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### **What Kills You**

Ever just sat and thought about life? What immediately comes to mind, the lowest lows, or highest highs? I'd have to admit, the first couple of thoughts that come to me are negative. However, as I ponder more and more, the majority of those thoughts become positive. As I ponder further, I realize that they linked together. My Dad once told me, "If something doesn't kill you, it'll only make you stronger.". After my father spoke his words of wisdom, I thought about what he had said, and finally concluded that he was correct.

I had thought of all the times my life had seemed to suck. All those times it seemed I was walking up a hill both ways in the snow to school. All those times I stopped, fell to my knees, and asked, "Why me?", over and over again. Nevertheless, it came to me as a surprise to think that such negative activities could conclude with such outstanding results. In listening to my father, I realized all those bad things that happened to me, indeed made me stronger, as well as thought me lessons about life.

Football has been an important part of my life since the fourth grade. I came into the first practice knowing nothing, hoping to score a touch down. I soon came to find out that, being the large kid I was, there was only one way to even come close to touching the football, which was to be a center. The center's job is to grasp the football, and when the time comes, simply give the ball to the quarterback, who's the "brains" of the operation.

The first couple years of football, I started both ways. Starting meant I was one of the best linemen on the team, playing both offense and defense. But as time went on, further on down the road, I found myself sitting the bench, not even coming close to touching the field. Come freshman year of my high school career, the team seemed to be short of players. This allowed freshman to stand on the sidelines during varsity games. Yeah, it was somewhat boring, standing there, watching every game in the cold rain until 11 o'clock, when I had a Freshman and Junior Varsity game the next day at 10 o'clock. The games weren't all that bad though, after all, I did have a great view of the hard-hitting action.

What really killed me were the practices that the football team had. We started off with two weeks of 2-a-Days right before school started. These practices consisted of us getting up at around six o'clock (which felt like five o'clock), and practicing twice a day, both for about two and a half hours to maybe even three hours straight. One of the practices wasn't all that bad, as we practiced in the cool morning dew. When that first practice ended, we were allowed to shower off, and grab a bite to eat while we had an hour's break. After that came the real back breaker, as it was about eleven thirty or twelve in the afternoon. Just thinking about it now sends chills through my entire body. The sun always seemed to find a way to peak out from the clouds above and cause the sweat on your head to boil. Those two weeks were pure hell for me.

But the practices weren't anything without the coaching staff that we ended up with. I can remember his name as well as the first time I ever heard it, Coach Bidwell. This name scared me at first, as it did to many of my teammates. As I started off those first couple of practices, I realized that I wasn't in the best of shape, in fact, I was probably the slowest, weakest and worst player on the team. Every time we ran, I was always towards the back of the pack. Every time I got hit, I was always knocked down. Over and over again, I kept failing at being one of those top guys on the list as Coach Bidwell called the roster for First String Players, and the Scout Team (a team in which is used for the starting players to "pick on").

Coach Bidwell had a reputation for being the mean coach. Now don't get me wrong, Marty Bidwell is one heck of a guy, but it was his practices, which gave him such a reputation. Everyday, as a team, we were supposed watch film of the team whom we were to play that next Friday, get about two hours of practice with the new plays, condition, and finish with about another fifteen minutes of film again. When the first day of school came about, biscuits and gravy were on the menu for lunch at school. When the football team heard about this, there wasn't any left. I mean, it looked like us farm boys hadn't eaten in thirty days! It almost looked like a herd of pigs at a slop-fest!

After football practice that day, there were two places you could find biscuits and gravy. One was in the school cafeteria's stash for mystery meat Monday and the other was outside on the football's practice field. Coach Bidwell found out about us eating what we did, and how much. Knowing this, he took it upon himself to bestow us Freshmen with a little extra conditioning before, after, and even during practice. After the first thirty or so one-hundred yard sprints were through, I think all but two or three guys hadn't blown chunks. As hell had ended, I watched all my teammates leave with pale faces, but I wasn't through. I realized that, if I was going to be a starting player, then I was going to have to give two hundred percent every day, play, and breath.

As time went on, I didn't just sit back and let myself know that, "hey, you failed, give up!". No, I kept telling myself to keep working. When someone decided that they were going to cheap shot me, I wouldn't give up in frustration or anger. No, I'd get up again, and again, over and over, hitting whomever lined up across from me with all my might, and grit my teeth until there wasn't anything else to give. Everyday, I found myself getting a little better, a little faster, hitting a little harder and running a little further.

"Why?", you might asked, was I killing myself, day after day, play after play when I wasn't even coming close to being a starter? See, that's the problem, I ended up getting to start. That's right, I reckon all that hard work didn't go unnoticed, as Coach Bidwell came up to me every day and offered to help through screaming those encouraging words to keep me going as a colonel does his cadet.

Through that football season, I realized that if something doesn't kill you, it does indeed make you stronger. All I really wanted to do at the beginning of the season was to fill in one of those five pole positions on the offensive line, and I achieved that goal. Yeah, there were those times when I wanted to stop and slump over while running those dreadful sprints. Then there were the times that I kept telling myself that all of the first string positions were taken and there wasn't a chance in hell I was going to fill one of those slots. The thought of death by running did come to mind as I kept working, harder and harder, but it never did come to be in reality. All that hard work only made me stronger in the end, and in the end, I ended up reaching a goal at the same time. That's why I feel that, "If it doesn't kill you, it'll only make you stronger." As my dad said, is a great way to look at life, as well as a law of life to abide by.