their asses up in the air, they're coming... Control the line of scrimmage, you're gonna control this game, Willie

WILLIE

Coach, you said that already...

TONY

... And don't forget to look for the mismatches!

(as Willie sighs; he repeats)

Look for the mismatches. You'll find one... One more thing!

(carefully)

Right out of the gate, let it fly. Go 999, and shock the shit out of 'em.

He grins at a surprised Willie.

As they now break from the tunnel, the ROAR of the Dallas crowd, and the excitement of the sportscaster's voices overwhelms all.

INGO (V.O.)

Well, everyone knows it's 'crunch time' for Steamin' Beamen. Cagey old veterans have been known to crack under playoff pressure -- so you gotta wonder how this rather volatile kid'll stack up...

TUG (V.O.)

No, sir! Prisoners will not be taken in this second half! The surviving team goes to Minnesota next week for the Conference Championship.

250 SIDELINE #5

250

Willie steps to the side, alone -- and vomits quietly... then he jogs out onto the field for the second half.

TUG (V.O.)

Oh boy! Dallas is in trouble now
'Willie's Ritual.' You know,
Ingo, in Tampa Bay one time you
looked just like that after...

Ingo finally laughs.

251 HUDDLE #3

251

Willie, totally focused, assesses his teammates. He spots Cap Rooney, in uniform, signaling in the play!

WILLIE

Okay, Strong Left Zig 90 Gun, on
three, serious -- it's their call.
And by the way, guys --

(beat)

I apologize for having a big head
back there -- but that wasn't me.
It was the Devil Red 6-6-6.

(as they laugh)

Now let's get this bitch before
they know what hit 'em! On
three. Ready!

They clap and break, believing it. Over Willie:

CAP (V.O.)

(helmet)

Watch for the robber on the
right... you know it's a beautiful
thing to watch you throw, kid!

WILLIE

Good to hear you say that,
not-so-old-man.

252 FIELD #11

252

WILLIE

Set! Black 41, Black 41! Hut!
Hut! Hut!

Willie steps back, flings it far... 50 aerial yards...
Interception!... An upset roar from the Dallas fans.

253 SIDELINE #6

253

Willie jogs back, past Tony, loose about it.

TONY
(into headset)
... hey at least he ran the play I called!

WILLIE
(to Tony)
One inch to the left, it would've worked.

261 LUXURY BOX #3

261

The AFFA Commissioner, with a small entourage, is watching part of the game in Christina's box.

CHRISTINA
... Let me on the Finance Committee, Phil, and I know I could make a difference with the networks. I know New York, I...

COMMISSIONER
Your mother looks great, by the way...

CHRISTINA
Thank you. She's always loved Dallas. Loves Neiman Marcus.

COMMISSIONER
Great lady. And your golf?

CHRISTINA
I'm about an 11 now... from the whites. Think you can take me?

COMMISSIONER
Whoa! Not bad! I'm afraid I'm not in your class, Christina.
(rising to leave)
Good game. Good team.
(crossing to Margaret with her two pet dogs in hand)
Margaret...

MARGARET
It's nice to see you, Phil.

COMMISSIONER
Still miss Art.

(CONTINUED)

261 CONTINUED:

261

MARGARET

I do, too...
 (displaying her new
 dog)
 Have you met Gabrielle?

COMMISSIONER

(a beat)
 ... so I have.

He moves, with great dignity, to the door.

CHRISTINA

(following him,
 unsatisfied)
 Phil, I'd really like to...

They're out of earshot at the door. The Commissioner, obviously under some pressure of his own, decides to tell her now.

COMMISSIONER

Christina, the owners would like you to come up to New York for a meeting. Sometime before the first of the year... if possible?

CHRISTINA

(surprised)
 Oh? About what, sir?

COMMISSIONER

Well... there's a concern that's been voiced about some moves that were made... mmm, on your behalf, for another Los Angeles franchise ... Several of the Association's rules may have been violated on this. We've heard that...

CHRISTINA

(stunned)
 Who! Who said this? Who's been saying this...!

She checks herself.

COMMISSIONER

Is Wednesday this week too soon?

CHRISTINA

Not at all. That'll be fine, sir.

(CONTINUED)

261 CONTINUED: (2) 261

COMMISSIONER

Good. Then the best of luck to you today...

He exits.

A261 CORRIDOR OUTSIDE BOX A261

The Commissioner, on the way out, shakes his head, to an associate.

COMMISSIONER

... I honestly believe that woman would eat her young.

261 LUXURY BOX #4 261

Christina, staggered, turns to Ed Phillips and Johnny.

CHRISTINA

What the hell happened!?

