

"FAIREST & BEST"

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. STANFORD UNIVERSITY RUGBY PITCH - DAY

It is late March 1924, a crowd of a thousand people are watching the final season rugby match between Stanford University and the University of California. The Stanford players wear crimson jerseys with white shorts while Cal is in all white. They play the match with a large leather rugby ball. Different amounts of applause and shouts can be heard to the action on the pitch. The scoreboard shows Stanford losing 13-15.

EXT. ON THE RUGBY PITCH - CONTINUOUS

NORMAN "PEABODY" CLEVELAND, a 20 year old Stanford player, is anxiously standing at flyhalf as a scrum forms.

PEABODY CLEVELAND

(shouting)

Come on Tim let's get the
ball out here. We're running
out of time!

The forwards of both teams bind and crash together to form the scrum. The front row players aggressively work against each other while TIM DALTON, shadowed by his opposite waits to put the ball in. Tim sees the hooker tap his hand and he feeds the ball into the tunnel. Tim races to the back of the scrum waiting for the ball to emerge. The Stanford No.8 controls the ball with his footwork until the scrum stabilizes. Tim looks around at his options. A Stanford flanker has broken off of the scrum waiting. Tim deftly picks up the ball and flips the ball up to the flanker as Tim is tackled from behind by his opposite number. The flanker runs forward past the gain line and crashes into two Cal players standing in defense. He goes to ground and Stanford forwards swarm over him in support. The ball emerges at the back of the ruck and Tim is there again to feed the ball to another forward.

PEABODY

(shouting)

Hello Tim! This is the backs
calling out for some ball!

As the 2nd forward rushes up to the gain line he is also tackled ferociously and is brought to the ground but he does not release the ball. A Cal player, LINN FARRISH, rushes up while the Stanford forward continues to kill the ball. Linn plants a boot into the back of the Stanford forward. The referee seeing this immediately and blows his whistle. The players back off the pile and the referee signals a penalty to Cal.

REFEREE

Up, up ,up. You gentlemen
know better than to kill the
ball. Let's keep having it
out.

The referee turns to a Cal player already holding the ball and stomps the ground with his boot.

REFEREE (CONT.)

Here's your mark.
(waving back
the Stanford
players)
Back ten gentlemen.

The Cal player takes the ball and punts it deep into Stanford territory but misses touch, the ball is chased by three Cal backs flying covering the kick. A Stanford winger fields the ball at the touchline, runs up five meters and throws the ball to the center of the pitch to the fullback to start a counterattack. He runs up into traffic and offloads to a center who is met by a tackle. As he is going down a Stanford flanker arrives and the center pops the ball up to him. As the flanker bursts through he unloads to the No.8 who runs into more defense. A maul ensues and the No. 8 holds on to the ball as players support him and Cal players attempt to strip him of the ball. As he passes the ball backwards through his support, a fist from an unknown Cal player catches him squarely in the side of the head. He retaliates with an elbow straight backward into the opposing player holding him. A fight begins. In the meantime Tim has received the ball at the back of the maul and passes it out to Peabody. Peabody runs forward crossing with the center but keeping the ball, he then passes a cut-out skipping the outside center to hit the fullback streaking through. The fullback breaks the defense and heads for the try line. Five meters out he is tackled but switches the ball to the winger coming inside who is stood up but able to pass behind the back to Peabody coming across his outside hip. Peabody crosses the tryline curves left to center under the posts and touches down the ball. All the backs turn around to look back up field to see the forwards still in a punch-up. Two large frontrowers CESARE MANELLI and LINN FARRISH continue the punch-up vigorously. The crowd is cheering loudly.

PEABODY

(looking back
at the fight)

Typical.

A car comes around the field to park nearby. SAM GOODMAN, a heavy set man, mid-forties, exits the car and walks towards the players.

Tim lines up the kick for the extra points. As he makes his kick approach Cal players rush him but he gets it away and converts the points. The referee blows the whistle to mark the end of the match. The scoreboard shows Stanford winning 18-15. The crowd responds with applause. The players form up to congratulate each other. The Cal players pass through a double Stanford line to shake hands, the players are bloodied, bruised, and dirty. Same as the Stanford players, Cal circle around to re-shake the Stanford player hands and then leave the pitch.

As the players finish on the pitch Sam walks over to the Stanford and Cal coaches and starts speaking to them. The two Stanford coaches are JIM WILEY and CHARLIE AUSTIN.

JIM WILEY

(shouting in a
heavy New
Zealand
accent)

All right boys come-on in.
Enough of that. Good on
everyone, well done. We have
an important announcement for
both teams. Sam Goodman is
here from the Olympic
Committee and it's time to
hear who's headed to Paris.
Come-on in so's you can hear
your man here with the
selections.

The players from both teams come in to listen and gather in a circle around Sam and the coaches. Different players show various amounts of nervousness, indifference, and attention.

SAM GOODMAN

(English
accent)

We have made our decisions and I can announce the selections for the trip to Paris. The Olympic Committee and I appreciate everyone who came to San Francisco for the trials, we wish we could take you all. The selections from Stanford are; Bill Rogers, Dudley DeGroot, Dick Hyland, George Dixon, Norman Cleaveland, Phillip Clark, Tim Dalton, and Linn Farrish. University of California players selected are Cesare Manelli, Ed Graff, and George Dixon. Sorry we couldn't take you all. And oh, one more item, the coach of the team will be Stanford's own Charlie Austin.

