

"The Recruit" by Adam Beckham



Part I - A Day in the Life

If there is ever a place in college ball for a guy who can throw a football through a tire I'll have it made, thought Carson Mack as he was practicing his throws in the backyard of his parents' giant house. It was not a giant house compared to the houses in the neighborhood, but Carson always felt that the house was too big, just like his father's expectations.

His mother stood beside him as he worked through his drills. Carson would throw the ball downfield to his father, and his mother would catch the balls as Carson's father threw them back. The first time he saw his mother catching footballs and then handing them over, Carson thought, "This cannot be normal." But over time it stopped being weird.

Carson's father shouted. "CARSON! 5-step drop then hit the tree."

Excerpt from "Quarterbacking for Dummies"

When throwing a football, the quarterback's back foot should be set perpendicular to the line between the quarterback and his target.

This will help you make more accurate throws.

Faking taking a snap from center, Carson's feet pounded backwards in practiced fluidity.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Just as quickly as he had started, Carson stopped and planted his right foot.

set

Almost immediately after he planted his right foot, the ball flew out of his hand.

throw

The ball whistled through the air in a tight spiral, the seams cutting the air like a knife through hot butter. It hit the trunk of the old oak tree with a solid *thunk* and twirled away into the grass.

"A little higher next time, Car, you can't throw the ball through a defender; you've got to get it *over* him," Carson's father said while trotting to retrieve the ball under the tree's shadow.

"I think it was a *great* throw, honey," his mother added cheerily.

Of course it was a great throw, Carson thought with sagging shoulders, *they are all great throws.*

Part II - Big Man on Campus

Being the starting quarterback for St. Vincent's varsity football team had its perks. At least once a week a note from a girl fell out of his locker when he opened it in the morning. At least once a week his coach let him know that a college had sent him a letter asking for game tape or letting Carson know that he might get an offer soon for a full-ride scholarship. These things became normal over the years, and by his senior year he hardly took notice, because only one girl was on his mind and only one college was in his sights.

"Hey, Car," said a beautiful blonde girl in a cheerleader's outfit as Carson slammed his locker shut before 1st period. This was Sarah, Carson's longtime girlfriend and captain of the cheerleading squad, and she was in a good mood. *We are a walking stereotype*, Carson thought, *and I have no idea how to end it.*

"We're going to Suzy's after school to make banners for Friday's game, OK?"

He thought about saying something, but decided against it. He didn't want to go to Suzy's house for any reason on any night, but the decision was made for him. You did not disagree with Sarah. It was not allowed.

So Carson just nodded, smiled and walked into his French class. He kept nodding as he walked in the door hoping that continuing to move his head would shake something loose in his head and help him make sense of why he was feeling so distressed while having such an apparently-great life. He knew what he wanted, but he did not know why he always seemed to want what he couldn't have.

What he wanted was a full-ride football scholarship to UCLA, but they had not sent him a letter of any kind in months. What he wanted was Claire Wilkins on his arm at prom, but she looked at him like he was the scum at the bottom of a pool that had been left uncovered all summer.

As he nodded his head and grinned, walking through the door of his French class, he thought, *Why can't I just be happy and take the scholarship to California?*

He stopped nodding his head and glanced over towards his desk. Next to his desk, Claire Wilkins was glaring at him and giving him a look that asked, *"Why are you nodding your head and smiling like a brainless jock?"* and answered itself, *"Oh yeah, it's because you are a brainless jock."*

Carson sighed and opened his French journal, looking for something that might impress Claire.

Excerpt from "Quarterbacking for Dummies"

Never "lock on" to just one receiver. If you stare at the person you are going to throw to, the defense will be able to tell what you are doing.

Being able to mislead the defense is a vital tool in the QB's tool box.

Guide to "The Recruit" by Adam Beckham

LEVELS OF QUESTIONING

L1 Questions:

- 1 - What is Carson's girlfriend's name?
- 2 - What does Carson's father tell him to throw the football at?

L2 Questions:

- 3 - Why does Carson never speak in the story?
- 4 - Why does Claire Wilkins seem to hate Carson?

L3 Questions:

- 5 - Have you ever envied someone else's life like people envy Carson's life?
- 6 - Have you ever felt trapped in a relationship, either with a girlfriend/boyfriend or just with a friend or relative?

Essay Question

In a short essay, describe the relationship between Carson and his father.

TYPES OF SENTENCE

Exclamatory - "*CARSON! ...*"

Interrogative - "*We're going to Suzy's after school to make banners for Friday's game, OK?*"

Declarative - *His mother stood beside him as he worked through his drills.*

Imperative - "*CARSON! 5-step drop then hit the tree.*"

KINDS OF SENTENCE

Simple - *You did not disagree with Sarah* (1 "I.C.")

Compound - *So Carson just nodded, smiled and walked into his French class.* (2 "I.C.")

Complex - *At least once a week a note from a girl fell out of his locker when he opened it in the morning.* (1 "I.C." - 1 "D.C.")

PHRASES

Adverb Phrase - *You did not disagree **with Sarah**.* ("with Sarah" describes "disagree")

Adjective Phrase - Carson's father said while trotting to retrieve the ball **under the tree's shadow**. ("under the tree's shadow" describes "the ball")

Appositive Phrase - This was Sarah, **Carson's longtime girlfriend and captain of the cheerleading squad**, and she was in a good mood.
("Carson's longtime girlfriend and captain of the cheerleading squad" describes "Sarah")

Prepositional Phrase - Carson's father said while trotting to retrieve the ball **under the tree's shadow**. ("under the tree's shadow" shows where the ball is)

Infinitive Phrase - Carson's father said while trotting **to retrieve the ball under the tree's shadow**.
("to retrieve the ball under the tree's shadow" is an infinitive phrase acting like an adverb describing "trotting")

PARTS OF SPEECH

The ball whistled through the air in a tight spiral, the seams cutting the air like a knife through hot butter.

"ball" is the **subject** - "hot" is an **adjective** describing the noun "butter"

"I think it was a great throw, honey," his mother added cheerily.

"cheerily" is an **adverb** describing the verb "added"

But over time it stopped being weird.

"being weird" is the **object** of the verb "stopped"