ED PHILLIPS

I don't know, but somebody opened his big mouth. And I'll bet you it was our friend the Mayor!

JOHNNY POLITO

You're missing the point, Ed. This guy definitely doesn't want her in L.A. That's the point.

Christina is worried.

A254 SCOREBOARD #4 A254

Reads: MIAMI 17, DALLAS 28. THIRD QUARTER. 4:27...

255 SIDELINE #7 255

Dallas has added another TD! It looks dicey.

TONY

(to Willie)

Branco's aching to nail ya. He's playing for the cameras. Go Split Left 90 Hitch, but if you think Branco's gonna bite, audible a fade right to 'Sandman.'

(CONTINUED)

255 CONTINUED:

255

WILLIE

You gonna let me check off?
Where's the coach I know and love?

TONY

If Branco bites.

WILLIE

You git it, Coach.

256 FIELD #12

256

Willie scans the defense. As predicted, the Dallas player (Branco) is tensed for the blitz, his knuckles white to the astroturf.

WILLIE

(audibles)

Set! Blue 22... razor, razor...
955, 955... Hut!

Branco breaks through! Willie, expecting it, throws a classic screen pass to Julian, who rumbles for 15 plus yards.

Branco lies on the field, bleeding. His eyeball lies several feet away. It is shocking, and quickly covered up by the TV cameras.

TUG (V.O.)

Time out. And we'll be right
back, folks, after a word...

TIME CUT TO:

257 FIELD #13

257

A classic sweep follows, run by Washington, thundering towards Tony on the sideline; he turns the corner with a great block from Madman, and picks up another 20 yards to the Dallas 12-yard line.

258 SIDELINE #8

258

Tony, rediscovering the purity of the sweep, smiles to himself. Monroe catches Tony's expression and gives him the "up."

(CONTINUED)

258 CONTINUED: 258

FIELD #14

Willie hands off to Sanderson, who hands it to the second wide receiver, Owens, who runs a reverse 20 yards in for a touchdown!

TIME CUT TO:

259 SCOREBOARD #5 259

MIAMI 24, DALLAS 28. FOURTH QUARTER. 12:57...

A259 FIELD #15 A259

The Dallas QB answers right back. Running in for a TD!

260 SIDELINE #9 260

It's now Dallas 35, Miami 24 -- 11 points. We PULL DOWN FROM the scoreboard to:

WILLIE
(re: Dallas QB,
to D'Amato)
Whatsamatter with this guy?
Doesn't he know I'm gonna whip his
ass?

TONY
Maybe no one's told him yet.

CAP
(to Willie)
You can beat him, Willie. I know
his mind... If you hit for another
score now, quickly, he'll fold, I
know it.

Cap's eyes are solid, supportive. Willie believes.

254 CHRISTINA'S LUXURY BOX #5 254

In a quiet moment, Christina notices most of her associates talk business on cell phones or to each other, only watching the game in quick eyebursts -- she hears a buzzing chorale of "increasing market shares" and "merchandizing revenue streams" and "league relocation protocols..." Margaret sits in a quiet corner with a friend, sipping on a Bloody Mary. She smiles over at her daughter.

262 FIELD #16

262

The Shark offense is on the Dallas 25, third and seven. Willie is over the ball. His eyes focus... A Dallas safety has his "go to" foot a slight inch ahead of the other. Willie smiles.

WILLIE

(audibling)

Set! Zorro, Zorro... Red 66,
Red 66... Hut!

Willie spins back and hands the ball off to Washington on a counter. Washington shoots through the line with room to run.

WILLIE

Go, baby!

Downfield, a Dallas defender tries to force Washington out of bounds, but spinning on a dime, Washington cuts back towards the center of the field -- Dallas defenders tackle him -- one, two, three at a time -- but he drags them for another five yards -- into the end zone. Touchdown!... Willie is the first downfield to jump all over him.

TIME CUT TO:

263 SCOREBOARD #6

263

MIAMI 31, DALLAS 35. FOURTH QUARTER. 02:00... Miami time-outs remaining: 2. A WHISTLE BLOWS. The clock runs.

A263 FIELD #17

A263

The Dallas offense at the Miami 24 -- Third and seven.

264 SIDELINE #10

264

Tony talks closely and intently with Willie...

265 FIELD #18

265

The Dallas QB pitches to the flat -- his running back snares the ball and cracks back for a few extra yards -- tired tackling from the exhausted Sharks.

266 SIDELINE #11

266

Fourth down and one. Miami 18-yard line. Tony looks... The Dallas field goal unit is not coming out. They're going for it!