During the call of selections different reactions can be heard from players, especially at the end when selections are completed. Cesar and Linn, who have just been fighting, now have arms over each others shoulders now that they are teammates and are congratulating each other. At the selection of Charlie as coach everyone is slightly surprised including Charlie.

JIM WILEY

All right boys that's plenty of excitement so let's fetch up the balls. Good stuff today.

SAM GOODMAN

Everyone's name I called, please stay here to discuss travel arrangements.

Players begin walking back to a nearby university building. The selected players approach Sam. Jim walks over to Charlie and shakes his hand.

JIM WILEY

Congratulations mate, you're going to go quite well.

CHARLIE AUSTIN

It's a shocker to me Jim, why you weren't selected to coach. These boys are yours.

(shaking his head)

Just 'cause you're a kiwi. The bastards.

JIM WILEY

Get off it Charlie. You'll do as fine a job. Now you better get over with the group and start your planning. It's going to be a long tour. No worries, eah?

CHARLIE AUSTIN

Yeah, no worries mate.

Charlie walks over to the group crowded around Sam. Jim slowly starts following the unselected players to the university building.

EXT. FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

It is 6 years earlier in an American trench facing German emplacements on Belleau Wood hill. Marine private DONALD COLLINS, a fresh face 18 year old, is pressed against the trench wall listening to instructions from his company GUNNERY SERGEANT.

GUNNERY SERGEANT

Okay kid. When we go over keep you head down and your wits about you. Don't forget to keep moving forward no matter what. Got it?

DONALD COLLINS

Got it Gunney.

GUNNERY SERGEANT

Okay, wait for the whistle.

He pats Donald on the shoulder and moves down the trench to check other Marines. Donald finds himself looking at the ashen face of a Marine Corporal pressed against the trench wall. After a couple of seconds whistles start being blown.

CORPORAL

Well private, it's Halls of Montezuma time.

Both men scramble up and over the trench with the rest of their company into a beautiful wheat field. No shooting greets them as they advance into the field towards a picturesque wooded hill.

CORPORAL (CONT.)

Wished they'd have put some artillery on that hill before this walk.

DONALD

They said there aren't any Germans in this sector.

CORPORAL

Don't believe anything they tell you private. It'll keep you alive a bit longer.

The company is maintaining order in the march across the wheat field in the hot sun though they are looking around since nothing is happening. Donald continues walking keeping his part of the line even but is suddenly extremely spooked when he flushes a bird from the ground immediately in front. The Corporal is laughing at Donald when the German machine gun nests just inside the treeline open up. The Corporal is cut in half by the hail of bullets which interlace between the multiple firing positions. Tracers flow back and forth over the wheat field. Donald starts screaming.

INT. DONALD'S BEDROOM IN SACRAMENTO - DAY

Donald snaps awake panting from the nightmare. His mother comes rushing up the stairs and runs in the room. It's daybreak on his family's farm.

MRS. COLLINS

Donald, Donald are you okay?!

DONALD

I'm okay Mom. I'm okay.

MRS. COLLINS

Are you sure? You screamed.

DONALD

I'm fine. I'm okay.

She gets up from his side and goes to the door. She looks back at him and then heads back downstairs. Donald lays his head back down on his pillow and stares up at the ceiling.

INT. COLLINS' KITCHEN - DAY

Mr. COLLINS is at the dining table reading a newspaper as Donald comes down the stairs pulling his suspenders up over his shoulders. The Collins are a well established but simple farming family. His mother is in the kitchen.

MRS. COLLINS

Breakfast dear?

DONALD

No Ma'am, I'm not hungry.

Mr. Collins looks over the top at his 25 year old son as he takes a seat at the table.

MR. COLLINS

Too hung-over Donald?

Mrs. Collins places a cup of coffee in front of Donald as he sighs due to his father's comment.

MR. COLLINS (CONT.)

I'm going to fire Pedro if he doesn't stop bringing that bootleg on the property.

DONALD

Leave Pedro out of this Father. We always need hands like him.

MR. COLLINS

Well if you could find a way to enter the fields again we'd need one less.

DONALD

Father. Please.

Donald reaches into his trouser pocket and pulls out an envelope. He looks at it and ponders it a moment. He let's out another sigh and places it on the table.

MR. COLLINS

What's that?

DONALD

I'm going back.

Mrs. Collins is startled and rushes to the table.

MRS. COLLINS

What?! Where?!

DONALD

I've got to go back. Take care of something.

MR. COLLINS

What are you saying?
France?!

MRS. COLLINS

(on verge of
tears)

Why do you want to go back?
You almost died!

DONALD

I've got to. I've got to put
an end to this.

MR. COLLINS

We can't afford this. The
seed for next season...

DONALD

You don't have to Father.

He pushes the envelope towards him.

DONALD (CONT.)

I was selected for the
Olympic rugby team. I leave
tomorrow.

Donald's father abruptly gets up and heads for the
kitchen's back door. His mother sits down in his
father's place.

DONALD (CONT.)

It's gotta end Mom.

Donald gets up and heads back upstairs leaving his
mother at the table.

INT. DONALD'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Donald enters and goes to the closet to get down a
suitcase. He starts packing. After putting a couple of
shirts and trousers in it he pulls a battered small
footlocker from the bottom of his closet. Inside is his
wool Marine Corps full blues tunic. He sets it aside to
reveal a small package wrapped in a scarlet
handkerchief. He packs it with the rest of his stuff.
His mother has come to the door.

MRS. COLLINS

Decided to leave early?

Donald shakes his head yes.

MRS. COLLINS

(CONT.)

Don't forget this.