

My Body, My Weapon, My Shame

In the world of Big Ten football, you feast on inflicting pain—on and off the field. You do it because you can. Because you weigh 300 pounds and your arms are bigger than most students' heads. Because winning games makes you a star and makes the coaches happy. Because it's what's expected of you **By Elwood Reid**

I did bad things for football. Because I could. Because I was 19 years old, weighed 270 pounds, had 5 percent body fat and had muscle to burn. Forget touchdowns, I played football for the chance to hit another man as hard as I could—to fuck him up, move through him like wind through a door. Anybody who tells you different is a liar.

There is the fear that any hit may be your last. That some bigger, stronger, better player will come along—take you down to the turf and end your career with the snap of bone or the pop of an anterior cruciate ligament.

The moment of impact goes like this: You slam helmet-

first into another person's back until you can hear the air whoosh out of his lungs. Or better yet—you ram a forearm so hard into his throat that the crunch of cartilage and the fear in his eyes give you pause. Time stops. No pain, only a sucking sound as the physics of the impact sort themselves out—who hit who first, angle, shoulder, mass, helmet, speed, forearm. Silence follows the cruel twist of limbs as the pain rushes in the way oxygen blows through the streets of a firebombed city, leaving flame in its wake. The pain is good. Both of you know it, and for a few precious seconds the world has order. Hitter and hittee. Mother-fucker and motherfucked.

I came by football through my father. I played because i you were big, it was what you did in Cleveland. To do anything else was to be soft or queer. As long as I could

ILLUSTRATION BY BRAD HOLLAND

hit and tackle, nobody made fun of my size. I played football, and that was all you needed to know about me. Then there were the men—the coaches who demanded a single-minded intensity from me each time I strapped on the pads. Even then I knew these were men who kept basements full of plaques and trophies from their glory days, collected beer steins and fell into deep depressions when the Cleveland Browns lost or their wives bore them daughters instead of sons. Their solution to everything was to hit harder. The word was forever on their lips. They scrawled it on chalkboards and spat it in my face: *Hit. Hit. Hit.* They knew how to infect eager minds with the desire

“I’ll accept nothing less than smash-mouth, cream-them-in-the-ear hole football,” the coach tells you. It’s a cliché, like every coach’s speech. The only difference? This time he owns your body and your mind for the next four years.

to someday play in the pros. And when one of these potbellied men screamed at me to kick ass, act like a man or gut it out, I did, because I wanted to believe that a sport or even life could be boiled down to a few simple maxims. I was big, and I could hit; therefore I had purpose.

In high school, my scrawny body filled out as I moved from junior varsity to varsity and then to captain of a mediocre football team. College scouts came to time me in the forty-yard dash, watch me lift weights and eye me coming out of the shower as if I were a horse they might someday bid for at auction. I can’t say I didn’t enjoy the attention, but I began to realize that as a potential college-football recruit, I was expected to behave like one. I had to shake hands and look scouts in the eye and thank them for coming to see me. I had to talk sports, tell them who my favorite players were, what team I liked in the Super

Bowl. I had to be smart but not too smart. Grades mattered only because colleges like “no risk” players, guys who can be recruited without the worry that they’ll flunk out. I couldn’t tell them that I didn’t care who won the Super Bowl, that what really mattered to me was books. That when I finished *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* or *Heart of Darkness*, my heart beat faster than it ever had on the football field. I knew that I had to keep this part of me hidden and let the scouts and coaches see the bright-eyed athlete they wanted to see.

Pursuing a football scholarship became a full-time job. Everything I did was for my body. I ate well, went running at night, swallowed handfuls of vitamins, swilled gallons of protein shakes and fell asleep rubbing sore muscles. Everything fell away as I focused on using this body I’d nurtured and cared for, asking it to come back day after day, stronger, better. And it did. Even after the most torturous practices, my body responded by snapping back, fresh and ready to go. If there were limits, I had yet to find them.

On the field, I plugged my heart in, throwing my body at tailbacks with reckless abandon. I went both ways and loved every minute of it—reveling in the sheer exhaustion that came every fourth quarter, when it was all I could do to hunker down into a three-point stance and fire out. To be better than the man lined up across from you was to summon your body to do what it didn’t want to do—what it would normally resist doing off the gridiron. Great ballplayers are full of hate and a kind of love for what they are capable of inflicting on another man. And in between whistles, I hated.

