

ADJUSTING THE OFFENSE

Written by

17-DE04-W023

A super star high school football quarterback learns the importance of leadership and respect the hard way.

INT. LOCKER ROOM AT HALF TIME - NIGHT

Lincoln High school football team filters into the locker room at Half-Time. The racially diverse group of Seniors enters: TY (18) running back; ELLIOT (17) wide receiver; MIKE (18) linesman; REGGIE (18) linesman; CHRIS (19) backup QB, gorgeous but dumb, wearing Homecoming crown from Half-Time ceremony. JOE HANSON (14 but looks 24), celebrity good looks, muscular, 6'3", first-string quarterback enters next to his best friend BEN (14) 5'3", bony, puppy-cute, bouncy, prepubescent-looking team manager/water boy.

BEN

Oh man, Joe, you're killing it!
That 50-yard touchdown run was like
"What the?" And the crowd was like,
"YEAHHH!" Everyone was going nuts!

JOE

(smiling)
I'm pumped, man. Washington's
tough, but I'm taking 'em down!

Guttural growl from Joe. Ben and Joe High Five slap.

BEN

Hey, I heard two of the NFHS guys
are in the stands. Think they're
looking at Coach for Hall of Fame?

JOE

Yeah. It's why I need to win and go
undefeated this season. The Hall of
Fame award belongs to Coach!

COACH WINTERS (50s) enters with other coaches.

COACH

Gather 'round guys.

Coach is talking to the entire team, but his arm is on Joe's shoulder and most of his speech is directed at Joe.

COACH (CONT'D)

Great job out there. Let's keep
things going. We're only 4 points
ahead...

The team howls and cheers.

COACH (CONT'D)

...but we still have another half
left to play, so stay focused. Stay
hungry.

(MORE)

COACH (CONT'D)

You've been doing great all season,
but the level of play tonight has
been phenomenal. Joe, you are on
fire, son. Keep making me proud.
This Homecoming crowd is loving it.

Coach continues his motivational speech in the background.
GRANITA "GRANNIE" BAKER (50s), Team Medical/Physical
Therapist enters with First Aid kit. She heads towards the
Seniors and starts cutting tape and gauze to size. Seniors
whisper quietly among themselves.

ELLIOT

What the? Joe's on fire? What about
us?

MIKE

Yeah, what's that about? Our line's
holding Washington like a brick
wall. Joe would be getting sacked
constantly if it wasn't for us.

TY

And it's not like Joe's throwing
AND catching his own passes.

CHRIS

Yeah! Joe's like the Teacher's Pet
except Coach isn't a teacher, he's
like a coach.

"Chris Eye-Roll" from the guys. They're accustomed to his
ineptitude.

REGGIE

This stinks, man! It stinks.

Grannie cleans and tapes up Chris' finger.

TY

Yo, Grannie. Why you taping up
Chris? He ain't even played yet.

CHRIS

No, I nicked my finger on my crown.
See, it's bloody.

"Chris Eye-Roll" from the guys.

GRANNIE

I take care of all my boys. How's
that feel, Honey?

CHRIS
It's good. Thanks, Grannie.

Coach pulls out a gift bag.

COACH
I was gonna wait until after the
game, but this first half - wow!

The Seniors watch resentfully, arms crossed.

COACH (CONT'D)
I had this towel made especially
for you, Joe. Stand on up here.

Joe pulls a fluffy, white towel from the bag. Embroidered are the words, "Powerful. Perfect. Pretty. Joe Hanson. Lincoln High 2017." Team cheers, but not the Seniors. Ben claps and bounces excitedly.

MIKE
(under breath)
Coach forgot the word "Peacock."

ELLIOT
(under breath)
And "Puke-able."

Joe hangs the towel around his neck with pride.

JOE
Wow, thanks, Coach. I'll cherish
this forever. I love it. Thank you!

COACH
But, we still need a win tonight.

JOE
You bet, Coach. In fact, I had a
really crazy dream about winning
last night. In my dream, the team
carried me off the field in
victory. I was even wearing the
Homecoming King's crown and the
whole stadium was going crazy as I
got carried off.

Teammates look over at Chris who still wears the crown on his head. Chris is genuinely confused.

JOE (CONT'D)
It was incredible, Coach. I woke up
with goose bumps. Because of that
dream, I KNOW we're gonna win.
(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

And tonight, the NFHS is gonna see
that YOU deserve the Coach's Hall
of Fame award. I'm winning
tonight's game for you.

Chris looks from face to face looking for answers.

CHRIS

Wait, I thought I got voted
Homecoming King.

MIKE

You did, you idiot. He's only
Homecoming King in his dreams.

Coach smiles big and slaps Joe fondly on the back.

COACH

Okay, okay guys. We'll be going
back out in a bit so rest up.

The coaches exit. The Seniors walk thuglike up to Joe.

REGGIE

Hate to break it to you, freshman,
but you ain't Homecoming King...

