

# Chapter 23: “They Think We Are Nothing”

Chapter 23: “They Think We Are Nothing” follows Josh Goodman, a star football player from Chadwick School, as he faces overwhelming anxiety before an important game against the California School for the Deaf, Riverside (CSDR). Goodman, a well-rounded athlete excelling in multiple positions such as running back, receiver, and kicker, becomes increasingly anxious about playing against a deaf school for the first time. His nerves grow as this game is not just another contest, but a defining match that could determine his team’s future performance. Alongside Goodman, Chadwick’s coaching staff, led by Coach Jordan Ollis, is equally apprehensive, understanding the high stakes involved. After a less-than-ideal season start, this game could set the tone for the rest of the season and either propel the team to new heights or spell disaster.

The intensity of the game is further increased when the players find out that an NFL film crew will be documenting the match, with a focus on Coach Ollis’s strategies. To top off the pressure, NFL legend Kurt Warner will be present to observe the game, adding an extra layer of significance to an already important event. Chadwick School’s prestigious location in Palos Verdes, known for its wealth and historical significance, creates a stark contrast to CSDR, which, while no less important, operates in a more modest setting. Despite their differences, both schools have a rich tradition in football. Chadwick has consistently been a dominant force, known for its disciplined and successful program, while CSDR’s football program remains relatively under the radar. Despite this, CSDR’s focus on determination and grit quickly proves that the Cubs may have underestimated their opponent.

In the days leading up to the game, Coach Ollis prepares his team by discussing the unique challenges they will face when playing against a deaf team. He talks about how

the communication styles will differ, especially since the deaf players may not hear the whistle, signaling breaks in the game. This forewarning, however, does little to prepare Chadwick for the raw power and intensity that CSDR brings to the field. The Cubs, who entered the game with confidence, quickly find themselves stunned by CSDR's ability to execute flawless team plays. CSDR's seamless teamwork and relentless physicality dominate the game from the outset, making it clear that Chadwick's initial assumptions about the game were misguided. The Cubs' attempts to recover are thwarted by their own overconfidence, and they struggle to find their rhythm.

As the game goes on, it becomes increasingly clear that CSDR is not just a team but a formidable force. The Cubs, despite their reputation and well-known discipline, are no match for the collective strength and unwavering focus of the CSDR players. The Cubs, underestimating their opponents due to preconceived biases, find themselves outclassed on both a physical and mental level. By the end of the game, CSDR has delivered a dominant performance, securing a 54-16 victory. The loss is a tough blow for the Chadwick players, particularly Goodman, who is left to reflect on the defeat. It's not just a loss in terms of score, but a realization that CSDR had earned their victory by pushing themselves beyond what Chadwick expected. Coach Ollis, ever the professional, acknowledges CSDR's superior play and uses the loss as a teachable moment. This defeat serves as a humbling experience, one that propels Chadwick forward with a renewed sense of determination. It marks a pivotal moment in their season, reminding them that true success is achieved through respect for all opponents, mental toughness, and an ability to adjust when faced with unforeseen challenges. The chapter reinforces how preconceived biases and a lack of adaptability can lead to failure, and how humility in defeat can drive future success.