Tony calls a time-out... Shark runs off the field to sidelines. Tony and Monroe converse with Shark.

TUG (V.O.)

... And Dallas is goin' for it!
They're takin' as much time as they can in their huddle. The clock is tickin'. One minute fifty. Whew, am I feeling this in the pit of my stomach! Oh, boy!

INGO (V.O.)

Gutsy move on Dallas's part! Fourth and one, they're taking a big chance here. They could take an easy field goal and even if Miami got a touchdown, the game would go into overtime. But 'Coach U' smells victory now, not a tie, a real gambler...

TUG (V.O.)

... Hey, I'd do the same thing, Ingo. That's the kind of play calling I like! It wins ball games!

267 SIDELINE #12

267

Tony and Willie stand close as we hear:

INGO (V.O.)

This is the game, Tug! If Miami can hold them here, Willie Beamen will have one last chance.

268 PRESS BOX #1

268

Jack Rose is outside himself, rooting.

TUG (V.O.)

This is it, guys and dolls, this is where the famous rubber meets the famous road!

269 MIAMI DEFENSIVE HUDDLE #1 269

Shark, bloody and exhausted, yells at his defensive unit:

SHARK

Y'all gonna make this tackle,
bitches! Everything we done
for is on the line!! This play!
Right now! Right here! Forever!
Be proud!

270 DALLAS HUDDLE #1 270

DALLAS QB

Make the first here, take a knee
and it's hello Minnesota. On one.
Ready?!

They clap and move to the ball.

271 FIELD #19 271

As the Dallas QB scans the defense, Shark calls for a
shift in the Miami defense.

DALLAS QB

Go! 47 Tiger... Monday, Monday...
48 Bandit, 48 Bandit... Hut!

SHARK

(simultaneous to
Dallas QB)

Roll-left! Roll-left! Orbit
Wheel! Strong right! Edge
back! Orbit Left! Omaha Orbit
Left!

The defensive players scurry to new positions.

The Dallas QB shoots back, handing off to the running
back. Shark waits, poised to fill the hole. The back
powers forward, no running lanes -- he bounces to the
outside, sees daylight, speeds for it...

Shark runs desperately to the same hole on his bum and
swollen knee. The runner is almost to the first down
marker -- inches! -- He dives for it!

Shark dives at the exact same time -- an all-out lunge of
sheer faith to stop the first down -- at any cost!

Shark and the runner collide, a loud crash! The runner
is stopped! An inch or two short of the first down
marker! The Miami 18.

- 272 SIDELINE #13 272
 Tony and Monroe go nuts in each other's grasp. Just like the old days!
- A272 SCOREBOARD #7 A272
 Clock stops for the change of possession. 01:34...
- 273 FIELD #20 273
 But Shark lies there like a dead man -- no motion! Dr. Powers and two trainers race onto the field.
- 274 STANDS #7 274
 Shark's wife and kids look on, terrified.
- 275 SIDELINE #14 275
 Tony hurries out, as does Monroe. In b.g., Willie and Cap wait in the grip of fear. The entire team waits. Tony and Monroe now run out.
- TUG (V.O.)
 Shark Lavay is down and it looks bad, but he definitely squashed Dallas's first down, and it's now Miami's ball. I can't think of a finer way to take a hit like that for your teammates!
- INGO (V.O.)
 No, sir! What a great tackle! One for the record books!
- 276 MEDIA BOX #1 276
 ON TV: The tackle replayed... Then the medical cart is shown on the field. Nothing is said. The stadium is hushed.
- INGO (V.O.)
 Well, Miami has one time-out remaining. They're down by 4 with 1:34 left. Nothing less than a touchdown will...

277 FIELD #21

277

Shark is definitely not moving. The ambulance waits near the goalpost. Tony, Powers, Monroe, and the trainers wait helplessly.

MONROE

Shark, talk to me please!

(to others)

Jesus Christ, is this the way
it starts...? Is he ever gonna...?

They ease him onto a stretcher when suddenly Shark's eyes open, falling on Tony with a glazy smile -- and a huge headache!

SHARK

(weakly)

... I... stop 'em?

TONY

(deeply relieved)

Oh, Shark! You stopped 'em cold,
baby! Godammit!

MONROE

You got the bonus, baby! A
million bucks!

SHARK

(dreamy)

A million dollars...!

(sees Powers)

Say, Powers...?

Powers AD LIBS.

SHARK

Are you still white?

278 STANDS #8

278

Both sets of fans roar their appreciation for his valor, as he tries to acknowledge them with a weak wave of his arm, as they cart him off.

279 STANDS #9

279

Shark's family, next to Willie's mom, reacts with great relief and joy.

