

22 The football ticket

As you know, Billy supports Driptown United. They are the greatest team that there could ever be, or so Billy thinks. Every Saturday that they play at home, he goes down to the ground to watch them. Billy has pictures of the team all over his bedroom walls. There is Mick Boots, the striker, Pete Diver, the goalkeeper, and Billy's favourite player, for obvious reasons, Billy Blockem, the greatest defender there has ever been. Billy Blockem has only let ten goals be scored against Driptown in the whole season. In fact, one season Driptown had done so well that they had reached the final of the league. They were going to play the big match against one of their archrivals, Chelpond, at Wembley Stadium in two weeks time.

On his way to school every day Billy passed the football ground. One Friday morning, he saw a notice that made him very excited, it said:

**Big Match at Wembley.
Tickets on sale tomorrow at 10 o'clock.
Get here early.**

After school, Billy rushed home to tell his mum.

"Mum, mum, the tickets are on sale tomorrow."

"Oh Billy," said his mum, "there will be so many people wanting them you've not got much chance of getting one you know."

Billy thought for a while.

"Mum," he asked, "can I go and queue up early?"

"I should think so" said his mum. "How early were you thinking of?"

"About twelve hours early," he said, "sort of now"

"What?" said his Mum, "and be out there all night!"

At first Billy's Mum said "No!" But you can probably guess what happened can't you?

Yes, Billy nagged his Mum so much that in the end she gave in and said, "Oh yes, go on then!"

Billy put on his warmest coat and hurried down to the ground. He took up his position right by the ticket window. Just above his head was a spectacular life sized picture of Billy Blockem in all his kit. Billy stared up at it and imagined himself on the terrace at Wembley cheering his team to a spectacular victory. The eyes in the picture seemed to be looking straight at him and, although he was standing there all alone, for some reason he didn't feel alone at all.

"You're the greatest Billy!" he whispered, as he looked up at the picture.

Billy stood there for a while. At first, he felt a bit silly as several people walked passed, giving him sideways glances as they did. Then Mrs. Green, who lives just across the road from Billy, passed by on her way home from work.

"Are you alright, Billy?" she asked. "You know there's no football match today."

"Err... yes, I'm OK," he said.

It began to get dark and cold. Then it started to rain. Billy tried to shelter but he didn't want to move in case several hundred other people suddenly came along and he lost his place in the queue. He was all-alone and getting wetter and colder. The rain was beginning to run down the back of his neck and he was beginning to wonder if it was really worth it after all!

Suddenly a bus shot past. As it did, it splashed through a large puddle sending a great sheet of water flying through the air. The dirty, muddy water soaked him from head to toe. His left shoe especially was very squelchy, so he took it off to empty the water out. But just then an enormous and very fierce looking black dog came bounding round the corner. It snatched the shoe out of Billy's hand and ran off with it before he could even open his mouth to shout. Billy felt very silly indeed standing there in the rain and cold with only one shoe.

He was about to give up and go home. But then his eye caught the picture above his head. Billy Blockem's eyes seemed to be looking straight at him. Billy thought of the match, and the ticket. He started to imagine himself on the terraces at Wembley shouting: "Come on the Drippies!" and in no time at all he had decided to stay.

Just then though his heart nearly stopped, as he saw Trevor Trippup and Pete Pushem, the infamous Driptown Primary School bullies, come swaggering round the corner at the top of the road. Billy pressed himself hard against the wall hoping desperately that they wouldn't see him, but they did.

"Hay Pete, its Billy boy!" shouted Trevor.

Billy wanted to run away as fast as he could, but just as he was about to sprint off down the road he looked up and saw Billy Blockem looking down at him. Suddenly he remembered the fearless way in which Billy always tackles Frank Falcon, the Oldcastle winger, and for some reason he decided not to run away.

"What are you doing here, Billy Boy?" sneered Pete Pushem.

Billy didn't say a word. He knew it only made them worse if you did.

"You must be tired standing up Billy Boy!" scoffed Trevor, and the two of them gave him a great big shove. Billy skidded backwards and landed with a great splash, on his bottom, in a very wet puddle. Trevor and Pete disappeared off along the road, laughing at the tops of their voices. Billy struggled to his feet, looked at the poster of Billy Blockem again, and stood back in his place by the ticket window.

Suddenly though he began to feel very hungry. There was a chip shop across the road and he could see people coming out with their chips. His stomach began to rumble terribly. But he dare not go across in case he lost his place at the front of the queue. He felt thirsty as well, so he opened his mouth and tried to drink some of the rain. But it didn't seem to make any difference. Billy was tired and hungry and thirsty. He wanted to go home, but every time he thought about giving up he looked up at the picture of Billy Blockem, staring down at him. He imagined the big match at Wembley and Billy Blockem bravely rushing in to tackle Sammy Smasher the Chelpond forward. And the more he looked at Billy, the braver he became.

But although he felt more and more brave, he also felt more and more tired. His legs started to ache, his eyes kept closing. He kept imagining he was in his warm comfortable bed at home, until the rain running down his neck quickly reminded him where he was.

The hours slowly ticked away, 10 o'clock, 11 o'clock. After midnight Billy got so tired that he sat on the step for just a moment and before he knew it he had fallen fast asleep.

Billy was woken up by a big cheer. He looked up, and to his surprise it was daylight. The sun was shining and there was an enormous crowd of people behind him.

"Come on Billy," someone shouted, "you're first."

The ticket window slid open. Billy struggled to his feet and said, "One ticket for Wembley please."

Billy held the precious ticket in his hand and everyone behind him shouted, "Three cheers for Billy! Hip hip, Hurrah!"

And then they all chanted, "Come on the Drippies!"

The rest of the crowd quickly bought their tickets, they all sold out in no time at all. In fact they had just sold out when Trevor Trippup and Pete Pushem turned up to buy theirs.

When Billy got home his mum took one look at him and said, "Billy what on earth has happened to you?"

"Nothing," he said with a great big smile on his face. "I got my ticket!"

Billy stood in the kitchen with only one shoe. He was soaking wet, covered in mud, starving hungry and thirsty. But then he held his ticket high in the air.

"I got it!" he said. "I got it!!"

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