

CHAPTER 13: The Fight

A few days after I freaked out at Wal-Mart, I was playing indoor soccer in the school gym against Ryann Turner, a kid who pitched for the team that was my rival in baseball last summer in Little League. I don't like Ryann much, and during the soccer game he pushed me from behind and knocked me down. Our gym teacher, Mr. Sipes, blew the whistle and said it was a foul and flashed the red card, which means Ryann was kicked out of the game. I was stunned for a second, but then I got up and I was really mad. I mean, this guy pushed me to the ground on purpose.

So I ran over to Ryann kind of in a rage, with my fists clenched, and tackled him and just started screaming at him and swinging my fists in his face. No silent screaming would do this time. He was hitting back. We were both getting hit by each other and it hurt.

Mr. Sipes ran over to us and had to grab my jersey and pull me off Ryann because I was punching him pretty hard. Ryann's bigger than me, but I didn't care. He got in some good punches, too, and I had a sore right temple for a week, but I hit him pretty hard. I never talked to him again after that fight. He's never pushed me down since then, either.

Some of the other guys on my soccer team grabbed some of the



SNOWMAN ON THE PITCHER'S MOUND

guys on Ryann's team, but there weren't any other big fights, just some wrestling matches. But I was so mad at that kid for throwing me down I just couldn't control myself. Grampa Jack would have been disappointed in me for doing that. But Grampa Jack wasn't there.

I still think that kid asked for it because this wasn't the first time he had done something like this to me, and to other kids, too. Once when I was playing baseball against him and I was batting, he threw a fastball high and inside, and that can kill you. And I know it was on purpose because of the look he gave me after the pitch. Luckily I got out of the way at the last second and the ball went all the way to the backstop or it could have broken my nose or my eye socket or something.

After the soccer fight, the only one I had ever been in up to that point, when I got home my dad, who had already spoken to the principal about it, drove home early from work and jogged into the house. When he found me in the family room he grabbed me by the arm.

"Why did you do that?" he said. "What's the matter with you, Tyler? That's just not like you!"

He was disappointed, I could tell. He told me that this was not how I was raised. Dad's pretty tough and he got in fights when he was a kid but he has said to me before that fighting isn't the answer to anything. I agree with him about that, but I tried to tell him that the kid threw me to the ground and that it was the same kid who intentionally threw a heater aimed at my head, but he grounded me for a week anyway.

I couldn't watch TV or go out after school at all or play video games or anything, and that sucked but it could have been a lot worse. I know kids who when they get in trouble aren't allowed to watch TV or play with their friends after school for a month. Not being able to watch TV for a month would have been bad because it was college football season and I watch as many games as I can and all the highlights on the local news and on ESPN.

I know that my friends and teachers and most of the people at school were really surprised I went after Ryann like that. I'm supposed to be sort of a leader in my school because I'm known for being a good



athlete and student and a nice kid and I'm always the first one to practice and one of the last to leave and I'm always nice to everyone. I do have a temper and I get really mad sometimes, but I don't usually take it out on people and I really don't think fighting is the answer to anything, even if a kid does try to bean you and even if he does push you down. I guess my mom's cancer really did kind of mess me up.