When the first recruiting letter arrived, I had this feeling that I was standing on the cusp of what I imagined to be greatness. I saw television, cheerleaders and, I suppose even then, the endgame—the NFL.

“This is a great opportunity,” my father said, holding the letter in his hands as if it were alive.

I nodded, knowing that the ante had been raised. I was no longer playing because I liked to hit but for the chance to get out of Cleveland and escape the factory-gray fate that awaited me.

I escaped by signing a letter of intent to play ball for one of those Big Ten colleges, where football is king, the coach is feared and anybody wearing a letterman’s jacket is instantly revered. I felt important, my head swirling with the possibilities that seemed to shimmer before me. I had worked hard; my friends had gone out drinking or had sat around watching television, but I’d been running and lifting. Now I felt as if I had been rewarded and everything would be OK.

That was ten years ago, and what I did both on and off the field for football is preserved forever in the aches, pains and injuries that haunt my body, lurking no matter how many aspirins I chew or how early I go to bed.

When I report to

freshman summer camp, there are thirty or so other new recruits sitting around a huge indoor practice facility. Some of them are big-

ger and stronger than me, guys with no necks and triceps that hang off their arms like stapled-on hams. The speedsters and skill guys, mostly thick-legged black dudes with gold chains and shaved heads, pool over into their own corner, staring down at their feet as if the secret of their speed lay somewhere underground. The odd-ball white guys—quarterbacks, tight ends and a few gangly-looking receivers—find one another and talk like bankers, in slow, measured tones.

I make my way over to the group of big guys who stand, shifting foot to foot, in a loose semicircle, until the coaches walk in and everybody snaps to attention. I am relieved to find that they look like all the other coaches who have ever yelled at me or offered arm-swinging praise. They are the very same gray/white-haired men, swaddled head to toe in loud polyester, I've been trying to impress my whole life.

Nobody says a word. Instead, the coaches stand there looking at us the way a mechanic eyes his socket wrenches, as tools to be picked up, used and thrown aside. There is only this simple equation: As a ballplayer, I am expected to do as I'm told, lay my body on the line or else get out of the way for somebody who will. Everybody in the room knows and understands this and, when asked, will put himself in harm's way with the dim, deluded hope that he will come out the other end a star.

The speech begins, and it's like every other coach's speech, only this time the coach spouting the platitudes owns our bodies and our minds for the next four years, five if we redshirt. He lays down the rules—the same rules I've heard all my life about what I can and can't do—about how we're here to win and anything less is simply unacceptable.

Then his theory of football: "Domination through hard work, men," he says, his short body quivering with anger. "More hard work until we come together as a team of men focused on one thing: *winning*. Am I understood?"

"Yes, sir," we answer.

"Good then," he says. "I'll accept nothing less than smash-mouth, cream-them-in-the-ear hole football. That is why you are here, and I will not tolerate softness or excuses. You are here because we think each of you will someday become a ballplayer. You are not yet ballplayers, but if you do what we ask, you will become ballplayers, and for that you are lucky."

All thirty of us grunt, "Yes, sir."

Then this no-neck guy, his face swollen with fear and de-

sire, leans into me and says, "I wish we could skip the bullshit, strap on the pads and sort out who's who."

My first inclination is to laugh, to tell him to relax. Instead, I lid my eyes and clench my jaw and tell him that yes, that would be good, that I too like to hit.

Coach finishes his rah-rah speech, and the air is heavy with anticipation as the realization washes over everyone in the room that all of the lifting and running has come down to this—the chance to prove ourselves by putting our bodies on the line with guys who are every bit as strong and as fast.

Then we're marched off to the training room, where a team



author used to mix
up with guys named Hernia,
Napalm and Flat-Ass Phil.
His memory still remembers.

of doctors pokes and prods us as if we were cattle heading to market. By the time we're through, everybody has a nickname: Fuckhead, Slope, Rope, Sith, Crowdaddy, Pin Dick, Yo Joe, Hernia, Bible Boy, Vic, Napalm, Six-Four, Too Tall, Dead Fuck, Flat-Ass Phil, the Creeper, Revlon. Somebody tags me with Sweet Lou Reid because before every practice I listen to "Coney Island Baby."

