ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fred Bowen is the author of Peachtree’s popular Fred Bowen Sports Story and All-Star Sport Story series. A lifelong sports fanatic, he has coached youth league baseball, basketball, and soccer. His kids’ sports column “The Score” appears each week in the KidsPost section of the Washington Post. Bowen lives in Maryland.

http://www.fredbowen.com

DISCUSSION GUIDE

THE FRED BOWEN SPORTS STORIES SERIES

Fred Bowen’s fast-paced middle-grade stories offer readers themes of competition, cooperation, facing change, gender roles, overcoming challenges, and new experiences in addition to play-by-play action, snappy dialogue, and engaging plots. Bowen’s books are not the usual sports-fiction fare; each book loops in a little sports history and includes back matter with fascinating glimpses into that history and the heroes who made it happen.

BASEBALL:
- Dugout Rivals
- The Golden Glove
- The Kid Coach
- Perfect Game
- Playoff Dreams
- Throwing Heat
- T.J.’s Secret Pitch
- Winners Take All

BASKETBALL:
- The Final Cut
- Full Court Fever
- Hardcourt Comeback
- Off the Rim
- On the Line
- Real Hoops

FOOTBALL:
- Double Reverse
- Quarterback Season
- Touchdown Trouble

SOCCER:
- Go for the Goal!
- Out of Bounds
- Soccer Team Upset

REVIEWS

“The books in the Fred Bowen Sports Story series are fast-paced, and at just over 100 pages, they’re perfect for reluctant readers…. Young readers will devour these stories, along with their painless lessons, and still have time to join their friends for games.” —School Library Journal

“Bowen does fantastic sports books…. He is definitely the new Matt Christopher.” —YA Books Central

Hardcourt Comeback: “This entry in the Fred Bowen Sports Story series is flush with life lessons about perseverance, dedication, and picking oneself up after a hard knock, not to mention loads of on-court action. It reads like a successful drive to the hoop—quick, purposeful, and effective.” —Booklist

“Excellent reading for sports-oriented students ages 7–12. The exciting narrative and page-turning action keep junior reader interest peaked.” —Midwest Book Review

“Bowen shares a wonderful trait with that other great sports writer for kids, Mike Lupica; they are both sports journalists. Bowen writes a sports column for kids in The Washington Post, and the spare, action-orientated writing of the sports journalist draws boys. It also helps that he knows his stuff. Bowen writes sports stories, not novels with a little sports.” —www.talestoldtall.com

“Fred Bowen never disappoints. His many action-packed novels speak to the hearts and minds of young sports lovers, and he demonstrates know-how and grace in writing about baseball, basketball, soccer and football.” —Washington Parent Magazine
DISCUSSION GUIDE

Dugout Rivals
Written by Fred Bowen
PB: 978-1-56145-515-7
Also available in e-book
AR • RC • Lexile • F&P / GRL Q; Gr 4
Discussion Guide prepared by Peggy Jackson

ABOUT THE BOOK
Jake is pumped about the upcoming season. There’s a new kid on the team who is amazing. His name is Adam and he can do it all—pitch, hit, and field. But then Adam’s talents start to dominate every game and Jake resents all the attention he’s getting. Everything changes, however, when Jake learns something about Adam and something about himself.

THEMES
Friendship | Jealousy | Empathy | Divorce | Teamwork | Sports | Baseball
Learning that everyone cannot be the “star”

WRITING PROMPTS / DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
ALIGNED with COMMON CORE READING STANDARDS

DIRECTIONS:
Use details from the text to support ALL of your responses.

CHAPTERS 1–3:
Chapter 1 ends with Jake thinking this is going to be his year. What does he mean by that? At the end of Chapter 3, Jake is worried and thinks, “Maybe this isn’t going to be my year after all.” What happened? Why did Jake’s mood change?

CHAPTERS 4–6:
Adam seems like a nice guy. He’s helpful and encourages his teammates.

But describe Adam from Jake’s point of view. How has Jake’s point of view changed since the beginning of the story?

CHAPTERS 7–9:
At the end of Chapter 9, Adam’s mom invites Jake to spend the night. Reread that scene. Explain the sentence: “Jake stood in the middle of everyone, feeling as if he were invisible.”

CHAPTERS 10–12:
How does the setting in Chapter 10—the sleepover at Adam’s house—show a different side of Adam? How does the sleepover affect the way Jake thinks about Adam?

CHAPTERS 13–16:
At the beginning of the story, Jake wants to be the star of the team and he is frustrated that Adam is getting so much attention. By the end of the story, Jake feels very differently. He doesn’t need to be the star; he is happy to be an important teammate. Why did he change?

OVERALL QUESTION:
In just a few words, write down what this whole story is about (the overall theme or big idea). Explain your response.

“THE REAL STORY” FOLLOW-UP QUESTION:
How does the information in “The Real Story” relate to the theme or the plot of the book?
ABOUT THE BOOK
Isaac is a serious pitcher and he’s determined to pitch a perfect game: no hits, no runs, no walks, and no errors. He gets close a couple of times, but then a batter gets on base and Isaac totally loses his cool on the mound. He gets so mad that his pitches start missing their mark and he can’t get his head back in the game. Then Isaac learns about a Special Olympics Unified Sports team and meets an interesting athlete who shows him a new way to think about being perfect.

THEMES
Inclusion | Diversity (intellectual abilities) | Friendship | Sports | Baseball
Basketball | Special Olympics Unified Sports | Problems with perfectionism
Hurtfulness of the word “retarded”

CHAPTER 1:
Describe Isaac. What does the author tell you about him just by showing you how he puts on his baseball uniform? What is a perfect game in baseball?

CHAPTER 2:
Look at your description of Isaac. What more can you say about him? What scene in this chapter supports your description?

Note: Some baseball terms may be unfamiliar, but don’t worry. Almost all these words can be defined through the use of context clues. Examples:
• Error: missing a catch during a game
• Patter: talking done by players on the field to keep themselves pumped up
• Dugout: area where the team sits

CHAPTER 3:
What does the scene with Isaac and his dad in the backyard tell you about the dad and their relationship?

CHAPTER 4:
Isaac thinks he pitched a strike, but the umpire calls out, “Ball one.” Later Coach Park says to Isaac, “I thought you were going to lose it when the umpire made that call.” What does Coach Park mean by “going to lose it?”

