It is in this struggle of an idealistic coach to remain true to his noblest convictions, regardless of all opinion to the contrary, that the purpose of the story unfolds. Don Henderson begins and ends his coaching career true to the finest traditions of his spectacular profession. But, after he came into big-time Indiana high school basketball competition, he coached but one year. Whether or not he would have emerged from a longer coaching career with his idealism unscathed is problematical.

Mr. Tunis thus gives his story a happy but rather improbable ending. Don quits coaching after his defeat at State to join the editorial staff of Springfield's newspaper, a crusader for right, and stays in Springfield to lead in community reforms and to help displace men like boss J. Frank Gray, from interference with the best ideals of youth in sports. The fact that Don makes this decision to go into the newspaper business in the little town of Springfield on the very heels of an attractive offer for the position of coach of basketball at Yale University, makes a reader who knows something of the impelling forces of coaching swallow a bit laboriously. If Don had given up his coaching career after winning the State at Indianapolis, it seems that Mr. Tunis could have borne out his forceful characterization of Don Henderson a bit more successfully.

In Springfield, Don soon finds that the powers-that-be want a winner at the State tournament, and that they aren't going to bend over backward being too ethical in finding ways and means to produce that winner. To them, winning is all that matters. The same ethical standards prevail with every prospective State title-winning high school team in Indiana. Competition to win the State has grown so keen that basketball has ceased to be a sport. It is a disease.

In Springfield the new coach, young Don Henderson, finds in J. Frank Gray, the town's business-boss and incidentally a school board member, a crafty, unscrupulous man - a man who might be typical of a type of go-getter in any town. Success is all that matters to J. Frank. Any means to that end is justifiable. He thinks it perfectly within the law of clean sport to get a star player to move from another town and high school to Springfield if he can offer the boy's family an inducement for the migration, a better-paying job. In fact, he comes to verbal blows with young Don Henderson over just this situation. J. Frank Gray thinks it good sport to place money and plenty of it on his favorite team. He feels, as do many Indiana oldsters, that this attraction of state high school basketball is for middle-aged amusement, rather than for the spirited happiness of youth. As a result, for lask of seating space, the high school boys and girls do not get to attend the regionals and semi-finals and finals in Indiana in great numbers. Most of the seats are bought up in large blocks weeks before by the middle-aged, the types of J. Frank Gray.

J. Frank finds it difficult to tolerate a young, hard-headed coach, whom he has helped to hire, but who has stubbornly refused to take dictations from him, or to favor him with a group of hard-to-get seats for the important contests.

Don Henderson runs his own team, in spite of the fact that Tom Gray, his star player, is J. Frank's son. And in spite of the fact that, through some reverses over which he has had no control (sickness and the like), he has been forced to play the tough competitive season through with but five men - absolutely no substitutes.

Mr. Tunis has a happy gift as raconteur of a thrilling basketball game. He carries his readers with him. They hang on to the edge of their seats. And his game situations are nicely varied: Springfield 43, Marion 42, in a wild ball game where Marion led by 1 point 45 seconds before the final gun.