On our first day of padded practice, the line coach, a man with steel blue-and-gray hair, cold eyes and a hatchet nose, marches us over to a row of low metal cages. "Get into a three-point," Coach says as he lines us across from one another on opposite sides of the cages.

I hunker down, straddling one of the boards, and look out at the man in front of me.

"Hit!" Coach screams.

And with a blast of his whistle, my college football career begins. We hit and fall to the ground, fighting and spitting until he whistles us back to attention. We line up and do it over and over. After ten minutes, I am bleeding from three different places, my arms are numb, and my right thumb hangs from my hand at an angle I know is wrong. But to stop and go to the sideline is to pussy out. So I play through the pain, and after a few more hits I don't care what happens to my thumb.

The rest of practice takes place in five-second bursts, until our pads, wet with blood and sweat, hang on us like second skins. Everything is done harder and faster. Fights break out without warning. Two long-armed D-backs start swinging at

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each other, and the coaches let it go until the taller one splits his hand on a face mask. Blood flies from his smashed paw as he spins around like some shoulder-padded Tasmanian devil. One of the coaches finally grabs him by the face mask and drags him to the sideline, leaving his opponent alone and bewildered, with nothing to do except join the huddle. Guys suffer knee injuries, pop hamstrings, tear Achilles tendons, while others just go down with silent, allover injuries that are the same as quitting—telling the team you can no longer take it. During the first week, nine walk-ons clear out their lockers and quit.

We learn to live with injuries and spend what little free time we have complaining and scheming about our positions on the depth chart. Hernia has a bruise he can move up and down his forearm. Bible Boy's knee is fucked, and my shoulder slides in and out of place so much that I no longer notice it. All of us

have scabbed-over noses and turf burns on our shins that crack and fill our shoes with warm blood the minute practice starts.

After practice and a shower, I stand in front of the mirror and stare at the road map of bruises, cuts and mysterious pink swellings. I touch each bruise, scrape and swelling until I feel something, and I know that my body is still there, capable of doing what I ask of it.

When the upperclassmen report to camp, we become their tackling dummies. Even the coaches forget about us and concentrate on the home opener four weeks off. I'm moved from defense to offense because my feet are too slow and my "opportunities," Coach says, are better on the other side of the ball. He tells me that offense is the thinking man's side of the ball, that it is about forward motion and scoring.

I adjust, and within a week I become an offensive lineman. Every day is the same grind—the same flesh-filled five yards on either side of the ball, where we grunt, shove, kick and gouge at one another. In the trenches, success is measured in feet and inches, not long touchdown runs or head-over-ass catches that bring crowds to their feet.

After three weeks, I begin to root for injuries. Not only do I want the man in front of me on the depth chart to go down but I begin to look for ways to hasten his downfall. I am not the only one. More than once I see guys twisting knees in pileups, lowering helmets into exposed spines, gouging throats and faces with the hope that a few well-placed injuries will move them up the depth chart. The coaches seem to encourage this ballplayer-eat-ballplayer mentality, pitting starter against backup and watching as the two players wrestle and pump padded fists at each other long after the play has been blown dead.

But it is off the field that the real training happens, where I learn about how the team is not really a team. Offensive players hate defensive players. Linemen hate ball handlers because they get all the glory and half the aches and pains. It goes without saying that everybody hates the kickers because of their soft

bodies and clean uniforms and the way they run warm-up laps out in front, making the rest of us look bad.

There is also a silent division between blacks and whites. Any white guy who hangs with the brothers and listens to their music is called a "whigger." Black guys who hang with the white guys are called "Oreo-cookie motherfuckers" or sellouts. In the locker room, when there are only white faces around, some guy will call a black guy who fumbles the ball or hits too hard in warm-ups a stupid nigger, and I know that I am supposed to nod in agreement or high-five the racist bastard. And when I don't, there is another line drawn.

But somehow it all comes together, and there are times when black and white, offense and defense and even the kickers seem to be part of the same team, especially when practice is over and we're all glad to be walking off the field,

fappy to have seen our bodies through another day, united by our aches, pains and fatigue.

I learn that among the linemen there are those who belong and those who don't. To belong means to go about the game of football grim faced, cocksure of your ability to take any hit and keep moving. The guys who zone out on God, refuse the pack or are refused by it end up falling by the wayside, unnoticed by the coaching staff and their fellow players.