Note: More baseball terms that can be defined with context clues:
• Bullpen: area near the field where pitchers warm up by throwing practice pitches
• Infielders: the players who play close in, near the bases
• Foul ball: a ball hit by a batter into foul territory, off the playing field

CHAPTER 5:
Coach Park’s basketball team is part of Special Olympics Unified Sports. Why is this kind of team called Unified Sports? Why do you think Coach Park wants Isaac to be part of the team? What is Isaac’s first impression?

CHAPTER 6:
Why is Isaac glancing around the field while he is talking with Kevin? Why does he just want the conversation to end?

CHAPTER 7:
How is Kevin changing? How is Isaac changing? How are they similar to each other?
CHAPTER 8:
Isaac says that the way he plays sports is a lot different from the way Special Olympics athletes play sports. What reasons does he give? Maya completely disagrees. What reasons does she give?

CHAPTER 9:
Why does Coach Park tell Isaac about pro baseball players who pitched perfect games? What does Maya mean when she tells Isaac to “just be perfect enough”?

CHAPTER 10:
What scenes in this chapter show that Kevin is changing in important ways?

CHAPTER 11:
Compare Chapter 3 with this chapter. They are both about Isaac and his dad practicing pitching. What gives you clues that things are different for Isaac in this chapter?

CHAPTER 12:
Mrs. Canavan tells Isaac a lot of details about Kevin that he didn’t know. How do you think that changes the way Isaac thinks about Kevin?

CHAPTER 13:
In Chapter 5, Isaac used the word “retarded” to describe the Special Olympic athletes. But in this chapter, he gets mad when Jackson uses the word. Why does Isaac feel so differently about the use of that word now?

CHAPTER 14:
When Kevin makes a basket at the end of the chapter, Isaac is so thrilled that he feels like he pitched the last out in a perfect game. Why is Isaac so excited?

CHAPTER 15:
Do you think Isaac would have made the Thunderbolts if he had tried out before he joined the Unified Sports team? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 16:
Reread the last two paragraphs. Earlier Isaac told Coach Park that he really didn’t bowl much, but when Kevin says, “I’m a bowler,” Isaac says, “Then I am too.” Why does he say that?

OVERALL QUESTION:
In just a few words, write down what this whole story is about (the overall theme or big idea). Explain your response.

“THE REAL STORY” FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:
What did you learn about Special Olympics Unified Sports that you did not know before? What did you learn about pro baseball players who pitched perfect games? How did the information in “The Real Story” relate to the theme or plot of the book?
ABOUT THE BOOK
Jack throws the fastest pitches in the league, but his blazing fastballs are all over the place. He’s racking up a lot of walks instead of strikeouts. A coach tries to show him some new pitches, but Jack loves bringing the heat. Will his fastball be his downfall, or can he change his game and start winning?

THEMES
Friendship  |  Sports  |  Baseball  |  Pitching  |  Professional baseball pitchers
Working hard to get better  |  Being open to change
Not being so quick to judge others

Writing Prompts / Discussion Questions

Directions: Use details from the text to support ALL of your responses.

CHAPTER 1:
Describe the setting and what is happening. What does the first chapter already tell you about the main character Jack?

CHAPTER 2:
What do you learn about Jack in this chapter? How is that different from what you learned in Chapter 1?

CHAPTER 3:
Why is Jack suddenly interested in his sister’s new boyfriend Finn? What do they have in common? How can Finn help Jack?

CHAPTER 4:
At the end of the first pitching lesson, Finn tells Mr. Lerner that Jack “could be a real good pitcher if he works at it.” But when Jack hears this, he “rolls his eyes.” What does that expression mean? Why does Jack roll his eyes?

CHAPTER 5:
What does Jack find out about Finn? How will that affect whether he wants Finn to help him anymore?

CHAPTER 6:
What do the statistics tell Jack about his pitching in this game? Compare his first inning statistics with the statistics in his next two innings. What might have helped him pitch better?

CHAPTER 7:
Think about the way Jack pitches. How does that compare with the way he plays Ping-Pong? How does his style compare with Andy Wong’s, the new guy who is also an excellent Ping-Pong player?

CHAPTER 8:
Why does Finn tell Jack about Steve Dalkowski and Sandy Koufax? What is the biggest difference between Finn’s idea about pitching and Jack’s? Who do you think is right?

CHAPTER 9:
Jack’s teammates congratulate him after he is taken out of the game. What is Jack’s reaction to their congratulations?

CHAPTER 10:
Andy Wong beat Jack in the Ping-Pong tournament. How did the way Andy played help Jack understand what Finn has been trying to tell him all along? How does Jack’s e-mail to Finn show that he is starting to change his opinion about Finn?
CHAPTER 11:
Compare Jack’s reaction to Finn’s coaching now with his reaction to Finn’s coaching in Chapter 8. What has changed?

CHAPTER 12:
Examine the statistics for Jack’s fastballs and change-ups. How do the statistics show that he is getting better? Look at his stats for May 8. Nine fastballs out of 40 pitches were strikes, and eight change-ups out of 20 pitches were strikes. Was he more successful with his fastballs or his change-ups? Explain your answer.

CHAPTERS 13–14:
The last line in Chapter 14 is “Jack couldn’t wait to tell Finn.” Why is he excited to tell Finn about the game? What does that last line show about Jack and his relationship with Finn?

CHAPTER 15:
What is the big, overall lesson Jack learns from his pitching sessions and talks with Finn?

OVERALL QUESTION:
In just a few words, write down what this whole story is about (the overall theme or big idea). Explain your response.

“THE REAL STORY” FOLLOW-UP QUESTION:
How does the information in “The Real Story” relate to the theme or the plot of the book?
Winners Take All

Written by Fred Bowen
PB: 978-1-56145-512-6
Also available in e-book
AR • RC • Lexile • F&P / GRL Q; Gr 4
Discussion Guide prepared by Brooks Spencer

NOTE: This version of Brooks Spencer’s Guided Novel Study is abridged and includes additions from the author where noted.

ABOUT THE BOOK
Kyle, a good kid, makes a bad decision to cheat in a big game. He fakes a catch to clinch the win against a long-time archrival. His teammates go wild with victory. But suddenly Kyle doesn’t feel so good. His conscience is bugging him. And he feels like he’s keeping a secret from his teammates, especially Claire. Kyle and Claire are good friends and her praise makes him very uncomfortable. But Kyle doesn’t want to come clean and give up his hero reputation. Eventually he concocts a scheme to secretly throw a game to balance the false win and make his team even in the standings with their archrival.