(CONTINUED)

279 CONTINUED:

279

TUG (V.O.)

He's okay! He's okay! Shark Lavay, one of the greatest the game has ever seen, has probably played his last game, but I can think of no...

280 SIDELINE #15

280

Tony clasps Willie by the shoulders.

TONY

He gave you the shot, Willie. Now take it.

(as Willie nods)

... It's your time.

Willie runs out, the crowd going nuts!

281 FIELD #22

281

First and ten on the Miami 18. 82 yards to go. 1:34...

WILLIE

drops back in the shotgun formation -- no pass lanes open, all covered, Willie drops a short screen to Julian, who dazzles on a 16-yarder out of bounds.

TIME CUT TO:

282 SCOREBOARD #8

282

MIAMI 31, DALLAS 35. FOURTH QUARTER. 00:55...

TUG (V.O.)

Second and ten. 66 yards to go. 55 seconds. One false step and that's all she wrote, my friends.

INGO (V.O.)

Coach D'Amato is gonna need every blessed one of those seconds.

283 HUDDLE #4

283

Willie notices Sanderson is rattled, his eyes closed, sweating a storm.

(CONTINUED)

283 CONTINUED:

283

WILLIE

Fourth Quarter. 55 seconds left.
It's do or die. Pro Left Red 88
Bronco. On two... You tight,
'Sandman'?

Eye to eye.

SANDERSON

Tighter than pussy on pre-wedding
day...

WILLIE

(grins)

That's why you're the best! You
like pussy as much as I do! Okay
then, let's show these big-ass
Texas boys what road-kill looks
like! Keep it lethal, 'money.
We're through on two.

284 FIELD #23

284

Willie in shotgun formation -- Three wide outs.

WILLIE

(scans the defense,
audibles)

Set! Red 44... Razor, Razor... 88
Sally, 88 Sally... Hut! Hut!

Willie again sees nothing, the receivers all expertly
covered. But then he sees -- a chance -- a desperate
chance -- Sanderson is slanting free downfield --

285 SIDELINE #16

285

Tony sees it as well:

TONY

Do it! Do it!

286 FIELD #24

286

Willie takes that cubic centimeter of chance; he flings
it deep... In breathless suspense, the ball sails.
Sanderson, sweating like a pig in his helmet, sees it,
adjusts his route mid-stride... It's as if it is his soul
flying towards him, which he now catches! And then runs
it in another 15 yards into the end zone! A miracle!
Jimmy Sanderson feels himself freed of the demons!

287 SIDELINE #17 287

A frenzied celebration on the Miami sideline -- in the stands -- they've won! But suddenly... Tony is crestfallen.

288 FIELD #25 288

A yellow penalty flag lies on the field... Holding!

REFEREE #3

No touchdown. Holding on offense #69. Repeat second down. Ten yards.

Madman furiously shoves Referee #3 in argument, and the Referee ejects him from the game (AD LIB).

INGO (V.O.)

Oh, that might just be the back-breaker right there!

TUG (V.O.)

That would take the air out of any tire. It's gonna take an enormous amount of will now to...

289 LUXURY BOX #5 289

Christina and her guests groan.

THEIR POV

The entire field stretches before Willie and the offense in the huddle. Never has 76 yards looked so long.

BACK TO SCENE

Christina sits down next to her mother; they talk AD LIB -- a new attitude shaping between them.

290 HUDDLE #4 290

39 seconds.

WILLIE

Okay, this is the way I like it -- we got 'em just where we want 'em.

WASHINGTON

You are such a punk!

(CONTINUED)

290 CONTINUED:

290

WILLIE

Watch your mouth or I'll take it
in myself.

WASHINGTON

I liked you better when you were
puking.

WILLIE

Nice and easy, boys. One play at
a time. Keep the routes sharp and
kiss the sideline like it's the
hottest momma you ever seen and we
are there! Lemme hear it,
brothers!

(as the team roars)

Lemme hear it again!

(louder, even more
inspired)

Now let's see the swagger,
motherfuckers!

The team claps, breaks, and starts to the line. The
Dallas defense is worn by the swagger and trash-talking
coming right at them.

CAP (V.O.)

(helmet)

... take another pop at that
weakside safety. He's pretending.

291 MONTAGE #5 - TWO-MINUTE DRILL (5TH GAME)

291

FIELD #26

A flurry of plays -- Tony firmly in control -- each play
well-called and quickly executed -- relayed from Tony to
Crozier, to Cap to Willie. A chain of minds. Every
person doing their job.

QUICK CUTS AND FLASHES

Subjective -- A caught pass -- a runner leaps out of
bounds -- a screen pass slanting out of bounds...