Then there are the guys who have already made it—broken out of the pack to start or platoon with another player in a starting position. Among the linemen, they are called “the fellas.” Coaches love the fellas because they have proven themselves. But what really distinguishes a fella is not his success on the field but rather his ability to wallow in the easy gratification afforded any athlete at any university that is nuts for football. Everything is permitted—drinking, scoring chicks, fighting off the field—because he has survived the mayhem and the mindless drudgery of practices. I hear the stories over lunch or in the locker room after a workout: how to score with a woman nicknamed “the Dishwasher.” How to persuade one of the brains or geeks to cheat for you. How to cop free meals at restaurants or free drinks at a bar. How to wrangle free T-shirts from the equipment manager. How to pass the drug test. And, most important, how to act like you don't give a shit, because you've got it coming to you.

We win our Big Ten opener, and for a few minutes in the locker room the air seems to vibrate with goodwill and camaraderie. Even I who have stood on the sideline get-

ting rained on feel like a player as I listen to reporters question today's heroes. After the coaches leave, word that there will be a party at a fella's house percolates through the sweaty room.

When I enter the party, the room seems to be in some sort of drunken-action overload. Near the keg there is a makeshift wrestling pit, circled by grubby couches full of squealing teased-haired women who look at me briefly, decide that I am not a starter and look away. I am handed a beer and told to drink. My beertender is a huge, smiling defensive tackle named the Wall, who watches as I raise the cup to my lips and sip.

“What's a matter with you?” he says, pointing at the beer. “We've got beer and a roomful of chicks who want to fuck us 'cause we won the game. What more do you want?”

“I'm just a frosh,” I tell him.

“Skip the *Leave It to Beaver* bullshit and drink,” Wall says.

I nod, drain the cup and follow him to the kitchen, past heavily made-up groupies who stare at me now that I am with Wall. There are others, big guys mostly, and we keep pace with Wall, who tosses back beer as if it's water. After every round, somebody slaps an arm around me or smacks

me on the shoulder, and for a moment I feel the tug of the tella fraternity.

What happens next is what happens in varying degree at every subsequent party. Fights erupt over women, favorite teams, etc. There is a girl in an upstairs bedroom handing out blow jobs or an underclassman who is too drunk and vomits before he is stripped naked and thrown out a window or tossed down the stairs.

I down half a bottle of Everclear grain alcohol when it is handed to me and let a sad-eyed chubby girl in tight jeans sit on my lap. As the liquor hits my brain, I realize that there are no victims here, even as I watch this girl get talked into going upstairs with three guys. Later I see her in the front yard, leaning against a lamppost crying, as several players throw empty beer cans at her and call her a whore. Everybody, including the skinny-shouldered engineering student and the jock-sniffing schlub with stars in his eyes whom we occasionally torture and torment, knows the deal and comes back for more. We have something they want, and they'll take anything we have—even the laughter and the cruel pranks—just to be near us, to wear one of our sweatshirts or to talk to us about the game. And it all seems so normal. When our starting defensive tackle rams a frat boy's head into a steel grate, not once but several times, there are no repercussions because he is a star and the team needs him. There are rules on the field and in the locker room when we are around the coaches, but off the field, anything goes.

And I do bad things because I want to belong. I hide that part of me that enjoys classes and reading in my room after practice. I know better, yet I find myself doing the same stupid shit I see others do, and nobody tells me that it's wrong. Nobody blinks when I walk into a party, pick up the first girl I see and pin her to the ceiling until her laughter turns to screams and then finally to tears. I put lit cigarettes out on the back of my hand to prove to the fellas that I don't give a fuck—that I am above pain, above caring what happens to my body, because I am young and I am a ballplayer and my body seems to have no limits.

At another party, I split a frat boy's nose for no particular reason other than that I am drunk and it feels like the right thing to do. He goes down, holding his nose, and I hop up on a thick oak banister, close my eyes and walk, not caring if I fall or if someone pushes me. When I do fall down two flights of stairs, I pop right back up, though my knee doesn't seem to be working, and there are several fraternity brothers closing in on me. Instead of running, I go outside and proceed to kick in the basement windows until I hear police sirens and escape into the snowy backyards. The next day, I am sober and ready to practice, and only at that point do I feel remorse. But then there is the first hit, and my body hurts, my joints crack, and I am absolved.