Meanwhile a subplot has been building. Another kid actually saw the fake catch and is threatening to report Kyle to the Youth Baseball Commission. He says that he will keep Kyle’s secret on one condition: that Kyle’s team doesn’t win the championship! Kyle feels trapped. He desperately wants his team to win the trophy, but if he plays hard and they win, the other kid will blab and Kyle’s secret will be out—everyone will know he cheated. He wishes he could put his life on rewind—he wouldn’t fake that catch again. But there’s no rewind button in life, so what can he do now?

THEMES
Baseball | Realistic fiction | Sports history | Friendship | Honesty
Responsibility | Personal integrity | Personal character
Problems with secrets and the long-term benefits of doing the right thing
Great and honest baseball pitcher Christy Mathewson

PRE-READING STRATEGIES
• Build interest around the book with which you are about to spend a few weeks.
• Read aloud one of the great picture books about baseball (see list in this guide). My favorite for this is Teammates by Peter Golenbock. The story is based on actual events.
• Have students take this quiz silently on a scrap sheet of paper. The final answer will be what sport you are describing:
  o What sport has Angels, Giants and Pirates?
  o In what sport are diamonds needed?
  o In what sport is stealing encouraged?
  o When is “going home” okay when you are in the middle of playing game?

After going over the answers, work with students to brainstorm and make a list on the board of other facts they know about baseball.
• Ask how many students have played T-Ball. How many students have gone on to play in other leagues? How many girls switched to softball? What are three differences in baseball and softball? (size of ball, number of players, the way the ball is pitched) What’s your favorite professional team? Who’s your favorite professional player, past or present?
• Bring in an old transistor radio if you have one. Baseball games were broadcast live way before they were ever on TV. On YouTube, you can listen to famous announcers like Vince Scully and Phil Rizzuto, or famous songs like “Take Me Out to the Ballgame.” You can watch/listen to Lou Gehrig’s moving speech about retiring because of illness but feeling lucky to have lived such a great life.
• If your students understand puns, play the classic WHO'S ON FIRST routine by Abbott and Costello. Listen to it, then draw a baseball diamond on the board and label the players. Listen to it again and discuss.
• Kyle’s grandmother is called “Honsey” in Winners Take All. Ask your students what they call their grandmothers and why. Traditional in the family? What the oldest grandchild called her? Accidental mispronunciation?

Note from the author Fred Bowen: When writing Winners Take All, I was scheduled to do an online chat with students as part of a program called The Read In. I had to practice for it by “chatting” online with the director’s grandmother, who turned out to be a huge baseball fan. Her online screen name was Honsey. The character in the book was going to be a grandfather but after my “chat,” I changed it to a grandmother and called her...Honsey.
WRITING PROMPTS / DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
ALIGNED with COMMON CORE READING STANDARDS

The following writing prompts give students a chance to pause and think about the story and the important issues it raises. Their written responses provide a great opportunity to practice their writing. After you have read aloud to your students and they have finished answering the prompts, gather them together for a whole-class discussion. They have already thought about the story and will have a lot of opinions. Use the Wrap-Up Questions at the end to jumpstart the conversation.

CHAPTERS 1 & 2:
Choose A or B and write your response:
A. Kyle’s favorite place in the world is the town baseball field, especially when his team is playing the Cubs. Describe your favorite place in the world.
B. The Cubs players, coaches, and fans yell at the umpire when he rules against them and they lose the game. What do you think the umpire is thinking when everyone is yelling at him? (Think about how you feel when someone is yelling at you.)

CHAPTERS 3 & 4:
Choose A or B and write your response:
A. Teamwork is an important part of sports. Describe the kind of person who would make a good teammate. Now describe the kind of person whose behavior would hurt the team.
B. Let’s say that Kyle decides to tell his teammates right away that he faked the catch. Think about what he would say. Think about how Nate or Claire would react. Write a short scene starting with this line: Kyle’s teammates gathered around and tried to lift him up on their shoulders, but he twisted free and said:

CHAPTERS 5 & 6:
Choose A or B and write your response:
A. Think about the setting of this chapter. What kind of mood does the author set? What words or phrases does he use to set that mood?
B. Kyle says, “I’m not a cheater. I made a mistake, that’s all.” What do you think about that statement?

CHAPTERS 7 & 8:
Choose A or B and write your response:
A. How important is attitude in sports and in school? Write about a time when you had a bad attitude and things turned out badly, or when you had a good attitude and did better than expected.
B. Nate and Kyle play in a playground basketball game against Bryan Ford. There are no referees. Do you think that kids’ games can be fair without grown-ups enforcing the rules? Why or why not?

CHAPTERS 9 & 10:
Choose A or B and write your response:
A. Kyle is hoping that the caller didn’t really see him drop the ball. Kyle wants to keep his cheating a secret. Can you think of a time that you were keeping a secret from somebody? How do you think Kyle will feel if he keeps his cheating a secret?
B. Honsey loves baseball. If you could see into her brain, you would see a lot of baseball facts. Write about what someone would see if he or she could look into your brain.

CHAPTERS 11 & 12:
Choose A or B and write your response:
A. It looks as if the Cubs coach is going to publicly accuse Kyle of faking the catch. Write a short letter to Kyle and tell him what he should do.
B. Kyle’s team has won the championship. He didn’t cheat this time, but he doesn’t feel like celebrating. Why not?

CHAPTERS 13 & 14:
Choose A or B and write your response:
A. How would you feel if you were one of the Reds or one of the Cubs standing in the room when Kyle admits that he really didn’t make the catch?
B. Do you think the commissioners made the right decision? Should they have benched Kyle (not let him play) in the final game? Why or why not?

CHAPTERS 15 & 16:
Choose A or B and write your response:
A. Circle two words from the list here and explain why you think they best describe Kyle. honest sneaky happy sad good bad kind mean
B. Kyle spots Jason right after the game, but he doesn’t care. Why doesn’t seeing Jason bother Kyle anymore?

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THE REAL STORY BONUS SECTION:
Choose A or B and write your response:
A. Honsey admires Hall of Famer Christy Mathewson. Write about a ball player or other grown-up whom you admire.
B. Christy Mathewson would tell the truth even if the truth helped the other team. What do you think his teammates thought about him?

WRAP-UP QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION:
• What do you think is the worst part of Kyle faking the catch?
• Kyle almost told Claire that he had faked the catch. How do you think Claire would have reacted if he had? How would you have reacted?
• Would Kyle have ever told the truth if Jason had never discovered the cheating and told Coach Rolfe about it?
• How does this famous expression apply to Kyle: “Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive”?
• Playing to win is exciting and fun. And winning a tight game is especially thrilling. But Kyle wants to win so much that he makes a bad decision. Why does he feel so much pressure to win?