292 COACHES' BOOTH #1

292

Crozier reeling off the plays in conjunction with Tony.

(CONTINUED)

292 CONTINUED: 292

HIS POV

The Sharks moving downfield like a ravaged but hungry 4th quarter machine. Sanderson is back to his natural glory, playing without the help of substances.

A292 SCOREBOARD #9 A292

MIAMI 31, DALLAS 35. 35 yards to go. 13 seconds.

293 FIELD #27 293

Willie, gazing over the defense at the line, doesn't like what he sees, calls his last "time out."

TUG (V.O.)

That's it! The last one!
Something seems to be wrong!

294 SIDELINE #18 294

Willie jogs over to Tony.

WILLIE

They had it cold.

TONY

Smart move. How ya doing?

WILLIE

I'm ready to win.

TONY

You know, there's something important I gotta ask you...

WILLIE

What's that?

TONY

That day you came over to my house, I made dinner for you?

WILLIE

(wary)
Yeah?

TONY

Did you not like the jambalaya?

Willie looks at him and laughs.

(CONTINUED)

294 CONTINUED:

294

WILLIE

Well, frankly, Coach, it sucked --
needed more seasoning... That's
why I been throwing up every
week.

TONY

(smiles)

I thought that. Just go out and
kick their ass and win the game!

TIME CUT TO:

295 FIELD #28

295

Willie scans the end zone -- would love to take a shot --
but there's nothing -- he throws the ball away, spikes
the clock.

A295 SCOREBOARD #10

A295

Now reads 35 yards, 9 seconds left...

296 SIDELINE #20

296

Tony stares at the field, at Willie, deep in thought --
it seems the biggest decision of his career is always now.

TONY

(to Crozier)

Comanche.

INTERCUT WITH:

A296 COACH'S BOOTH #2

A296

CROZIER

You're kidding!

TONY

Let the kid do his thing!

CROZIER

Jesus Christ, Tony, we got nine
seconds -- ! You're banking on...

Tony casts his eyes skyward at Crozier in the box.

(CONTINUED)

A296 CONTINUED:

A296

TONY

This is what coaching's all about,
Nick. You up to it?

Crozier breathes and relays the play to Cap, on to Willie.

CROZIER

Okay you got it. Spread West
Hustle 60 Comanche Right. Remind
him he's got the option -- rifle
or spread formation, check at the
line...

297 HUDDLE #5

297

Willie hears it from Cap and looks over at Tony in
amazement. Tony nods... Willie shakes his head. Okay!

WILLIE

(loose)

Okay, guys, it can't get more fun
than this! I swear to God I
didn't call this one. Spread
West Hustle 60 Comanche Right,
check with me. On one. Ready.

WASHINGTON

Man has balls of iron.

WILLIE

Tony is the man! We together on
this, J-man?

WASHINGTON

Dynamic duo, brother.

WILLIE

I feel you. Let's see that all-
pro strut, baby! Ready? Check
with me on one. Ready?

298 FIELD #29

298

They break and line up over the ball. Willie scans the
defense.

WILLIE

Set, Rifle 22, Rifle 22! Hut!

(CONTINUED)

298 CONTINUED:

298

Willie pump fakes a pass to Sanderson -- the Dallas defenders flinch left to cover him -- Willie immediately takes off right with the ball, skimming the outside of the line -- Madman delivers a devastating block -- Julian runs slightly behind Willie, ready to throw his block --

... but Willie sees some daylight, and tears down the sideline -- the Dallas safety is racing him -- Just as he zooms in on Willie, he laterals the ball to Julian just behind him...

Julian snags the ball -- leaps around the safety, who slams Willie out of bounds --

Julian races against time down the sideline, turning on the afterburners -- the game clock.

A298 SCOREBOARD #11:

A298

Game clock ticking down... 00:07... 00:06... 00:05...

INTERCUT WITH:

B298 SIDELINE #20

B298

Faces: Tony, Cap, Monroe, others...

INTERCUT WITH:

C298 STANDS #10

C298

Faces: Cindy, others...

D298 FIELD #30

D298

A Dallas corner is moving fast onto Julian -- but Julian, flashing the clock, plays smart -- without selfishness -- no dazzling spin moves -- no evasions -- he dives out of bounds.

E298 SCOREBOARD #12

E298

The clock freezes. Three yards to go. No penalty. Four seconds. One play.

TUG (V.O.)

Oh my God! My heart is up in my mouth right now! Ingo! This is what football's all about...

Torture!

