

The Super Bowl

“Drop ‘em guys,” I said quietly to my teammates, “drop your buzzers. It’s over.”

Steve and Peter stared at me blankly then glanced at the scoreboard and smiled to themselves. CLANK went the buzzers as the three of us let them slip from our hands and fall to the table below. Smugly, we stared over at our opponents’ seemingly heartbroken faces because they too had taken a look at the board and realized the same thing my companions and I had. We had won. We had won it all. The crowd applauded as we took our bows and walked off the stage where history had just been made. All of our hard work and schooling up to this point had finally paid off, and it felt good to be champions.

None of us could have seen this coming two weeks earlier as winter faded and spring began in my junior year at Michigan City High School. Basketball, swimming, and wrestling were over and it was time for what we were all waiting for: not baseball season, not track season, not even girls’ tennis season; it was time for the real competition to begin. It was time for the Social Studies Super Bowl. The SSSB is the only time of the year when everyone has a chance to go head-to-head against others from different grades and walks of life. Seniors against seniors, seniors against freshmen, football players against band members, skaters against cheerleaders, even scary gothic kids against mathletes. Each social studies teacher has to have at least one team of three students from each class take part in the competition and some even offer extra credit to teams for each round they make it through. The clear favorite from the junior class was the team of Anthony, Benjamin, and the endless pit of knowledge known as Nektarios Vasilottos, but it is known at City that a senior team takes home the W in the final match of the

year. There was no way a team of everyday, average guys with mediocre grades such as Steven, Peter, and I could be expected to win the Super Bowl; we didn't have a chance. Or did we?

"This ought to be good," Mr. Bruemmer, our US history teacher, joked as the trio left his classroom and headed to our first matchup.

We entered Mr. Lenard's room five minutes before it was our turn to duel. After watching the two teams before us going at it, we weren't too sure what to expect out of our first round. Lenard, the proud owner of the darkest tan known to man, started by giving us a quick run through of the rules.

As he pulled his index finger back he said, "There will be ten questions this round. All right answers are worth ten points and five will be subtracted in result of a wrong answer."

"The first person to raise a hand will be called upon to answer the question. If they are incorrect, the other team may talk it over and decide on an answer or pass." He continued, now holding the middle finger. "Finally, there will be no cheating," he urged sternly as he moved the ring finger to join the others. "The first time being caught loses your team ten points and the second results in an automatic disqualification."

My teammates and I took a deep breath and exchanged words of encouragement as the abnormally tan government teacher prepared to read the first question. Ten questions and seventy points later we came out victorious and got our passes signed to go back to class.

The following four rounds presented no problems for us as we tore through the competition like a plow through a snow covered road. It wasn't until round six that we met our first true test of wits. It was the dream team of Nektarios, Anthony, and Benjamin. The three

had yet to beat a team by less than sixty points and showed no signs of stopping after correctly answering the first three questions of our round. It was at that point that Steven and I watched our Peter turn from the goofy friend we thought we knew to an encyclopedia of knowledge. After both teams failed to answer the final question of regulation, it was tied at thirty-five points apiece. We entered what I expected to be a difficult five question overtime round. Peter not only answered four of the five questions, but he answered three before the questions had been read completely by the sun god. The classroom erupted with screaming and applause after what was the biggest SSSB upset in years.

Sadly, we lost our next match in the championship round of the junior class to another underestimated team of Spencer, Dalton, and Christopher. Luckily, the top two teams from each grade moved on to the big time rounds in the auditorium the next Friday. Reaching the auditorium is the social studies equivalent of being called up from the minor leagues. Everything at the next level is faster. There are Jeopardy buzzers in place of raising hands, there is a scoreboard rather than a chalkboard, and there are fifteen harder questions instead of ten of the not-so-difficult kind. All three of us spent every period of class for the next week studying history and government books. I spent my Spanish class memorizing the capitals of every Spanish speaking country in the world. Ironically, the capital of Nicaragua, Managua, would be a key answer in the semifinal auditorium round.

Both my team and our newly found junior rivals defeated the two freshmen teams and the two senior teams and were set to battle it out once again for the title of Social Studies Super Bowl Champions. No matter which of us won, a junior team would have been champion for the first time in recent history. After eleven grueling questions, we had a fifty point lead, which led to the following statement from me: "Drop 'em guys. Drop your buzzers, it's over."

Needless to say, Bruemmer was shocked, and my team received a large sum of extra credit points. After winning the competition, I found that a lot of the ideas I had originally thought about education, school, and everyday life weren't necessarily true, the main thing being that I would never remember anything about school or the information I acquired throughout the years. It wasn't until the SSSB that I realized that I do remember how a bill becomes a law, I do remember what the Harlem Renaissance was, and, for some reason, I do know that the Sesame Street character Snuffleupagus's first name is Aloysius. This experience helped me see that everything we learn about in school doesn't go in one ear and out the other. When a student is taught well and works hard, information actually sticks and can be useful in life.