AFTER YOU READ
• Have fun with baseball idioms and get parents involved too! The English language is full of idioms that come directly from the game of baseball—“Give me a ballpark figure,” “I’ll take a rain check,” “Touch base with me later.” (See the idiom activity sheet at the end of this guide.) Have your students ask their parents (and other grown-ups they know) for examples and then keep a running list in the classroom.
• Give each student a copy of the Winners Take All Multiple Choice Review Worksheets at the end of this guide. You can give it to them after finishing the book or, give it to them in sections after each group of chapters. (Answer key is provided at the end of this page.)
• Give each student a copy of the Winners Take All Fact or Opinion Worksheet at the end of this guide. Answer key is provided at the end of this page.

ANSWER KEYS
Multiple Choice Review
1. b
2. c
3. c
4. a
5. b
6. a
7. c
8. b
9. c
10. a
11. a
12. c
13. b
14. a
15. c
16. b
17. c
18. b
19. c
20. b
21. b
22. c
23. c
24. c
25. c
26. a
27. a
28. a
29. c
30. b
31. b
32. b
33. c
34. b
35. c
36. b
37. c

Fact or Opinion?
1. F
2. F
3. O
4. F
5. F
6. O
7. F
8. O
9. O
10. O
Idioms are words or phrases that don’t mean, literally, what they say. “Hold your tongue” does not mean stick your tongue out and hold it with your fingers! It means “Be quiet!” We use baseball idioms all the time. See if you can “translate” what the idioms in the following sentences mean.

1. We have to “touch base” with our mothers when we leave the movies.

2. Mr. Lee “went to bat for me” when I thought I had lost my homework.

3. Danny and George are ready to “give their pitch” for extra recess.

4. We need to get “a ballpark figure” for the cost of the picnic supplies.

5. I have to babysit tonight so I'll have to “take a rain check” on having pizza with you.

6. Jamie “hit a homerun” with his science presentation!

7. The sixth grade “dropped the ball” in the Keeping Your Hall Clean competition.

8. The boys were “out in left field” when it came to learning new dance steps.

9. Mrs. Jones is out today so Mr. Monaco is our “pinch hitter.”

10. Mr. Parker’s got a new job. He’s “in the big leagues” now.

Extra Credit: Write the meaning of these other baseball idioms on the back of this paper:
“off base,” “two strikes against him/her,” “struck out,” “stepped up to the plate,” “knocked it out of the park,” “on the ball,” “threw a curve ball,” “playing hardball,” “the bases are loaded,” “it’s the bottom of the ninth inning”
Fact or Opinion?
Winners Take All

Name: ________________________________      Date: ________________

Place an “F” beside the statement if it is a FACT (can be proven or verified).
Place an “O” beside the statement if it is an OPINION (represents how someone feels about something).

___ 1. Christy Mathewson was a major league ball player in 1910.

___ 2. Mathewson was one of five players in the first group admitted to the Baseball Hall of Fame.

___ 3. Ty Cobb was one of the dirtiest players ever to play the game.

___ 4. Mathewson attended Bucknell University where he played football, basketball, and baseball.

___ 5. In his career, Mathewson pitched eighty shutouts.

___ 6. Mathewson was the best pitcher of his time.

___ 7. Mathewson’s great memory helped him as a pitcher.

___ 8. Tom Kite was not as great an athlete as Mathewson.

___ 9. Justin Leonard made a very bad decision to count the extra stroke if no one saw it.

___ 10. Players shouldn’t have to call penalties on themselves in golf.

BONUS: Practice your fact and opinion skills by writing two facts and two opinions based on Winners Take All.
Multiple Choice Review
Winners Take All

Name: ________________________________

1. Chapter 1: “Rally caps” is a term used to encourage teammates and fans to do what with their hats or caps?
a. throw them in the air  
b. turn them around backwards  
c. exchange them with the person next to them

2. Kyle didn’t seem to like Bryan Ford, but
a. he was his cousin  
b. they had always been on the same team  
c. he respected Bryan’s ability as a hitter

3. Chapter 2: Kyle almost immediately regretted faking the catch when
a. Bryan wanted to pick a fight  
b. his dad left the ballpark in disgust  
c. the teams’ parents were arguing with each other over the call

4. The umpires were clearly having a problem with Kyle’s catch because they
a. had to get out the rule book  
b. had to call the supervisor of umpires to make the call  
c. decided to flip a coin

5. Chapter 3: Why did Kyle not want to be carried on his teammate’s shoulders?
a. he was afraid of heights  
b. he was feeling guilty about the fake catch  
c. he was afraid they would drop him

6. Kyle’s grandmother, Honsey, seemed to be an expert on
a. baseball facts  
b. knitting and crocheting  
c. knowing when someone was hiding their feelings

7. Chapter 4: What really spoiled celebrating the victory with Claire?
a. The ice cream shop was closed  
b. Claire had invited Bryan to come  
c. The anonymous phone call to Kyle’s house

8. The anonymous caller claimed to have
a. seen Kyle make the catch  
b. seen Kyle not make the catch  
c. seen Claire make the catch instead of Kyle

9. Chapter 5: What did the caller threaten to do?
a. go to the police  
b. write a letter to Kyle’s grandmother  
c. tell the whole league Kyle was a cheater

10. What was Claire’s reaction to Jason’s threat?
a. she believed Kyle had caught the ball  
b. she laughed because she thought it was ridiculous  
c. she didn’t care because everyone knew that Jason was a liar

11. Chapter 6: Kyle’s favorite bat was a
a. Ken Griffey Jr. model  
b. Babe Ruth slugger model  
c. Mickey Mantle autographed model

12. During the Reds vs. Giants game, Kyle intentionally
a. hit a homerun  
b. let the pitcher hit him  
c. struck out

13. Chapter 7: “The score was knotted at 6-6.” Means
a. the score was confused  
b. the score was tied  
c. the score was over
14. If the runners are “at the corners,” where are they on the field?
   a. 1st and 3rd
   b. 2nd and 3rd
   c. 1st and 2nd

15. Nate and Kyle played ____ with Bryan at the park.
   a. Frisbee
   b. bike relays
   c. basketball

16. What caused Bryan to get so angry during the game?
   a. Nate called a foul against him
   b. Kyle called a foul against him
   c. Claire said he shot like a wimp

17. Chapter 9: What had Honsey been watching on TV when Kyle thought she was asleep?
   a. her favorite soap opera story
   b. a movie
   c. a golf tournament

