

Touchdown Kid

By Tim Green
(Chapter 7 excerpt)

The Cicero Falcons arrived at the field, and after brief warm-ups, eleven of Glenwood Cougars' finest took the field to battle them. While Cory stewed in shame for thinking Coach McMahan might actually have had a place for him, Liam ran wild out on the field. Cory didn't know if it was because Liam knew Coach McMahan was watching, or if it was just that his stars were all lined up perfectly, but by halftime Liam had run 126 yards and scored two touchdowns. The only reason he didn't have more was because the Cougars quarterback had a serious case of the fumbles. Three times he lost the snap in the red zone before being yanked from the game and replaced by the backup quarterback late in the second quarter.

The fumbles, along with a dozen penalties, cost the team the lead. They were down 28-14, and during halftime, with the boys all sitting cross-legged on the grass in the end zone sucking on orange wedges, Coach Mellon stomped among them like an ogre. Cory wondered how much was a show for Coach McMahan's benefit – Mellon wanting to impress the HBS coach with his intensity and toughness. Real or not, three kids got clunked on the head by Coach Mellon's clipboard.

Whether it was the clipboard or the yelling, the Cougars began the second half like a house on fire. Their defense forced the Falcons to punt after three plays, and then Liam led the march right back down the field. They were on the goal line ready to score when Liam ran a toss sweep to the strong side, where the defense was waiting for him.

And then it happened – almost like in a movie – all slow motion. Cory saw the hits from the defense on Liam – one high and one low – and then Liam's shriek pierced the air.

Everyone in the stands gasped at the same time, then went strangely quiet. Players from both teams backed away from the mess that had been Liam's knee only moments ago. Liam paused only to snatch a breath of his own before screaming again. Coach Mellon came unstuck from his spot on the sideline and dashed out with the other two coaches flanking him. Liam's ferocious brother vaulted the chain-link fence and beat everyone to his brother's twisted shape.

Cory swallowed to keep his Cocoa Puffs breakfast down. He knew every dream Liam had ever dreamed had just come to a quick and painful end.

Read the excerpt from Touchdown Kid and then answer the questions below.

1. What does the word fumble mean? _____

2. How did the quarterback's fumbles affect Liam? _____

3. Using details from the excerpt, explain how Coach Mellon was behaving at halftime.

4. What does it mean that "Cougars began the second half like a house on fire?"

5. Why did everyone in the stands gasp? _____

6. How do you think Cory feels watching Liam? How do you know? _____
