Kurt Reynolds

College Comp

Theme #2

CU, Baby! CU!

**Lead attempt #1 - Thinking lead**

*I hope Harry doesn't bring up Bill Walsh college football,* I thought as I stood next to Dawn on our first date. *If he starts talking smack, I don't know what'll happen. I mean this is our first date!*

**Lead attempt #2 - Snapshot lead**

It's late October in a gravel pit somewhere west of Red Lake Falls. A bonfire of pallets and tree branches rages 20 yards from us. People used to be closer, but someone threw a car tire in, and now it's too hot to even get any closer. Plus, that black smoke billowing from the sizzling tire can't be good for you.

**Lead attempt #3 - dialogue**

"Well, actually. We can settle this," I say, setting my red solo cup down.

"Yeah, right," Harry says. "I'd kill you."

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I'm on a first date with Dawn. We just saw *Pulp Fiction* and had dinner at Paradiso. She then asked if I knew of anything else going on. Hence, we found several friends at a party later that night. Which was how we got to this very moment in the narrative.

But none of that seems to matter now. There is a score to settle.

"You wish, loser," I say, suddenly wishing I hadn't spotted Harry at the party and called him over to talk. *I mean this is my first date with Dawn! I've been trying to talk to her for six months now. And then, out of the blue, she calls me? That never happens.* But I can't help myself. So I say, "The last time we played when I came up to visit you at BSU, I beat you by ten. And you wouldn't even let me take the Buffs."

"That is the first time you've beaten me without them," Harry says, setting his drink down. I can tell I'm getting to him.

"No . . . No . . . No," I say, shaking my head with each word. I fish my checkbook out from my back pocket.

"Oh, here we go . . ." Harry says. Now he is the one shaking his head.

I thumb to the back of my checkbook where I have kept track of every *Bill Walsh College Football* game we have ever played.. "Here we go," I say holding it up to the fire light. "June 15th. Miami 26, Boston College 24. Oklahoma 45, Auburn 34. Tennessee 54, UCLA 28. That was a great day."

"That was luck," Harry adds.

"Okay, let's see what is on this page. Oh here we go. July 3. Oklahoma 34, Texas 33. I won on a two point conversion. I hit Keith Jackson for a wide open two point try. Sucka."

And this is how just one of many late night *Bill Walsh College Football* bouts would begin.

It didn't matter where we were or who we were with. Once the smack talk started, one could rest assured we'd be duking it out a few hours later on someone's Sega.

And that is what happened.

I left Dawn to get a ride home with some of her friends, so we could go over to Harry's parent's house and settle the score in his basement like we had done for hundreds of hours over the years.

Of course, one game turned into a re-match. I chose West Virginia and Harry beat me with North Carolina thanks to three fumbles. So I talked him into letting me take Penn State, the second best team on Bill Walsh that year, while he took Notre Dame. I won with a last second field goal. That led, of course, to a tie-breaker game.

"It all comes down to this," Harry says, sitting on the edge of the sofa.

"Why don't we just play out Colorado vs. Nebraska and settle it for good?" I say.

"Like hell," Harry says. "That's not fair. You know it."

"Wussy."

There is a good reason Harry doesn't want me to play with Colorado. Not only are they the best team in Bill Walsh's College Football '94, but I've spent hundreds of hours digesting all of their formations and plays.

Harry learned his lesson the hard way in early June.

Secretly, I finally caved and bought my own Sega Genesis. I also happened to notice that Game Stop was also selling the new Bill Walsh's College Football, which had been released the day before. Harry had no idea that I went straight home and played all through the weekend. Luckily, it had been raining so I didn't have to go to work at Voyageur's View. Then I spent every night after work at the highway department playing Colorado through their season. Six times. I knew this team inside and out. And I had discovered a few tricks.

"I know you can't beat me with Colorado, so don't even try," I say to Harry as he sits on the edge of the couch in his basement. "Wuss."

*That'll get him*, I think.

I look over at one of my best friends, who is a good six feet from me sitting on the edge of his bed. I am slouched on a God-awful, puke green bean bag chair. We have to sit away from each other, for more than once our games of *Bill Walsh's College Football* had turned into fisticuffs.

"Why don't you take ' 94 Penn State. They have Kerry Collins. I'll be '88 Miami. We'll replay the '87 Orange Bowl."

"Oh, that's faaaiiiirr," I say. "Miami will beat the piss out of them. No way. I'm Colorado."