18. In which sport do the players call penalties on themselves?
   a. tennis
   b. golf
   c. basketball

19. What player, who was so honest the umpire sometimes asked him to make the call, did Honsey tell Kyle about?
   a. Tiger Woods
   b. Tom Kite
   c. Christy Mathewson

20. Honsey believed
   a. “what goes around, comes around”
   b. “a gentleman is expected to tell the truth”
   c. “golfers are more honest than baseball players”

21. Chapter 10: “Kyle’s problem clung to him like the grass stains on his uniform.” This sentence is an example of
   a. alliteration
   b. simile
   c. personification

22. What was Kyle’s excuse for not playing well in the last regular game against the Cubs?
   a. he was sick
   b. he was trying to throw the game
   c. he couldn’t get his head into the game

23. When the ball meets the bat, it makes a crack sound. What example of figurative language does that represent?
   a. simile
   b. alliteration
   c. onomatopoeia

24. Chapter 11: How many innings does the Rising Stars League play?
   a. nine
   b. seven
   c. six

25. “The Reds bench was bedlam.” What does bedlam mean?
   a. quiet
   b. calm
   c. excited

26. What position did Cubs player Bryan Ford hold?
   a. catcher
   b. pitcher
   c. shortstop
Multiple Choice Review (continued)
Winners Take All
Name: _______________________________________

27. Chapter 12: What was Claire calling Kyle about after they beat the Cubs?
   a. to tell him about the protest by the Cubs
   b. to tell him to pick up his trophy from the coach
   c. to take him for ice cream again

28. Who did Honsey think was as good as Willie Mays?
   b. Kyle
   c. Enos Slaughter

29. Chapter 13: What finally made Kyle decide to tell the truth about the catch?
   a. everyone was shouting at him
   b. he thought they would believe Jason over him
   c. he would always feel guilty about it

30. How would you describe the atmosphere in the league meeting room?
   a. friendly
   b. tense
   c. quiet

31. Chapter 14: When Coach Daye turned away from Kyle when Kyle confessed at the meeting, we can infer
   a. Coach Daye was supportive of Kyle’s decision to tell the truth
   b. Coach Daye was disappointed in Kyle’s decision to tell the truth
   c. Coach Daye wanted to console the other players

32. A unanimous decision means all parties
   a. disagree
   b. agree
   c. are divided

33. Chapter 15: The way the Reds players were acting toward Kyle at the championship game, we can infer
   a. they didn’t want him on the team
   b. they were still upset with him
   c. things were back to normal

34. Kyle’s secret about not catching the ball had
   a. made him dislike baseball
   b. taken all the fun out of the end of the season
   c. caused him to lose all his friends

35. Chapter 16: What is a “full count” in baseball terms?
   a. 3 strikes
   b. 3 strikes/2 balls
   c. 3 balls/2 strikes

36. How many balls have to be called before a batter can walk to first base?
   a. 3
   b. 4
   c. 2 balls and 2 fouls

37. What is a “bunt” in baseball terms?
   a. a foul ball
   b. when a hitter strikes at the ball while running to first
   c. an intentional hit that only goes a very short distance
**ABOUT THE BOOK**

Jesse’s freshman football team is in big trouble. The Panthers don’t have anybody who can pass the ball! Jesse is not big and strong like his brother Jay, who was the star quarterback on Panthers varsity last year. Jesse is short and he definitely can’t throw the ball like his brother. Nobody on his team can. Maybe it’s time for a brand new plan? Something even a little crazy…like Jesse playing quarterback? At least he’s fast and knows all the plays. What have the Panthers got to lose?

**THEMES**

Friendship | Sports | Football
Problems with judging people by their appearances
Being open to change | Working hard to achieve goals

**WRITING PROMPTS / DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**ALIGNED with COMMON CORE READING STANDARDS**

**DIRECTIONS:**

Use details from the text to support ALL of your responses.

**CHAPTERS 1–3:**

How does the author show that Henry, the new team quarterback, is not very good? Why is Jesse surprised that Henry is having trouble playing quarterback? Jesse’s friend Savannah plays soccer. Why did her coach make her the goalkeeper?

**CHAPTERS 4–6:**

Why does Jay think Jesse could be a good quarterback? Why does Jesse doubt his ability to be a good quarterback? Jesse senses something has changed between him and his brother Jay. What do you think has changed?

**CHAPTERS 7–9:**

Why does Coach Vittone mention pro football player Fran Tarkenton? Name two of Jesse’s skills that would make him a good quarterback. Why does Jesse suggest Savannah should be the team’s kicker? Why do Quinn and Langston think that’s a bad idea?

**CHAPTERS 10–12:**

What makes the coaches change their minds about using Savannah as a kicker? Compare and contrast how the Franklin team plays now and the way the team played in Chapter 4. What has improved? What else has changed?

**CHAPTERS 13–15:**

Jesse is drawing football plays in study hall. What does that tell you about Jesse? At the end of Chapter 14, Jesse creates a play that Quinn, Langston, and Savannah think is great. Why do you think the author keeps that play a secret from the reader?

**CHAPTERS 16–17:**

The secret play that Jesse planned (in Chapter 14) works! Who made the winning touchdown? Why do you think Jesse planned for that player to run for the touchdown? Now think about the whole story: How did things turn out differently than expected for Jesse? for his brother Jay?

**OVERALL QUESTION:**

In just a few words, write down what this whole story is about (the overall theme or big idea). Explain your response.

**“THE REAL STORY” FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:**

What more did you learn about Fran Tarkenton? How does the information in “The Real Story” relate to the theme or the plot of the book?
**ABOUT THE BOOK**
Matt wants to be the starting quarterback on his team, but he’s got some serious competition from the annoying but talented Devro Beech. To make matters worse, his English teacher is on his case about a new class assignment: he has to keep a journal. He doesn’t know what to write about. Then his teacher says, “Keep a diary about playing on the football team.” So he does. And as he writes, he starts paying closer attention to what’s happening on and off the field. And he discovers that not everything is what it seems to be…not even Devro.

**THEMES**
- Jealousy
- Determination
- Friendship
- Sports
- Football

*Instant Replay* by Jerry Kramer | Pleasures of writing
How writing helps you to focus for deeper understanding

**WRITING PROMPTS / DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**
**ALIGNED with COMMON CORE READING STANDARDS**

**DIRECTIONS:**
Use details from the text to support ALL of your responses.

**Note:** The story is told in diary form and is organized by week rather than by chapter.

**WEEK 1:**
Write down how many grammar and spelling errors you can find in Matt’s first week of journal entries. What is Ms. Ignacio’s reaction to Matt’s entries?