299 SIDELINE #21

299

TONY
 (to Crozier, re:
 Willie's running)
 He's still holding onto that thing
 like a loaf of bread. Someone's
 gonna take it from him.
 (to Cap and QB coach;
 looking at Willie)
 ... Is he okay?!
 (to Julian)
 Way to run!
 (to Cap and staff)
 He did it for once! He thought
 with his head, not his balls --
 unselfish! Great move... let's
 go... four seconds. One time.
 I love this game!

300 PRESS BOX #2

300

Jack Rose is as excited as any 11-year-old kid, praying
 to more worldly gods.

301 LUXURY BOX #6

301

Christina and her Mother share the moment of together,
 rooting for once as a family.

302 SIDELINE #22

302

Willie now huddles with Tony, forehead to forehead,
 talking low, confidently, as Cap listens.

TONY
 Take a breath...

WILLIE
 Okay... okay...

TONY
 You set?

WILLIE
 Yeah.

TONY
 Then make 'em believe, Willie.
 This time. Now.

(CONTINUED)

- 302 CONTINUED: 302
- CAP
- Remember: See it before you do
it, kid.
- Willie nods and runs back onto the field, as there are no
time outs left!
- B301 SCOREBOARD #13 B301
- MIAMI 31, DALLAS 35. FOURTH QUARTER. 00:04...
- 302 STANDS #11 302
- The fans are in an uproar, stomping, screaming! A man in
a gorilla suit with a placard: "I've gone ape over
Willie!" is pushed and mauled by irate Dallas fans. Off
flies his ape head!
- 303 HUDDLE #7 303
- WILLIE
- Well, it's our time in the sun,
guys.
- (looks into each
face)
- One on one, man on man, together!
Left Tank Stack 421 Rhino. Lean
and mean. On three. Ready!
- They break and line up over the ball at the four yard
line. Willie scans the defensive alignment. The play
clock marches...
- 304 STANDS - DAY (LAST PLAY) 304
- The breathless crowd...
- 305 FIELD #31 - POV - DALLAS DEFENDERS 305
- pointing, shifting positions, trying to confuse Willie.
- 306 SIDE LINE #23 306
- Players kneeling on the sidelines, some praying, barely
daring to watch, some chewing nails, others screaming
encouragement... Cap Rooney whispers a silent prayer for
Willie. Coach D'Amato -- the picture of a man at a zenith
in his life...

307 FIELD #32

307

WILLIE

Set Black 66, Black 66. Hut!
Hut! Hut!

A sudden torrent of movement -- Miami slams forward -- Dallas slams back -- in SLOW MOTION, Julian reaches for the handoff -- the ball slaps into his stomach -- a convincing fake -- as Willie keeps the ball -- Julian leaps left -- Dallas defenders surge to cover him -- at that moment Willie chooses to go right back over the hole Julian has collapsed.

High over the goal line -- he seems to sail through the air for suspended moments -- he is almost there -- almost across the plain of the goal line, almost to glory -- as a wall of Dallas players rise up to meet him like a breaker at sea... Willie crashes into it...

A307 BRIEF SHOT OF GHOST

A307

whoever he be -- from another time -- diving with him.

Willie seems to bauble the football as he disappears into "big Wednesday." All SOUND CEASES. Wind plays off the grass... In the silence of the major pileup, bodies draped and intertwined like smoking car wrecks, referee #2 digs out the players, one by one, looking for the ball ... the tension rising to extraordinary heights! Where the fuck is it?

A307 SIDELINE #24

A307

Tony waits silently...

TUG (V.O.)

I think he lost it, Ingo!

B307 FIELD #33

B307

A player peels off, revealing Willie smiling, the ball held awkwardly up around his neck, but firmly in his possession... Referee #2's arms now shoot up in SLOW MOTION -- touchdown! The Miami players go absolutely nuts! The Dallas players are stunned, protesting!... Willie is hauled into the air by his ecstatic teammates. The Dallas crowd is stunned and silent; Miami fans are ecstatic!

TUG (V.O.)

I've seen Mecca, Ingo!! I have
seen Mecca! I am redeemed!

C307 PRESS BOX #2 C307

Even Jack Rose is in love with the Sharks again.

ROSE
 (into his TV camera)
 'Never say never.' My Sharkies
 have done it! A few short weeks
 ago, who would've believed Willie
 Beamen...?

D307 SCOREBOARD #13 D307

MIAMI 37, DALLAS 35. FOURTH QUARTER. 00:00...

E307 SIDELINE #25 E307

Pandemonium on the Shark sideline. Tony falls to his
 knees in a prayer-like position... then finally rises,
 and runs across the field to hug the Dallas coach.

