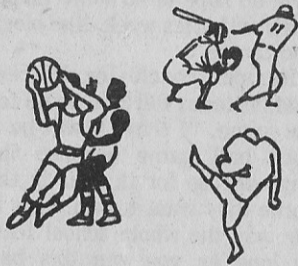


# 'But Father . . . I Don't Know'

PLAY  
by  
PLAY



With Steve Marantz

A morose figure sits thoughtfully in the front pew of Notre Dame's cavernous cathedral. Aside from the small candle flickering at his side, there is no movement within the shadowy edifice.

Shortly the man rises, and trundles forward to the confessional booth. Quietly he kneels in the cozy chamber, and waits.

Presently a priest acknowledges him and he is asked to proceed.

The man says he is troubled. The priest asks why.

Everything is going wrong he says. Like what, asks the priest.

Like injuries says the man. The priest tells him every coach must expect injuries. The priest tells him he can't win without depth, Jesus had twelve good men behind him.

The man says Jesus never played in the Big Eight. The priest says the bigger they are the harder they fall.

The man says his conscience is guilty because he may have cost a game by calling an inadequate defense at an inopportune time. The priest says it was a great moment in sport.

The man feels he has lost his faith in junior colleges. The priest tells him to schedule a few for next season.

The man says his secondary can't stop an air attack. The priest says only the Pope knows about that.

The man says Poppe graduated three years ago. The priest is silent.

Then the man is silent. The priest asks him what is really troubling him.

The man says he feels a lot of people are being let down. He points out sagging attendance figures. He points out a decade of successful football in the record book. He fondles his Orange Bowl ring. The priest cannot understand. He asks the coach why the people can not enjoy the game just for the fun of it.

The man says he doesn't understand either. He says everything has changed so much, gotten out of hand. He laments that everybody is pushing him, even the press gives him a hard time. The priest tells him he is a good man. He says not to worry about the press, nobody reads the newspapers anyway.

The man is relieved to hear that. He says he likes television better anyway.

The priest suggests smiling next time he's on.

The man says maybe, if his team can score a few points Saturday. He is ready to leave and says Father, excuse me. The priest says of course, but one more thing.

What's that, asks the man. The priest says there is a good Italian quarterback sitting on the bench who bears watching.

The coach only shakes his head as he walks away.

Another man enters the chamber right after him. He is tall, well-built, and green-clad.

Father, says the new man in confession. Yes my son, replies the priest.

Father, says the new man, I told my team to beat Missouri by more than Nebraska if they wanted to go to the Orange Bowl. The new man asks if that was wrong to do.

The priest says it was wrong. He says if Notre Dame wishes to go to the Orange Bowl, it must beat Missouri by more than Oklahoma, not Nebraska.

Forgive me says the new penitent. Hail Mary . . .