**WEEK 2:**
Matt is confident that he will be picked to be the starting quarterback and he says he’s not worried about Devro. Why does Ms. Ignacio think that Matt probably isn’t being completely honest about his feelings?

**WEEK 3:**
Compare Matt’s journal entries in Week 1 with this week. What makes this week’s entries so much better?

**WEEK 4:**
Matt only has to write three entries a week for homework. Why does he write an extra entry this week?

**WEEK 5:**
Matt’s teacher always includes a quote at the end of her e-mails and the quotes usually relate to Matt’s journal entries. This week the quote is: “Ever tried? Ever failed? No matter. Try again. Fail better.” Why does Ms. Ig choose that quote? What does it mean to “Fail better”?

**WEEK 6:**
Why is Matt so upset that he lost his playbook?

**WEEK 7:**
When Colby says that he saw Devro with Matt’s playbook, Matt assumes that Devro stole it. Why is Matt so quick to think something bad about Devro?

**WEEK 8:**
Do you think Matt would rather win a big game with Devro as quarterback or lose a big game with Devro as quarterback? Remember to back up your opinion with details from the text.

**WEEK 9:**
Matt is tricked twice by Ms. Roberts and then remembers that Ms. Ig says, “You’ve got to keep your eyes open. Things aren’t always what they seem.” How does that thought apply to the way Matt thinks about Devro?
**WEEK 10:**
This story is told from Matt’s point of view. How would it be different if it were told from Devro’s point of view? What would Devro think about Matt?

**WEEK 11:**
Compare Matt’s feelings about Devro at the beginning of the story with the way he feels about Devro now? Did Devro change or did Matt just change the way he felt about him? Explain.

**WEEK 12:**
Once Matt started reading *Instant Replay*, he couldn’t stop. What made it so interesting to Matt?

**WEEK 13:**
How did writing a journal help Matt better understand his feelings and thoughts about his football season?

**OVERALL QUESTION:**
In just a few words, write down what this whole story is about (the overall theme or big idea). Explain your response.

**“THE REAL STORY” FOLLOW-UP QUESTION:**
How does the information in “The Real Story” relate to the theme or the plot of the book?
ABOUT THE BOOK
Sam is twelve years old and a star player on an awesome team: the Cowboys. His teammates always pull together and play to win. Their effort pays off big time when they beat their arch-rival in a hard-fought game. But their celebration doesn’t last long. Sam makes a discovery that threatens their victory and their team spirit. Can Sam keep the Cowboys together or will his discovery destroy the team?

THEMES:
Personal character | Group integrity | Leadership | Peer pressure | Honesty | Friendship | Fairness | Football
1940 Cornell vs. Dartmouth football game

CHAPTER 2:
How would you describe the Cowboys as a team? Is Sam’s father interested in Sam’s football team? How can you tell?

CHAPTER 3:
What does the touch football game tell you about the feelings between the Cowboys and the Giants?

CHAPTER 4:
What does Sam find at the end of this chapter? What does he decide to do with it? How does Sam justify his decision? Could he have made another decision?

CHAPTER 5:
How does Brady act in the meeting with Mr. Hanley? Why do you think he acts this way? Describe Mr. Hanley. Do you think he believes Brady and Sam?

CHAPTER 6:
Trey says to Sam, “Now that you found that scooter…” The word found is in italics in the book. What does that tell you about how Trey said the word and how he feels about Sam keeping the scooter?

CHAPTER 7:
How would you describe the game between the Cowboys and Giants? Why does the author keep mentioning the time left in the game?

CHAPTER 8:
Describe how the Giants treat each other during the traditional Friday evening pizza party. Describe some of the personalities on the team. Sam’s happy at first but then his mood changes dramatically. What happened?

CHAPTER 9:
Sam says the team did not win the Giants game fairly. Why does Sam think that? Why does Trey say the team should keep the win? Trey compares the Cowboys keeping the win in the Giants game to Sam’s keeping the scooter. Are they the same thing?
CHAPTER 10:
Why does Sam return the scooter? How does Sam act around Sergeant Jones? How does Sergeant Jones act? Do you think she believes Sam’s story? Sam is offered a reward. Why does he refuse it?

CHAPTER 11:
The setting is a rainy game. How does the author use the rain to help the reader understand the way Sam is feeling? Use exact words or sentences from the text to show what you mean.

CHAPTER 12:
Why do you think Sam’s dad shows the film of the end of the Giants game first? What is the team’s reaction? Why does Sam’s dad tell the story of the 1940 Cornell vs. Dartmouth game?

CHAPTER 13:
Compare the arguments that Sam and Trey make about whether the Cowboys should keep the victory over the Giants. How does the fact that Sam brought back the scooter help his argument against Trey about the game? How does the way the vote is taken increase the drama and tension of the chapter?

CHAPTER 14:
Why do the Cowboys play poorly in the first half against the Lions? Why are the Giants cheering for the Cowboys? What is the Cowboys’ reaction?

CHAPTER 15:
Compare how Sam and Trey treat each other in Chapter 15 with how they treat each other in Chapter 13. What has happened? Why did Trey change?

OVERALL QUESTION:
In just a few words, write down what this whole story is about (the overall theme or big idea). Explain your response.

“THE REAL STORY” FOLLOW-UP QUESTION:
How does the information in “The Real Story” relate to the theme or the plot of the book?
ABOUT THE BOOK
Brett is a star player on his basketball team...or at least he thought he was. Then he misses an easy layup at the buzzer that costs his team the game. And things get worse. At a friend’s party at a rock climbing center, Brett freezes on the wall. He’s losing his confidence fast, both on and off the court, and the championship game is coming. Can Brett overcome his fears and play like a winner again?

THEMES:
Overcoming fear | Determination | Physical courage | Phobias | Friendship
Sports | Basketball | Pro players who came back after public failures

WRITING PROMPTS / DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
ALIGNED with COMMON CORE READING STANDARDS

DIRECTIONS:
Use details from the text to support ALL of your responses.

CHAPTER 1:
How would you describe the Wildcats basketball practice? What does it tell you about the players and the relationship between Brett and Will?

CHAPTER 2:
How does the author use the History Bee to show the relationship between Brett and Brooke? Describe that relationship.

CHAPTER 3:
What is a layup in basketball? Brett scores a key basket with a layup to make the score 43–38. Why all the emphasis on layups?

CHAPTER 4:
You have read about Brett for four chapters. How would you describe him in three or four adjectives? Why did you choose those adjectives?

CHAPTER 5:
How is the setting in Chapter 5 important to the action? How does the author show that Brett is getting more and more nervous? How is the word “beaten” used at the end of the chapter?