One night at a party during my sophomore year, I am asked by a fella if I want to help him videotape some girl giving head to a couple of guys in an upstairs room. I nod drunkenly and follow him through the forest of oversize

flesh and dull-eyed groupies to the stairs, where he turns around and winks at me. For a moment, I'm not sure if he's joking or not. The music is loud—too loud. There are women playing quarters at a table to my right and guys staring at *Hustler* magazine on a couch in the corner, while several sophomores write their names with a permanent Magic Marker on the body of a passed-out frosh and discuss shaving his balls.

"You ready?" my guide asks. I can tell he's waiting for me to say no so he can call me a pussy or a Boy Scout. I look around at the monster bodies of ballplayers acting like children grabbing at toys, and I realize that I've finally become what the coaches and my fellow players



have always expected me to become—a fella, a person living in a world of no consequence. I am not a star or even a starter; still, everything I do is acceptable, allowed and in the end...empty.

I look at the hulking player as he awaits my response. Part of me wants to go upstairs and rescue the girl, take her away. But I know she'd only be back next week, drunker and more willing, and I would be there, too, and maybe then, a few beers to the better, I'd say yes when asked if I wanted to help with the videotaping, because I could, because it is expected of me and because it is what a fella does.

I turn to go, but before I can get to the door, Fuckhead jumps on my back and screams, "Isn't this great?" I shake him off and toss him to the floor, tell him no and walk out-

side, feeling cold and hollow. But most of all, I feel simple and stupid, because I can't see a way out. If I quit, I lose my scholarship and go back home to Cleveland having failed. If I choose not to partake in the fun, there will be a line drawn and I will be exiled into the lonely world of those who practice but who will never play or belong. That is my problem, that I want to belong at any cost. I still have the dream that someday I will become a starter, and the pro scouts will come to time me in the forty-yard dash and I will have a chance to go to the next level.

It starts with a tingling in my arm, one of a thousand jolts of pain that have run through my body that I no longer seem to notice. Only this time it doesn't go away.

I hear one of the coaches screaming, "Get up, Reid. Get the fuck up and get your ass back to the huddle."

Without thinking, I roll to my feet and try to shake it off. When I rejoin the huddle, the coach glares at me and another play is called, and I line up, hit and do it again, the pain lingering in my spine. Then one morning I awake unable to raise my arms above my head. After swallowing a handful of Tylenol Threes and a few anti-inflammatories, I go to practice and hit. My arms dangle from my shoulders, bloodless and weak, forcing me to deliver the blows with my head and helmet. The coaches scream when I am slow to rise after the whistle. And when the pills wear off, the numbness is replaced by a hot poker of pain and a dull, crunching sound in my neck. After I miss a block, Coach sends me to the sideline and motions for the trainers to have a look. I explain and point to my neck as they walk me to the training room. It is the longest walk of my life, and no one even turns a helmet in my direction. In the training room, I am told to lie still while the trainers pull my pads off and wrap ice bags around my neck.

I sit the sideline for a full week. No one except the trainers and the team doctor says a word to me, and it's all right, because for once I am outside looking in at the football machine as it whirs and clicks along without me. But by the end of the week, I want more than anything else to peel the ice bags off my neck and shoulders, strap on pads and prove that I'm still one of them. I think that this time it will be different, that I can hit and go about the game I've played and nursed my body for without acting like one of the fellas off the field.

So when the team doctor works his way up my arm with a safety pin, poking my flesh and asking, "Do you feel this?" I say, "Yes."

"And this?"

Yes, yes and yes. Although I have no idea where or if he is poking me. He plays along with the charade. There are no X rays, only ice and pills that make my head feel like it's stuffed with cotton. After the pain has subsided, I am put on a cycle of cervical steroids and must report to the train-

ing room twice a day to have my blood pressure monitored.

In a week, I am back on the field, and everything falls into place. My legs move and my body goes where it's directed, but the pain won't go away. I imagine a rotten spot in my spine, a cancer I want to cut out. My body learns to hit all over again, making small adjustments in some vain hope that the injury will go away and with it the nerve pain that seems to lurk after every collision.