*There is no way he is taking the bait*. We both know that in the world of Bill Walsh's College Football, which came out in 1995, the 1994 Colorado Buffaloes team is loaded: Heisman Trophy winner Rashan Salaam, Belitnikoff winner, Michael Westbrook, future first round pick Rae Carruth, the top rated and fastest player in the entire game, quarterback Kordell Stewart, and a host of other offensive talents unlike anyone else on the game. They are almost unbeatable.

If I have CU - and the football gods don't curse me with fumbles or injuries - I will reign points down upon anyone who dares play me. Even Harry, who has been playing Sega since he was in seventh grade. I didn't start until I was a sophomore. So it should be fair.

"Come on, wuss," I try again.

"Okay. Dammit!" Harry says glaring at me. "But you can't blitz."

"Fine," I say. *He doesn't know what he is getting himself into*. "I'll just play zone," I concede. "But remember, I haven't been playing this for two full weeks like you," I lie.

See Harry has no clue that I bought my own copy of Bill Walsh's college football and have been playing nonstop for the past three days. *He has no clue what I've discovered*.

"You're on," Harry says and selects his beloved favorite college football team, "Nebraska."

"And it is fair. Nebraska was the only team to beat CU all year," I remind him. *Still, it's your funeral.*

"I know," Harry adds with a smirk. *Oh. Smirk, nancy. I'm going to destroy you.*

I win the coin flip and elect to defer.

My kicker sends the ball deep, and Harry takes a touchback.

"Wimp," I say in disgust.

"Whatever." He sits up closer to the TV. *As if that's going to help you,* I think and sink deeper into the bean bag.

The Cornhusckers break the huddle. *He's going to run the triple option . . . Boring.* I send out my 4-3 zone defense. I widen out my ends to take away the pitch man. I put my inside backer right over the center to stuff the dive. His quarterback is fast, but so are my safeties, which I creep up to the line of scrimmage.

Sure enough, it works. I bait him into giving it to the fullback. Three years. *Snoozefest*.

On fourth and one, he elects to punt.

"Nancy," I say and grin.

It's a great punt and pins me inside my 15.

Now, it's time to put on a show.

I crack open my Mountain Dew and shovel in a handful of Pepperoni flavored combos into my mouth.

I break the huddle in a shotgun formation.

"Brave," Harry says. "Running the shotgun with an option quarterback," he says, laughing. "You're dead."

"Really?" I say. Only it sounds more like "Rreealllghkjshgkashjgllly?" as I chomp on the eight or so Combos in my mouth.

Then I tap the A button and audible. What Harry doesn't know is that in the last 40 hours of gaming, I discovered that when you switch from odd formations, you can manipulate which players go where.

"What?" Harry begins as he notices my running back, Salaam, motioning out to play wide receiver and my wideout, Westrbook, jogging in and joining the backfield. He has no clue that I now have the fastest player in the game at QB and the second fastest player dotting the I formation.

I might have started in shotgun formation with an option quarterback, but I audibled to the I formation. And I'm about to run the speed option on his candyass. Harry won't know what hit him.

"Hike," Stewart barks from the screen, and I snap the ball.

*It's over.*

Before Harry can adjust his defensive ends wide to prevent the pitch, I cut the ball up with Stewart.

"Shit!" he barks, bumping his nightstand and sending his Pepsi teetering.

But it's too late. Both for Harry's floor and his defense.

The Pepsi tips onto its side. The dark fluid fizzes out and then over his nightstand and hits his carpet.

Stewart pulls away from the linebackers in two steps. He doesn't have a defender within 20 yards of Stewart as he sprints 96 yards for a TD. For the last twenty yards or so, I actually get up and start high stepping it as I run him into the endzone.

"Wait, replay that!" I say, giggling as I plop back down into the bean bag. "I don't think you even have a defender on the screen."

"How did you know how to do that?" Harry says, shocked. His mouth is gaping open and his eyes are wide. He throws the controller down and begins searching for a towel to mop up the mess beside his nightstand.

"Oh, I've been practicing . . . a bit," I smirk so hard it actually hurts my cheek. "And just wait until you see how well I shift the kickoff team to an onside kick formation."

Before he even knows what hits him, I'm up 14-0 and ready to onside a second time.

“Dammit,” Harry fumes. “I hate Colorado.”

“Suck it up, Nancy! And try not to lose by 100.”