

At Muncie, Indiana, Springfield beats Fort Wayne Tigers in the semi-finals by freezing the ball for the last minute and one-half -- 29 to 27. When Springfield beats Anderson in the first game at the State Tournament at Indianapolis, Springfield Wildcats win 21 to 20. But listen to the last six minutes before the final gun. I quote from Mr. Tunis' story:

"Then seconds tick off, minutes went by and Tom Gray faked, pivoted, and shot from the side to bring the score to Springfield 23, Anderson 21. Then the Anderson Indians reared down the court and Erskine rushed in to sink a one-hander and tied the score.

"Then a Wildcat fouled and Anderson Indians went ahead 24 to 23.

"The Wildcats were spent, their feet were sore and hot, their legs were reds of iron, their thighs ached with every step, their lungs were leaden bellows that crucified them each time they pounded the boards. They were through. They were beaten. They couldn't.

"Tom Gray waves his fist in their faces. You're gonna quit, are you? Gonna quit, you guys ... just ... when we have it won ... almost ... gonna quit on Don A fine gang you are ... a fine team ... call yerself Wildcats! C'm on, gang ... let's give 'em all we got! A gang that won't be beat can't be beat can't be beat! Give!"

"Eleven thousand people were watching this game: firewagon basketball, chances taken, wild recoveries made, spills and tumbles and falls all over the floor, with the outcome of the contest and the Tourney, too, yet to be decided."

But Tom Gray, the young tall weaving lad who played for his coach and his team with all of the finest traditions of idealism in sport, in spite of his father's attitudes, led his team to victory by 1 point in the last 50 seconds of play.

Then to the last game at State Tournament, where Don Henderson's Wildcats are to battle with Bosse High School of Evansville, whose great star, Jerry Kates, is already nationally known. And Don with his five good average players who loved their team and who had won thus far on grit and spirit, and with not a substitute worth mentioning!

In the last minute in this crucial game, Don and his scrappy team come from behind to tie the score only to meet defeat by a single point. This is a glorious climax to Mr. Tunis' recounting of games. In three brief chapters he tells the story of this great game. A basketball player, a coach, or any basketball fan, once into Mr. Tunis' account of this game would be glued to its pages. We read:

"The tension tightened, increased, became taut and unbearable. There was no world but this. Reality was that heated enclosure. Space was the confines of those four white lines. Time was the electric clock overhead. Life was that intense, thrusting surge below.

"The final seconds. The last seconds of the game, of the day, of the Tournament, of the entire season. On the floor the ten beaten figures wrenched for victory. Or defeat.

"Then Kates leaped in and stole the ball. With a quick break, the little blend figure was out in the clear, dribbling furiously down upon the Bulldog goal."

Thus Don Henderson, the young coach who had brought Springfield up through the season to the State, lost in the final game by one point.

Mr. Tunis knows what boys say to each other in the heat of battle. He knows all of the various psychological devices that coaches use to drive or to quiet men--according to their various needs, before or during or after a game.