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No Pressure

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No Pressure

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"You've done it a thousand times. You know how to do it. You practiced all off-season for hours on end. You don't get nervous in the off-season, because no one is watching you from the stands. You notice that the stands are empty and you feel a sense of loneliness. The sun beats down on your already red neck and you begin to daydream."

Cover Page Footnote

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SEAN REARDON

NO PRESSURE

You've done it a thousand times. You know how to do it. You practiced all off-season for hours on end. You don't get nervous in the off-season, because no one is watching you from the stands. You notice that the stands are empty and you feel a sense of loneliness. The sun beats down on your already red neck and you begin to daydream.

You think of your first game coming up in about two weeks. The stadium will be filled with people who love you and hate you. The P.A. system will be playing music to get you pumped up and the stadium lights will be shining down on you. You will look into the stands and see your parents there. You haven't seen them in a while, and you want to perform well in front of them. After all, they are the ones who drove all day today just to see you punt. Your dad will have his little camcorder focused on you all game, and your mom will sit there, trying to figure the game out. Are you going to get nervous with all those people in the stands watching you? Are you going to think about the kid's parents who you beat out for the job, just wondering what they are thinking about you? Do they think their son is better? Do you really deserve to be the one starting in this game? Did you honestly practice harder than this kid in the off-season, or do the coaches just like you better? All these thoughts enter your mind as you hold on to the beat-up football that your coach gave you to practice with. Why doesn't this ball always fly right? You have kicked it enough you would think that it knew what to do when it left your foot, but it doesn't. Your daydream comes to an end when you see your football coach walking out of the building right next to the football field.

You know that your coach can see you, because he has to walk right by the field in order to get to his car. What do you do? Do you kick the ball and hope he sees you kick the perfect punt? Or do you just stand there, and let him wait until the game to see how you do? Your knees begin to rattle. Your legs, the ones that you have been strengthening all off-season, feel like limp noodles. You know what you should do. You should kick that damn ball. If you can't kick a ball in front of your coach, how are you going to kick it in front of 2,000 screaming fans? You look at the ball. You know how to do it, and he is still looking at you. He is not making it obvious, but you know he is definitely checking you out. You look at the little flags on top of the field-goal uprights and see that they are very still. You know that there is no wind now, and if you screw up you can't blame it on the wind. There will be no one to blame, but you.

You take your first step and you picture a guy from the opposing team coming to block it. Your second step quickly follows the first one. You keep your elbow in and you drop the ball, hoping that it will land perfectly on the laces of your gold and black Nike sneakers. You close your eyes as the ball hits your foot. Your head is down as your right leg flies up over your right shoulder. You're hesitant to look up and see where the ball is going. Finally you look. You see that your ball is a perfect spiral, cutting through the air like a rocket above the clouds. You can almost see the steam line following your ball. You let out a sigh of relief as you look over at your coach. You are expecting your coach to jump up and down and congratulate you on a perfect kick. You stare directly at him, just hoping he saw it. You think to yourself, why isn't he saying anything? Why won't he clap for you? Doesn't he know that you just kicked a perfect ball right in front of him? Don't you know that you're supposed to kick like that? That is your job, and that's what he expects you to do. But, can you do it in a few weeks when the pressure is really on?