

Irene Punt

# THE FUNNY FACEOFF



 SCHOLASTIC

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江苏工业学院图书馆

Irene 藏 Punt 章

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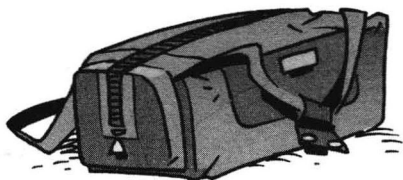
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*To Tom — for the day you sang*  
*“Rudolph, the Red-nosed Cowboy”*  
— I. P.

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# Game Time

Snow sat on top of the silver letters that spelled Centennial Arena.

Tom and Stuart lugged their big hockey bags up the stairs and through the entrance doors. They saw one of their buddies and hurried towards him.

“Hey, Mark. Wait up!”

Mark had earphones in his ears and his brother’s iPod stuck in his pocket. He turned down the music. “Wait till you guys see what I have in my hockey bag.”

They made their way down the hall behind the spectator bleachers to the dressing room, where they propped up their sticks

in the corner. The room was crowded.

“C’mon! C’mon!” said Tom. “Let’s see!”

Mark reached into his bag. He pulled something out.

“What’s that?” Tom asked.

Mark flopped down the sides and sat it upright. He took the iPod out of his pocket and placed it in the slot. “These are mini-speakers. But they make mega sound. Listen to this . . .” He pressed the volume arrow up. “My brother won some free iTunes on The Hockey Flip website.”

“Cool!” said Tom.

*“We are the champions of the rink . . .”*

Mark began to sing. He turned up the volume.

*“And we make our hockey gear stink*

*We are the best team*

*We let off big steam*

*Toot tooty-toot toot*

*’Cause we are the champions  
of the rink!”*



Everyone cracked up. Mark hit the replay button and the song started over. He grabbed his hockey stick and pretended it was a microphone. He sang so loud, his face turned purple.

Everyone stood, cheering and laughing. Everyone . . . except Jordan, the goalie. He was concentrating on lacing his chest pads and tightening the buckles near his ankles. Then he moved into his pre-game stretches.

"I'm trying for a new shutout record," Jordan whispered to Tom. "I gotta focus." He practiced his ugly goalie face.



Tom hoped Jordan got his wish.

The door opened and in walked Coach Howie. He was waving the game sheet and carrying a case of water bottles. Tom liked Coach Howie. He was nice and he was fun. He worked at the Smokin' Cola Company. Sometimes he gave them free energy drinks after a game.



“Okay, you hot dogs,” Coach Howie said loudly. A hockey glove flew through the air. Coach Howie blew his whistle. “Settle down. You’re Glenlake Hawks, not loony birds. Get

your gear on. We've got a game to win!"

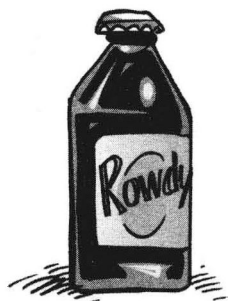
Tom pulled on his jersey and began taping his socks, still humming Mark's funny song.

"Which line plays first shift?" asked Stuart.

Coach Howie checked his notes. "I've got Tom at centre; Mark's right wing, Spencer's left wing, and Stuart and Ben are on defence. Jordan's in goal."

*Yes!* Tom cheered to himself. He looked at his friends. They were all smiling because they all got to play first shift. *We ARE the champions of the rink!* he thought.

Then Stuart caught his finger in the zipper of his hockey bag, Mark pulled on his lucky socks, and Jordan began to hiccup. It was game time.



# Go, Hawks, Go!

The team filed out of the dressing room. Tom looked up into the stands. His mom and dad were sitting with Stuart's and Mark's parents. They wore the team colours: yellow and green. Tom's stomach knotted. *Why did he get so nervous before a game anyway?*

The Zamboni swept and flooded the ice, then headed for the parking stall. Coach Howie opened the gate. He took slippery steps across the ice. "Stretch and skate!" he hollered at the Hawks. "Get warmed up." He put the water bottles on the players' home bench. Then he shook hands with the ref.

Tom placed the blade of his stick on the

ice. He took long, slow strides, then picked up speed. Suddenly, his head filled with,

*"We are the champions of the rink  
And we make our hockey gear stink  
We are the best team  
We let off big steam . . ."*

Mark skated ahead of him, singing the same song.

*"Toot tooty-toot toot!"* Tom called to him. Mark bent forward and twisted. *"Toot tooty-toot toot!"*



"Nice stretches," said Coach Howie, cheering them on.

Tom cracked up. The coach had made a joke without knowing it. Tom forgot all about being nervous.

The clock dropped to zero. The buzzer sounded. The Hawks circled around Jordan. "Hawks! Hawks! Hawks!" they cheered. Then the first shift took their starting positions.

Tom set up at centre, his eyes glued to the ice.

The ref dropped the puck and Tom stabbed at it with his stick. The puck flew to Mark. Mark dug in his skate blades and raced up the ice with the puck. He passed it to Tom right before the blue line. Tom wound up and took a slapshot. The Sunridge Sharks' goalie stopped the puck with his blocker, but it rebounded back to Tom. Quickly he fired the puck into the net, hitting the crossbar with a

*PING!*

"Wow!" cheered  
Mark and Stuart.  
They punched Tom  
on the shoulder.  
"Great goal!"



The crowd cheered.

The Hawks banged their sticks.

Tom felt great.

*"We ARE the champions of the rink!"*  
Mark sang, heading for the bench. Coach  
Howie held the gate open for them and the  
next line set up at centre ice.

The song started in Tom's head again and  
wouldn't quit. Calling themselves champions  
made him feel more sure and powerful.

"Go, Hawks, go!" cheered the fans.

"Go, Hawks, go!" cheered the players on  
the bench.

Three periods flew by.

The final score was 4-0 for the Hawks.

Tom headed for the dressing room. He threw his stick in the corner and whipped off his number 15 jersey. He waved it in circles over his head. "Woo hoo!" he shouted.



"Another shutout for Jordan!" announced Mark, both arms in the air. "Another two goals for Tom!" He pressed the power button on the iPod.

*"We are the champions of the rink  
And we make our hockey gear stink . . ."*

Everyone sang, swaying in time with the music. Everyone . . . including Jordan.

"Listen up!" shouted Coach Howie. Everyone sat. "Good game, boys. You guys

really burned it up out there! For a special treat, I brought you some of the new Rowdy Root Beer we're bottling at the Smokin' Cola Company. Next game is tomorrow at 6:30." He sat down and unlaced his skates as the boys made a beeline for the drinks.

Mark began to sing, making the word "Rowdy" extra loud.

*"Ninety-nine Rowdy root beers  
on the wall*

*Ninety-nine Rowdy root beers*

*If one of those bottles  
should happen to fall*

*There'll be ninety-eight Rowdy  
root beers on the wall."*

Tom put the open root beer bottle to his lips. Little bubbles fizzled and jumped onto his tongue. He took a big gulp. The fizzles went down his throat and up his nose. He blinked. He pinched his nose. "Did ya feel that fizz?" he asked, eyes watering.



“Man, this root beer has gas!” said Mark, rolling his eyes.

The dressing room exploded with laughter.

“You boys are too much!” said Coach Howie, smiling.

“*You’re* too much!” the team shouted back. “Thanks for the Rowdy Root Beer, Coach!”

Mark circled the dressing room in his red long underwear, collecting the empty bottles.