CHAPTER 6:
The author uses two chapters to describe the game with the Huskies. Why does he do this? How does it create more tension in the story?

CHAPTER 7:
This chapter describes only 45 seconds of the game. What does the author do to “slow down” the action?

CHAPTER 8:
How has Brett changed since the beginning of the story? How is he different? Why is he different?

CHAPTER 9:
How has Brett’s relationship with Will changed? How has it changed with Brooke?

CHAPTER 10:
Compare and contrast how Brett acts and plays during the game in this chapter and how he acts and plays during the game in Chapter 3. What are some of the specific differences?

CHAPTER 11:
After the Wildcats practice, Brett sits on the gym floor to watch the start of his sister’s practice, but he barely notices what her team is doing. Why is that?

CHAPTER 12:
Coach Giminski tells the Wildcats two stories. Why is it important that these stories are about real games and real players?
CHAPTER 13:
What does Mike at Earth Treks do to help Brett overcome his fears?
Compare Brett’s feelings at the end of this chapter with his feelings at the end
of Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 14:
What does Coach Giminski mean when he says to Brett, “Take it to the
hoop”? Brett seems to be gaining confidence and playing better. How did
Brett’s experience at Earth Treks help him as a basketball player?

CHAPTER 15:
Describe the rules for the game “21.” What are the two shots in the game?
Why is that important to the story?

CHAPTER 16:
What does the game tell you about Brett? How has he changed?

CHAPTER 17:
Think about the whole story. Why do you think the book is called
“Hardcourt Comeback”?

OVERALL QUESTION:
In just a few words, write down what this whole story is about (the overall
theme or big idea). Explain your response.

“THE REAL STORY” FOLLOW-UP QUESTION:
How does the information in “The Real Story” relate to the theme or the
plot of the book?
ABOUT THE BOOK
Ben is the captain of his basketball team and he’s got a problem with Hud, the most talented player on the team. Hud knows he’s the best and tries to win games by hogging the ball and showing off. Can Ben convince Hud to forget his hot-shot ways and help the whole team win some games?

THEMES:
Integrity | Teamwork | Responsibility | Friendship | Conflict | Sports
Basketball | The Ruckers League

WRITING PROMPTS / DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
ALIGNED with COMMON CORE READING STANDARDS

DIRECTIONS:
Use details from the text to support ALL of your responses.

CHAPTER 1:
Compare the scene at the first park with the scene at the Westwood Recreation Center (WRC). Why are Ben and Logan so excited to meet Hud?

CHAPTER 2:
This is a book about a basketball team. How does a jazz orchestra compare to a basketball team? What is a solo in a jazz orchestra?

CHAPTER 3:
Why does Mr. Sims say that playing on a summer team is not “real hoops”?

CHAPTER 4:
Think about the coach, Mr. George. Compare the way Ben feels about Mr. George and his tryouts with the way that Hud feels about them. Do you think Mr. George and Hud will get along? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 5:
Describe Donut’s personality. What does Mr. Sims think of Donut? Explain.

CHAPTER 6:
Look at the list of Coach George’s “Team Rules.” After the coach reads Rule #8, Ben says to Hud, “Guess we can’t play at Westwood anymore.” Why does he say that? Why doesn’t Hud respond?

CHAPTER 7:
What does the game tell you about the relationship between Coach George and Hud? What does the coach mean when he yells out to Hud, “Simple pass. No French Pastry.”

CHAPTER 8:
Looking back to Chapter 6, what does Coach George expect from his captain? Ben is the team captain. What is his problem now that he has seen Hud playing basketball at the WRC?

CHAPTER 9:
Ben and Logan compare the basketball team to a jazz orchestra. How does that relate to Ben’s problem concerning Hud? In other words, how is a jazz orchestra a metaphor for Ben’s problems with Hud?

CHAPTER 10:
Why does Hud continue to break Coach George’s rule about not playing pick-up basketball? Why does Ben confront Hud in the locker room? At the end of the chapter, why does Ben feel like he just lost the biggest game of the season?

CHAPTER 11:
What do the last 25 seconds of the game against the Robinson Panthers tell you about Mr. George? What do they tell you about Hud?
CHAPTER 12:
After Coach George puts Levon in the starting lineup, Ben notices Hud’s “jaw was clenched and his eyes were blazing.” Why does Hud react that way?

CHAPTER 13:
How do Mr. Sims’s stories about Donut, Hi-Tops, Earl “The Goat” Manigault, and The Rucker League relate to Hud’s situation?

CHAPTER 14:
Compare how Hud ran the play in this chapter with how he ran the play in Chapter 11. What does that tell you about Hud?

CHAPTER 15:
How has Ben’s relationship with Donut changed from the first time he and Logan went to the WRC? How does Donut feel about his decision not to play basketball in high school?

OVERALL QUESTION:
In a few words, write down what this whole story is about (the overall theme or big idea). Explain your response.

“THE REAL STORY” FOLLOW-UP QUESTION:
How does the information in “The Real Story” relate to the theme or the plot of the book?
DISCUSSION GUIDE

Go for the Goal!
Written by Fred Bowen
PB: 978-1-56145-632-1
Also available in e-book
AR • RC • Lexile / GRL N; Gr 3
Discussion Guide prepared by Peggy Jackson

ABOUT THE BOOK
Josh just joined the United, a travel soccer team with awesome players. But the United’s season is going down in a string of defeats. Then Josh discovers something about the 1999 United States Women’s World Cup Champions. That group of all-stars worked at being teammates. Maybe their secret strategy will work for the United?

THEMES:
Collaboration | Team-building exercises | Teamwork | Friendship Thinking out of the box | Sports | Soccer | 1999 Women’s World Cup

WRITING PROMPTS / DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
ALIGNED with COMMON CORE READING STANDARDS

DIRECTIONS:
Use details from the text to support ALL of your responses.

CHAPTERS 1–3:
Josh and Aidan are excited that they have made the United, a select soccer team. But it’s very different from their old team, the Flames. How does Josh think it’s different? How does his mom think it’s different?

CHAPTERS 4–6:
List two reasons why the United don’t “click” (play well together) in their first tournament. Now think about the cafeteria setting in Chapter 6. Even though the characters aren’t playing soccer, how does the author show that Josh and Aidan’s experience with the Flames was probably a lot different than it is with the United?

CHAPTERS 7–9:
How does Josh come up with the idea of doing team-building exercises? Why does he think these will help the United in a real game?

CHAPTERS 10–12:
In Chapter 10, how do the United teammates play differently than before? How has the exercise with the purple blanket helped them become better soccer players?