CHRIS

(wearing crown; still
genuinely confused)
Yeah, 'cuz I think I am-

MIKE

And NO ONE is carrying you off the
field...except to maybe a dumpster.

BEN

It was just his dream, you guys. He
wasn't saying that-

REGGIE

No one's talking to you, little
girl.

Ben looks down. Joe stands. He's a head taller than Reggie.

JOE

Don't talk to Ben like that.

REGGIE

Aw, did the water boy get his
feelings hurt?

JOE

He's not the water boy. He's team manager. He's as vital to this team as I am.

MIKE

You're right he's as vital as you, freshman, 'cuz you ain't vital. Coach might be pumping that big fat head of yours full of hot air, but you best keep your conceited dreams to yourself.

Joe says nothing, stands firm, watching them walk away.

BEN

Thanks, Joe.

JOE

Yeah, man. You always stuck up for me in second grade when I got bullied, too.

BEN

(smiling)

Back when I was bigger than you. Before you hit puberty.

JOE

Hey, you'll always be four months older than me. You're like the big brother I never had.

Ben nods, slaps Joe's back like a big brother.

BEN

(in a lower octave)

Yeah...

The seniors huddle in a circle and speak in hushed voices.

MIKE

I'm so sick of Joe thinking he IS the team.

TY

This is OUR last Homecoming. We're the stars of this team, not him.

MIKE

You know what we should do?

Mike looks at the other Seniors with dramatic pause.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Reggie, we should open up and let Washington break through the line.

Reggie laughs until he sees Mike is serious.

REGGIE

You're serious? No way, man. I need that football scholarship. Recruiters are in the stands. No way I'm messing up my chances.

TY

Me either, Mike. Those recruiters can't see me take a dive. I need a scholarship.

MIKE

I'm not saying to tank the whole game. I'm not an idiot. I want to win, too. I'm talking one play. I just want Joe Hanson to taste what it's like for the team to not have his back, you know? Reggie and I'll let Washington in. Ty and Elliott, don't be open for passes. Simple.

The Seniors all look over at Joe who is talking to Ben and other teammates. As he smiles, his teeth sparkle.

TY

Woah, did you see that? His teeth sparkled! Like in a toothpaste commercial!

CHRIS

I saw it too!

REGGIE

Man, would I like to see that pretty boy's face covered in dirt!

MIKE

C'mon, we gotta do this! Who's in?

The guys hesitantly nod. Ty sighs.

TY

Only one play? Whatever. I'm in.

CHRIS

Wait, what if Joe gets hurt? I'm backup QB. I don't want to be the reason we lose Homecoming!

MIKE

He's not gonna get hurt. And even
if he does, aren't you sick of
being in this freshman's shadow?

Chris unsurely shakes his head no. Mike nods yes to show
Chris he has answered incorrectly. Chris unsurely nods yes.

FADE TO:

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD, SECOND HALF - NIGHT

Scoreboard: Home 14; Visitors 10. Offense on the field.
Huddle breaks. They set up at the Line of Scrimmage.

JOE

Ready! Green 52. Yellow 31. Red 44.
Hut!

The Center snaps the ball to Joe. Mike and Reggie meekly
block, letting Washington in. Joe is surprised by the lack of
defense. He breaks left to avoid being tackled. He looks for
an open receiver. They are not available.

COACH

WHAT IS GOING ON!!!!?

Joe evades tacklers, and decides to run the ball himself. He
bolts for the end zone, zigzagging, avoiding and knocking
down opponents. At the 20-yard line Joe stiff arms the Strong
Safety on the right, who goes down. The Free Safety rams Joe
on the left, but Joe body-pushes back. The FS stumbles hard.
At the 10-yard line, a player grabs Joe's right leg. Another
grabs Joe's left leg, but Joe keeps running, dragging the
guys with him. Just as he arrives at the end zone, other
players pile on Joe, pummelling him from different angles.
The touchdown is good. The stadium erupts in pandemonium.

As the opponents stand, Joe is not moving and his nose is
gushing blood. He is unconscious.

MIKE

No. No. Oh no!

COACH

Medical! Medical!

Ben sprints to Joe's side with water and the new towel. Ty
kneels remorsefully by Joe. Coach arrives. Ben and Ty wipe
and clean Joe's bloody face. The pretty white towel is soaked
in dirt and blood. Medical team arrives.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - CLOSE UP OF JOE - NIGHT

Joe, finally conscious, raises hand and waves. Standing ovation from crowd. The bloody towel slips off stretcher, and falls to the ground. Coach picks up Joe's bloody towel. He furiously walks back to his team at the sidelines.

WIDE SHOT - COACH SCREAMS AT TEAM. SENIORS HANG THEIR HEADS IN SHAME.

INT. SCHOOL MEDICAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Joe tries to sit up but he's dizzy. Grannie check's Joe's limbs for breaks.

JOE

When can I go back out, Grannie?

