

Chapter 18: Finishing with a Bang

Chapter 18: Finishing with a Bang begins with Cody Metzner, a hard-hitting player for the Cubs, expressing doubts about the size of the crowd at the championship game on November 27, 2021, because of the Thanksgiving holiday. His concerns quickly dissipated as he entered John W. North High School stadium and saw thousands of fans dressed in red shirts, filling the stands. Ticket sales had reached 2,362, and many more fans arrived at the door, eager to witness the game. Media presence was overwhelming, with reporters from top networks like ABC, NBC, and ESPN in attendance. Even representatives from Tom Brady's production company were present, showing interest in creating a film about the team's remarkable journey. This overwhelming support made the atmosphere electric, setting the stage for an unforgettable night.

Among the attendees was Nancy Hlibok Amann, the superintendent of CSDR, whose presence highlighted the significance of the event. She was well-known in the deaf community, with her family's impactful history. During her interview, she spoke passionately about the game, emphasizing that the night held much more than a championship title. She hoped that the game would send a powerful message to the world about the capabilities of a deaf football team, competing for a trophy usually claimed by hearing teams. Her words underscored the importance of the Cubs' journey, which was more than just a fight for victory but also a fight to break barriers and showcase their athleticism and resilience on a global stage.

The game began with the Cubs facing immediate challenges. On their first possession, they failed to capitalize despite a spectacular twenty-yard catch by Jory Valencia. Faith Baptist's quarterback, Luke Rasmussen, took advantage of the Cubs' defensive struggles and quickly put his team ahead with a touchdown. By the end of the first quarter, the Cubs were trailing 28-0, as Faith Baptist's aggressive offense continued to

overpower them. The Cubs struggled to defend against Faith's high-powered offense, and the tension mounted as the deficit grew larger. Despite the early setback, the Cubs knew they had to dig deep and find a way to get back into the game.

In a moment of desperation, Coach Keith Adams made a bold decision to go for a risky fourth down play deep in the Cubs' territory. Felix Gonzales, known for his agility and power, took advantage of the opportunity, making a stunning sixty-yard run for a touchdown. This play sparked hope for the Cubs, as it was the first sign of their ability to fight back against the odds. They continued to build momentum with Jory Valencia catching pass after pass, bringing the score to 28-16. The game became more intense as both teams showed signs of aggressive play, which eventually led to penalties for unsportsmanlike conduct. The physicality of the game only heightened the stakes, making each play feel like a battle.

As the game wore on, the Cubs faced significant injuries, with Jory suffering a foot injury and Kaden Adams sustaining a broken ankle. Despite these setbacks, the team refused to give up, continuing to fight through the pain and adversity. They managed to score once more, bringing the score to 28-22, just one touchdown away from tying the game. The Cubs' resilience in the face of such adversity became a central theme of the championship night. It wasn't just about the physical battle on the field—it was also about mental toughness, determination, and proving to the world that a deaf team could compete at the highest level. Their incredible journey, filled with challenges and triumphs, captured the hearts of everyone watching and became a testament to the power of perseverance and teamwork.