

Coach, Let Me Go In! Huh, Coa

By Art Buchwald

Playing coach Dick Nixon paced up and down the sidelines of the football field. His team was on his own 10-yard line, and he was being forced to punt. To make matters worse, his only kicker, Ted Agnew, had been thrown out of the game for unsportsmanlike conduct and had been put on probation for three years and fined \$10,000.

Sitting on the bench, all suited up, were Johnny Connally, Rocky Rockefeller, Ronnie Reagan, Bill Rogers, Mel Laird, Barry Goldwater and big Elliot Richardson, and on the ground Jerry Ford.

"Send me in, coach," begged Connally. "I can save the game."

"I can't kick," Rock said, "but if you need me, I'll run with the ball."

Ronnie Reagan said, "Don't forget I was the original gipper of Notre Dame."

Nixon just walked up and down the sidelines some more.

He was in a terrible dilemma. If he sent in a strong player, the Democratic team vowed to block the kick.

Capitol

If he sent in a weak player he might lose the game.

He looked over at Johnny Connally. Johnny was his first choice, but he was a problem for any coach. He had played on the Democratic team until this year, and now that he was on the Republican team, the Democrats seemed to have it in for him. Nixon's scouts had informed him that if he sent in Connally the Demos would smear him.

The crowd, shocked by Agnew's sudden departure from the field, kept screaming for a substitute.

But this punt meant a lot and Coach Nixon was not about to be rushed. He walked to the Republican cheering section and said over the loudspeaker, "I need your help. Would everybody please list your three choices for a substitute kicker, put them in a sealed envelope and send them down to the field?"

The Democrats were furious. "How long are you going to have a time out?" one of the players yelled.

Nixon ignored him and walked down past his bench.

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Punishment

Everyone looked up hopefully. Ronnie Reagan said "Coach, I know your game plan and I'm a team player. Give me a break."

Rocky said, "You have to send in someone whom the fans can rally around. You can't think of today, but of the big game in 1976. You won't be sorry, Dick."

Barry Goldwater played it cool. "I don't give a damn if you send me or not, coach, but you could do a lot worse."

The fans were passing down their sealed envelopes and Mel Laird started counting names. Every time he came across a list in which he wasn't mentioned he threw it away.

Coach Nixon went up to big Elliot Richardson. "Elliot, if I send you in, will you forget about the tapes I made of the other games?"

"It's hard to say, coach. It's not up to me anymore; It's up to the football commissioner.

Nixon turned away in disgust.

Mel Laird came over with the count. "The fans have voted 49,768 for me, four for Connally, three for Rocky and one for Agnew."

A delegation from the Democratic bench started to cross the field. "Look, Dick," one of them said as he came up to Nixon, "you can't hold up the game forever. We can block any kicker you send on the field."

Nixon barked, "The rules say I have a right to choose any substitute I want to kick for me."

"But only with our approval," another Democratic coach said. "Now we have a compromise. Why don't you use one of our kickers? It could bring the stadium together."

"You're out of your minds," Nixon said. "You want me to use a Democratic player on my team?"

The Democratic coach shrugged his shoulders. "It's the only way you'll ever get to punt."

Nixon angrily turns to the bench and says, "Go in Ford, and win this one for Spiro."

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