GRANNIE

You want the good news or the bad news first?

JOE

Good news.

GRANNIE

You're built like a tank. You should be a mess, but you somehow emerged relatively unscathed.

JOE

And the bad news?

GRANNIE

You've got a bad knee sprain and some pretty nasty bruises.

She touches areas beside his knee. He winces.

GRANNIE (CONT'D)

Some swelling there. But, you'll live. Maybe a two week recovery?

JOE

No Grannie, I need to go back in.

GRANNIE

To this game? Why?

JOE

My team needs me.

GRANNIE

Need you? Honey, you got purposely thrown under the bus. Did you not see that?

Joe is quiet for awhile.

JOE

No, I did.

GRANNIE

I'm guessing the boys want to take you down a few notches.

JOE

I just want to do my best. I don't get why that makes them hate me.

GRANNIE

Well, you're a freshman starting quarterback on Varsity. You look like a human Ken doll. You're clearly Coach's favorite. The crowd loves you. And your sweat smells like freshly baked chocolate chip cookies.

JOE

Why are those bad things?

GRANNIE

They're not, and I'm not saying what the guys did was right. Boy, are they in for a world of hurt with Coach. But, honey, you want this team to win?

He nods.

GRANNIE (CONT'D)

Or do you just want to be King of the world?

Joe thinks about it.

JOE

No, I want the team to win.

GRANNIE

Then quit selling tickets to your one-man show.

JOE

What do you mean?

GRANNIE

Some people think power comes by just being great. And you are pretty great. You know that.

JOE

Yes ma'am.

GRANNIE

But, it's not just about you being bigger better stronger than everyone else. True power comes with impacting others to be great as well.

JOE

Grannie, I can't control what other people do or don't do.

GRANNIE

No, but you can influence. Kid, you've already got all the qualities of a great leader. Use that to inspire your team to be part of your vision. Don't just win the game. Win your team.

Joe winces as he stretches his hurt leg and arm.

JOE

Wrap me up good, Grannie. I'm going back out.

GRANNIE

Next game, Joe. You took a good beating. It's time to rest.

She starts to walk. Joe stops her by holding her arm. He stares intensely in her eyes.

JOE

Grannie. Ty and Reggie need to shine for those recruiters tonight. Coach deserves the Hall of Fame. Chris needs to wear his crown without shame. Tonight is not about me. It's about the team. But. I. Need. You. Will you help me help the team? Help me. Help them.

GRANNIE

Shut up. Just shut up. You had me
at "Grannie."

CUT TO:

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD GAME - NIGHT

The scoreboard now reads Home 21, Visitors 24. Only a few minutes left in the 4th quarter. Joe limp-walks out of the tunnel. Everyone gasps and murmurs. You can almost see a holy halo of light enveloping Joe as he walks.

CHRIS

(sincerely relieved)
OHH, there IS a God who answers
prayers!

COACH

How're you doing, son? You alright?
You're not walking so good.

JOE

I'm okay, Coach. I just gotta warm
it up. How's it going out here?

COACH

We're in trouble. Washington's
ahead by 3 now and we only have a
few minutes left on the clock.

JOE

Put me back in, Coach.

COACH

But, you're hurt. I can't-

JOE

I'll be fine. Grannie taped me up
good. We can do this, Coach.

COACH

Are you sure?

Joe looks at the Seniors.

JOE

Can we do this, guys?

MIKE

Definitely, man. Glad you're okay-

Joe gives Mike and Reggie a brotherly hand slap/shake.

JOE

Everything's cool. Let's go out there and do what we do best. Are you okay with that, Chris?

CHRIS

Are you kidding? Yes! Thank God!

SERIES OF SHOTS - JOE RUNS SEVERAL UNCHARACTERISTICALLY SELFLESS PLAYS. TEAM NOTICES AND THEY PLAY WITH UNITY.

Only seconds left on the clock. 30-yard line. The team huddles. Fourth Down.

JOE

One play left. A field goal would only tie us up and it's not a guarantee. We need a touchdown.

REGGIE

Run the ball, Joe.

JOE

No. This is Ty's time. I'm gonna throw it.

TY

That's riskier. Their defense is powerful. They've been all over me. We already know you can plow through them. Run the ball, Joe.

JOE

I'll get it to you, Ty. Go wide and break to the inside.

At the snap, Washington tries to break through, but the linesmen hold the line. Ty and Elliot get swarmed by the defense. Joe considers running it, but sees Ty evade and head toward the end zone. Joe bullet-throws like he's threading a needle. Ty sees it coming high and jumps above the others. Catches it. Touchdown. Everyone is stunned. The stadium erupts. The team runs to Joe who is running to Ty. They tackle both playfully. Chris grabs his Homecoming crown and places it on Joe. The Seniors pick up Joe and Ty, carrying them both off the field. Joe laughs as he takes the crown off and places it on Ty's head. They High Five each other.

FADE TO BLACK.

