

Chapter 7: Stamina

Chapter 7: Stamina focuses on the contrasting dynamics between high school football teams in California, with a particular emphasis on the Cubs, a smaller Protestant school team. This chapter sets the stage by introducing the dominance of large Catholic schools like Mater Dei and St. John Bosco, known for their state-of-the-art facilities and consistently ranking among the top football teams in the nation. These schools are powerhouses in the world of high school football, and their success often casts a shadow over smaller teams like the Cubs. In contrast, the Cubs face off against smaller and less competitive teams early in their season, where they enjoy impressive victories. However, these wins also serve as a reminder of the upcoming challenges they will face when their stamina and skills are tested against the more formidable opponents in later rounds.

The intensity rises in a challenging game against Calvary Chapel, where the Cubs struggle to maintain their early rhythm. Despite a promising start, their quarterback, Trevin Adams, is swiftly sacked, throwing off their offensive flow and resulting in a rare three-and-out. The setbacks compound when the Cubs face difficult plays and find themselves scrambling to regain control. However, they manage to regroup and pull together, taking a 38-19 lead by halftime, reflecting their ability to bounce back from adversity. But as the second half unfolds, fatigue begins to set in, and the game's pace starts to take its toll on the players. The Cubs, visibly exhausted, begin making uncharacteristic mistakes, including dropped passes and missed tackles. These errors highlight the critical importance of stamina—both physical and mental—as fatigue sets in and threatens to derail their chances of securing a win.

As the game enters its final stretch, the Cubs' lead begins to shrink as Calvary Chapel makes a strong comeback. The once comfortable lead of 38-19 dwindles as the game heads into a nail-biting conclusion. With just minutes left on the clock, the Cubs cling

to a slim 66-57 lead, but Calvary Chapel threatens to take the game with a fourth down and inches to go. The pressure mounts as every play becomes more critical, and the atmosphere grows tense. In a pivotal moment, a wide receiver for Calvary is tackled just short of the first down marker, shifting the momentum back to the Cubs. This play keeps their hopes of victory alive, but the pressure remains. The Cubs attempt to run down the clock and secure their win, but a tense moment arises when Trevin throws a pass that almost results in a fumble. The game is ultimately saved when Jory Valencia, with a calm and composed demeanor, catches the ball just beyond the first down marker, sealing the Cubs' victory. This dramatic play underscores the unpredictable nature of football and highlights the critical importance of mental fortitude in high-pressure situations.

After the dust settles, Coach Keith Adams reflects on the game, acknowledging the challenges and mistakes but emphasizing the lessons learned. He expresses cautious optimism about the Cubs' potential playoff run, knowing that the team has shown resilience in the face of adversity. The chapter not only showcases the physical demands of high school football but also highlights the emotional and psychological challenges players face. The game against Calvary Chapel serves as a reminder that stamina, both in terms of endurance and mental focus, is crucial for success. This chapter conveys the significant role of conditioning, teamwork, and resilience in overcoming setbacks. As the Cubs move forward in their journey, they carry with them the lessons learned from this intense game, knowing that each challenge prepares them for the battles ahead. The team's ability to stay focused, even when faced with exhaustion and pressure, marks a turning point in their season, solidifying their identity as a team determined to succeed.