Instead the pain gets worse, and most nights I'm back in the training room with the other gimps, begging for ice and more pills that I hope will somehow allow me to hit again. Nobody questions the toughness of the guys who are hauled off the field with their knees turned inside out or the players who are knocked cold and can't so much as wiggle a toe. But I look healthy. There is no blood, no bone poking through skin, no body cast, no evidence that I am injured. I can walk and talk and smile, and in the eyes of the team the real problem is that I can't stand the pain.

I go another month, practicing when my neck will allow, sitting the sideline when it won't. Finally, I'm referred to a neurologist. This time there are tests: X rays, CAT scans, an MRI and an EMG. When a nurse pumps two needles into each of my arms, telling me my mouth will taste like I have a spoon in it and that I'll feel nauseous, I smile, happy to have the pain and the sickness so controlled.

As I stare into the fluorescent lights with the taste of metal in my mouth, I know that something in my body has given out, that I somehow deserve this for not wanting to be a fella.

When the tests are over, I am not allowed to see the results. "We'll have them sent to the team doctor," the technician tells me.

"Am I OK?" I ask, wanting this guy in a white smock with his needles and nurses to tell me that I'm all right—that I'll have my body back. But I know that I'd only throw it away again, out on the field, to prove that I am one of them.

Instead, there are other tests, more pills and a neck brace. I start going to the parties, watching the fellas go about their fun, envious of what their play and performance has earned them. To prove to the fellas and myself that I still matter, I get drunk, head-butt walls and stick needles into my numb hands, despite rational thoughts that tell me what I am doing is stupid. I am careful to inflict this abuse only on myself, to show them that the injury they can't see is real and I can stand even more pain than they can imagine. So I let someone push a stapler into my biceps over and over until my shirt turns red, and for a few precious minutes the fellas pay attention to me—one even shakes his head and calls me a "sick dog motherfucker." And I'm proud. The pain leaves, and my body feels like it used to—large, powerful and capable of great things.

Then there is the morning, the staples still scabbed into my arms, the cigarette burns on the backs of my hands. But worst of all, there is the silent crunching in my neck and the dead feeling in my fingers. I stand in front of the mirror, staring at the smooth outline of my neck muscles, the

slope of my shoulders. I know one thing: I no longer want to play football the way the best of them do—dying between whistles as if you are born to it and there is no other option. Still, when I'm called into the head coach's office and told that I can no longer play, I walk out of the room despising my neck, my body and the fact that it will no longer have the opportunity to hit another man.

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ome guys go through life feeding the athlete inside with weekend-warrior games of touch football, season tickets, tailgate parties and war stories about what it was like to play. Athletes don't, as they say, die twice; instead, part of them remains 19 years old forever, with the body ready and willing to prove itself all over again. I had to kill that 19-year-old, the one who enjoyed being able to prove himself to the world with sheer brute force: hitting, taking and not thinking.

After college I headed for Alaska to get away from football. I became a frame carpenter and spent my days pounding nails and lifting twenty-foot sections of wall until my back and neck shivered with pain and my arms went numb. Every time I went home sore, bruised and full of splinters, it felt good—punishment for failing at football and at being a fella. Work helped to kill the jock in me. Falling off build'ings and being crushed by two-by-fours dropped by stor- Hi-Lo operators finished what football had started. There were days and even weeks when I couldn't pull myself out of bed. And I liked it, because for once I could see the end—somewhere, sometime I would no longer be able to use my body, and what would be left would be the guy who loved reading and talking about books.

Later I would work as a bouncer, a bartender, a grunt laborer, a truck dispatcher and a handyman. When I needed money, I rented out my body to schizophrenia-drug-testing programs at a VA hospital. The drugs left me with waking aural and visual hallucinations for days. I thought I was Miles Davis and that I could hear ants crawling in the grass. There were other tests with needles and electric current and more drugs. I didn't care. I got paid for all of it and never once questioned why I wanted to do this to myself. But somewhere along the line, the jock in me died.

Now I'm a guy who used to play. I rise out of bed each morning to a symphony of cracks and crunches. I have pain from football injuries I don't remember. My shoulders still slop around in their sockets if I don't sleep in exactly the same position every night. Sometimes my neck and back lock up without warning, and I fall, and I'm reminded that I did bad things for football and it did bad things to me. It left me with this clear-cut of a body, a burned-out village that I sacked for a sport.

Elwood Reid's first novel, If I Don't Six, will be published next year by Doubleday. His short story "What Salmon Know" appeared in the February issue of GQ.