CHAPTERS 13–15:
How has Josh’s experience on the United changed since the beginning of the story? Choose at least two scenes that show how it has changed.

CHAPTERS 16–17:
How do Josh and Aidan feel about Evan at the beginning of the book? How do they feel about him at the end? Why have their feelings changed about him?

OVERALL QUESTION:
In just a few words, write down what this whole story is about (the overall theme or big idea). Explain your response.

“THE REAL STORY” FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:
What did you learn about the 1999 U.S. Women’s Soccer Team that you didn’t know? How does the information in “The Real Story” relate to the theme or the plot of the whole story?
DISCUSSION GUIDE

Out of Bounds
Written by Fred Bowen
PB: 978-1-56145-894-3
HC: 978-1-56145-845-5
Also available in e-book

ABOUT THE BOOK
Nate, an eighth grader, and the rest of his teammates are competitive, especially when it comes to playing against their rivals, the Monarchs. They want to win so badly that they’re willing to root against the Monarchs when they play other teams. Something happens though, and Nate starts feeling uncomfortable about their win-at-any-cost attitude. But what can he do about it? He’s just one guy on the team.

THEMES
Sportsmanship | Attitudes about winning | Friendship | Leadership
Peer pressure | Sports | Soccer

WRITING PROMPTS / DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
ALIGNED with COMMON CORE READING STANDARDS

DIRECTIONS:
Use details from the text to support ALL of your responses.

CHAPTERS 1–3:
How is Aunt Lizzie different from Nate’s parents? How does Nate act around Aunt Lizzie? How does Nate react to Aunt Lizzie’s play when she purposely kicks the ball out of bounds?

CHAPTERS 4–6:
Describe the Strikers as a team. Compare Nate and Sergio’s attitudes toward winning and competition. Describe Hunter and the other Monarchs. Compare them with Nate and his teammates.

CHAPTERS 7–9:
Compare Nate and Aunt Lizzie’s attitudes toward winning and competition. Lizzie tells Nate, “You want to win, but you want to win the right way.” What does she mean by that? What is Nate’s reaction to her advice? How does Nate feel about rooting against the Monarchs?

CHAPTERS 10–12:
Why do you think Nate kicks the ball out of bounds? What is Sergio’s reaction to the play? What is the Monarchs’ reaction? How does Nate feel about the play after the game? How is his feeling about the play changing? How does Aunt Lizzie’s soccer video affect Nate’s feeling about the play?

CHAPTERS 13–15:
Sergio does not think that the Monarchs will try to win their game against the Devils. Why not? Hunter tells Nate, “We want to beat you not cheat you.” What does Hunter mean by that? How does Hunter feel about Nate’s decision to kick the ball out of bounds?

CHAPTERS 16–17:
Nate says at the end of the book, “Things turned out all right.” What does he mean by that? What are the “things” he is talking about?

OVERALL QUESTION:
In just a few words, write down what this whole story is about (the overall theme or big idea). Explain your response.

“THE REAL STORY” FOLLOW-UP QUESTION:
How does the information in “The Real Story” relate to the theme or the plot of the whole story?
DISCUSSION GUIDE

Soccer Team Upset
Written by Fred Bowen
PB: 978-1-56145-495-2
Also available in e-book
AR • RC • Lexile • F&P / GRL R; Gr 4
Discussion Guide prepared by Peggy Jackson

ABOUT THE BOOK
It is the beginning of the soccer season and Tyler is pumped. His team is stacked with awesome players and they have a real shot at being league champions. But then a couple of the stars consider leaving to play on a travel team and Tyler is furious. Then he finds out that star power isn’t the only way to win games.

THEMES
Seeing change as opportunity | Staying positive/optimistic | Friendship
Perseverance | Sports | Soccer | World Cup

WRITING PROMPTS / DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
ALIGNED with COMMON CORE READING STANDARDS

DIRECTIONS:
Use details from the text to support ALL of your responses.

CHAPTER 1:
Describe what kind of team the Cougars are. Tyler says Zack will not leave the Cougars because the Cougars have a “perfect team.” What could be another reason why Tyler thinks Zack will not leave the Cougars?

CHAPTER 2:
Describe how the boys at the park act together. Do you think they are all friends?

CHAPTER 3:
List the reasons why Zack wants to play for the Panthers. How does Tyler feel about Zack wanting to play for the Panthers?

CHAPTER 4:
Compare and contrast how Tyler feels about his team now with how he felt about his team in Chapter 1. What are some good things that happen to Tyler because Zack and the two other players left to join the Panthers?

CHAPTER 5:
How does Tyler feel about Zack showing up at the Cougars first game and giving Tyler advice?

CHAPTER 6:
Compare the Panthers games with the Cougars games. What is different? What is the same?

CHAPTER 7:
What is Tyler’s reaction when Zack tries to practice with the Cougars? Compare how Tyler and Mario feel about Zack.

CHAPTER 8:
There is an expression that goes like this: “It is better to be lucky than good.” How does that expression apply to the game?

CHAPTER 9:
What is Tyler’s initial reaction to Zack’s invitation to play with the Panthers? Why do you think he reacts that way? How does he feel when he actually plays with the Panthers? Why does Tyler turn down Coach Wexler’s invitation to play with the Panthers?

CHAPTER 10:
The Cougars seem to be getting better as a team. What are some reasons for their improvement?

CHAPTER 11:
Compare how Mario feels about the season with how Tyler feels about the season.
CHAPTER 12:
How would you describe how Tyler feels about Zack? How would you describe how Zack feels about Tyler? Refer to scenes or actions in the story to support your answer.

CHAPTER 13:
Tyler says, “I thought teammates were important.” What does he mean by that? Mario says, “Being friends is important too.” What does he mean by that?

CHAPTER 14:
How does the setting in this chapter contribute to the humor in the chapter?

CHAPTER 15:
How is Mr. Robertson’s message about “one play” and any team being able to beat another an encouraging message in this story?

CHAPTER 16:
Mikey, a substitute defender, scores the winning goal. How does Mikey’s scoring that goal fit in with what the whole story is about?

CHAPTER 17:
Compare Tyler’s reaction to Zack’s wanting to play touch football now with his reaction to Zack’s wanting to play in Chapter 13. How is it different and why do you think it has changed?

OVERALL QUESTION:
In a few words, write down what this whole story is about (the overall theme or big idea). Explain your response.

“THE REAL STORY” FOLLOW-UP QUESTION:
How does the information in “The Real Story” relate to the theme or the plot of the whole story?