308 INT. SHARK LOCKER ROOM - LOCKER ROOM #4 - NIGHT 308

Jubilation in the locker room... Willie gives and receives
 congratulations from all...

Cap Rooney searches out Willie in the chaos. Their eyes
 meet, with respect.

CAP
 Great game... whoever you are.

WILLIE
 Thank you, Cap.

They nod to each other. Simple as that.

SERIES OF DISSOLVES: The players and reporters and team
 personnel gradually disappear until Coach D'Amato and
 Rooney are left in a corner of the quiet locker room.

CAP
 I'm calling it quits.

TONY
 You sure?

CAP
 I'm sure.

A beat.

(CONTINUED)

308 CONTINUED:

308

TONY

I'm sorry I put you in, Cap.

CAP

Oh, hell!

(actually swears,
relieved)

I'm not. They needed to see me fail. So I did! And I'm glad Cindy got a taste of it. Now maybe I can get on with my life... I'll see you around the pasture, old man.

He exits.

309 OMITTED

309

310 COACH'S LOCKER ROOM #2 - LATER

310

Christina reenters the same small room where she fought with Tony at halftime.

CHRISTINA

Congratulations!

TONY

Thanks.

CHRISTINA

How's Cap?

TONY

He's okay. He'll be leaving after the season... So will I...

She nods, not surprised.

CHRISTINA

(nods)

I'm sorry it ended up this way, Tony, I know you don't believe it but I really am... Seeing the team out there today -- it was like going back in time...

(remembering)

God, it was beautiful football!

TONY

It was. It was beautiful.

A beat.

(CONTINUED)

310 CONTINUED:

310

CHRISTINA

This used to be a hell of a sport,
didn't it?

TONY

It still is.

He walks on. Christina watches after him.

311 EXT. TEXAS STADIUM - NIGHT

311

Tony walks out onto the field where Willie stands alone,
a football in hand, watching as the groundskeepers unroll
the large tarps and stadium personnel pick through the
stands. The stars are abundant this night.

TONY

Nice night.

They walk together across the field.

WILLIE

Mmm... Can't get over Cap. I
learned more watching him in the
first half than I did in five
seasons... Next week I'm gonna
win it just for him.

TONY

Glad to see success hasn't gone to
your head too much, kid...

WILLIE

Steamin' Beamen...? Never.

TONY

Don't pat the ball.

WILLIE

Coach...?

TONY

Don't pat the ball before you
throw, it's getting to be a habit,
and they're seeing it too easy...

(as Willie looks at
the ball he is
holding)

This is your moment, Willie.
Savor it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TONY (CONT'D)

(beat)

But never forget: on any given Sunday, you're either gonna win or you're gonna lose. The point is...

WILLIE

'... Can you take it like a man?' I got it, Coach!

Tony gazes around the stadium, taking it all in.

TONY

Next year I'm out of here.

WILLIE

... I figgered...

TONY

I'm not the right guy for this team anymore. I wanna see my grandkids. I wanna start living again... I wanna wait on a grocery line. I wanna walk on a sidewalk. I wanna do nothing... As long as it's not fishing...

WILLIE

(laughs)

... I don't think there's anything else you could do, Coach.

TONY

... There was this great quarterback in the '70s I knew. This guy was one tough sonofabitch. Fought for every inch he got. Didn't have your natural skill, this guy, but he made it happen, he won... So time went by and he didn't know it, but his day was over. He couldn't go deep like he used to and he started missing the easy underneath routes... the game was just passing him by... Anyway, I ran into him a few weeks ago in L.A. and we had a few beers, we started talking and you know what he said?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

311 CONTINUED: (2)

311

TONY (CONT'D)

He said that when looked back at those 200 whatever-they-were Sundays, he didn't really miss the Pantheon Cups or the girls or the money or even the goddamned glory! What he missed were those other guys looking back at him in the huddle. Those eleven guys -- their names he could hardly remember -- but it was their faces he remembered... every one of 'em seeing things the same way. Looking downfield. Together.

(beat)

That's what he missed... I'll miss you, amigo.

Tony pats Willie affectionately on the arm and walks off. Willie's expression is gentle, appreciative. He drops back three quick, lithe steps, and sails a long, perfect spiral down the empty field.

WILLIE

So... my arm, y'know, Coach, I met with this specialist and...

He turns to look for Tony. But he's already gone.

WILLIE

(quietly, to himself)

I'm scared...

312 EXT. VERANDA (MIAMI VILLA) - DAY

312

Press conference.

SUPERIMPOSE: ONE MONTH LATER

TONY

(as if in response to Willie)

... Hey, we're all scared. If you think any coach these days got himself a secure visa out of Casablanca, you need a Mandrake X-ray.

