

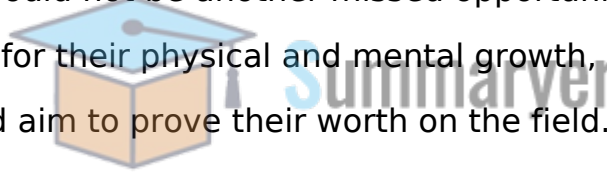
Chapter 20: Unfinished Business

Chapter 20: Unfinished Business, takes us into the world of the Cubs as they reflect on the pivotal moment when Super Bowl LVI took place on February 13, 2022, at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, California. This remarkable event wasn't just significant for the sport, but also for deaf athletes, as players like Trevin, Christian, Jory, and Enos found themselves not only representing their team but the broader deaf athletic community. With 70,000 spectators in attendance, the stage was set for a powerful celebration of inclusion, marked by the appearance of deaf performers during the halftime show. The NFL's commitment to breaking stereotypes was on full display, but even amidst this monumental achievement, the Cubs felt a yearning for more. Though they took pride in their history-making moment, they couldn't help but feel the sting of their recent championship defeat, craving the taste of victory rather than the consolation of second place.

Despite the disappointment, Coach Keith Adams knew how to transform the sting of loss into a motivational tool for the Cubs. He reminded the team that their journey was far from over and that they had "unfinished business" to settle in the next season. With Enos graduating, the team had to come to terms with a change in their roster, but key players like Trevin, Felix, Jory, Cody, Christian, and David remained committed to the goal of redemption. Coach Adams successfully persuaded Kaveh Angoorani to extend his playing career for one more season, offering a sense of continuity and experience. The Cubs understood that their success in the upcoming season would be defined not just by their talent, but by the mental resilience they were developing in the face of adversity. It was clear that their determination to win was stronger than ever, and they were eager to put their hard work into action.

The offseason proved to be a critical period for the Cubs, as the dynamics of their training evolved. No longer were they simply going through the motions—they actively

sought to improve and become stronger as a unit. The weight room, once a place that required pushing from their strength coach Galvin Drake, became a hub of activity where players arrived with the intention to outdo each other. The sense of urgency that had been missing the previous year was now palpable, as the players channeled their frustration and disappointment from the previous season into a commitment to improve. Coach Drake observed the transformation, noting that the Cubs were now driven by a desire to hold each other accountable, pushing their limits to ensure that their next season would not be another missed opportunity. This renewed dedication laid the foundation for their physical and mental growth, setting the stage for a season in which they would aim to prove their worth on the field.



During this period of intense preparation, players like Alfredo Baltazar took the time to connect with their heritage and share the Cubs' journey with their families. A trip to Mexico allowed Alfredo to meet with extended relatives and communicate his accomplishments as part of a deaf football team. This wasn't just about playing football—it was about showing his family that deaf athletes could excel in the sport. As the first person in his family to play football, Alfredo sought their approval, and his desire to prove himself became a driving force in his preparation for the season. His dedication to the sport was reflected in the physical transformation he underwent during the offseason, as he dedicated himself to the strength and conditioning necessary for success. More than just a player, Alfredo became a symbol of determination and inspiration for his family and his team, reinforcing the idea that sports could offer not just personal growth but the opportunity to bridge gaps and foster deeper connections. His journey exemplified the power of sports to shape not only athletic careers but also the relationships that supported those endeavors.