(off laughter)

I'm a triple-decker stress sandwich right now...

(CONTINUED)

REPORTER #1

Why's that, Coach? The 32-13 loss
to Minnesota?

TONY

(smiles)

Not even close... try fishing,
Johnny.

He's responding off-handedly to a FEMALE REPORTER'S question on the stairs leading up to the veranda of an Italian-style villa housing the Pagniacchi Foundation. The group mills nervously; something's in the air.

TIME CUT TO:

CHRISTINA

stands before the assembled press corps -- Coach D'Amato moving to her side on cue. Nick Crozier sits close by. Margaret Pagniacchi and the Mayor attend.

CHRISTINA

(reading)

Thank you all for coming today...
I guess you've heard all the
rumors about the Sharks leaving
for Los Angeles because Mayor
Smalls was reportedly unable to
get City Council approval for
stadium improvements...

(as Smalls tightens)

... but let me make this as clear
as I can to you: We -- the Sharks
-- have no intention of leaving
Miami. We love this town, and we
love our Shark Stadium -- and we
will continue to remodel it, at
whatever cost, to make it a home
away from home for our fans!

(looking pointedly at
the Mayor)

And we have great confidence at
the final hour that our Mayor will
be there for us...

The Mayor accepts the applause, but some in the press mutter among themselves, believing they know the real story.

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINA

... You know, I came to a revelation recently. I realized how much I love this game, and I want to live up to what my father left me: a legacy, a feeling that this is our house -- the Pagniacchi house... I am resolved therefore to stick it out here in Miami because the Pagniacchis are not quitters and we will never let this town down!

As they applaud, Christina turns to Margaret. United behind the family name, they seem to have discovered each other again.

CHRISTINA

Nick...?

(sees Nick standing)

Nick Crozier -- our new Head Coach. Welcome!

(as Crozier nods in response to the polite applause)

Tony D! Thank you!... Always! Wherever you go, know this: you will always be a 'Shark' in your heart. You will always be remembered with great respect and love. 'Whatever it takes,' right?... And Tony...? Thanks for making me understand what I'd forgotten -- that football is more than a game. It's a way of life! Tony D'Amato, everybody, give him a hand!

She hugs Tony as he steps to the podium.

TONY

Thank you, Christy... I really am sorry I've not been able to deliver to you and the fans another Pantheon Cup. San Francisco sure took care of that for me...

(off good-natured laughter)

It's been way too long not to win the Big One. But in football, as in life, things change and fresh blood is needed...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TONY (CONT'D)

(beat)

... So I guess it's time for me to get the hell outta the way. Bring in the new. I think Nick Crozier is gonna do a great job...

(nods to Crozier)

... Most of all, I wanna thank the people of Miami for their long support over these last 20-something years... Geez, it flew by like... like any other Sunday, but it's meant everything to me and I've had a great ride. Too good a ride for any one man. I'm gonna miss you all. Thank you...

There is significant, heartfelt applause from some, not all. Rose, in spite of himself, is regretful to see his nemesis depart, muttering to a colleague.

ROSE

I'm gonna miss that arrogant S.O.B...

(studying Crozier)

Crozier's a wimp compared to D'Amato.

Tony acknowledges the applause, about to leave the podium -- but then seems to change his mind.

TONY

... I almost forgot... In thinking about change, I guess I felt it was time for me to change, too. Y'know, like an old vampire, I need a new blood supply...

(some laughter)

it was Willie Beamen who taught me how... to give it another shot.

(as the press is murmuring, wondering)

... So, starting today, I am taking over as Head Coach of that new expansion team in Albuquerque, New Mexico, the Aztecs.

(as a wave of questions roll across the balcony)

Why? 'Cause they're giving me full management control. How can I pass that up? I guess the bigger I get, the more ridiculous!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

312 CONTINUED: (4)

312

TONY (CONT'D)

(off laughter)

... But hoping not to make a fool out of myself out there, I have just signed Willie Beamen as starting Quarterback and 'franchise player' for the Aztecs...

Now there is pandemonium on the veranda. Christina's expression drops, crossed. Crozier looks like he's going to throw up. Tony grins. That's the way it goes.

TONY

So, Miss P., I look forward to seeing you next year across those sidelines... and calling it what it always was and still is: a game. Let's keep it that way... So long, everybody.

He waves and walks out -- leaving Christina and Crozier to deal with a bewildered and upset press corps.

FADE TO:

313 EXT. PLAYING FIELD #1 - DAY

313

The same image that opened the story:

A football field. Any football field.

Grass sways in the wind.

THE END