

## 24 Billy's heroes

As you know, Billy has several heroes. Two of his favorites are Driptown United footballer, Billy Blockem, the greatest defender there has ever been, and Mick Muscle, the champion wrestler who Billy goes to see with his Grandpa at Driptown Town Hall.

Billy often daydreams about what it would be like to be Billy or Mick. He imagines himself running out onto the pitch on a Saturday afternoon in his Driptown kit, as the crowd shout and cheer and chant, "Billy, Billy, Billy is the best." Then, in his dream of course, he stops Frank Falcon, the Oldcastle winger from scoring a last minute equalizer, so ensuring that Driptown get through to the final of the F.A. Cup.

At other times Billy dreams that he is just climbing into the ring at Driptown Town Hall, about to face Hacker Harris in a sensational wrestling match. The crowd are chanting, "Billy! Billy! Billy! Billy!" as he throws Hacker Harris to the canvas. Then, he does one of his spectacular flying dives, just like Mick, and the referee counts Hacker out of the fight.

Trouble is, of course, that Billy always wakes up from his dream, usually just as Mister Yellit, Billy's teacher (now he has gone up to class 5), is yelling, "Earth to Billy! Earth to Billy!" Billy, come in please! Is there anybody there!"

Billy wished and wished that he could be as tall as Billy Blockem and have muscles like Mick Muscle. But, as you can probably guess, no matter how much he wished, nothing seemed to happen. He just stayed as small and as skinny as he had always been.

One Friday, Billy was reading the local paper when something caught his eye. It said: 'In next week's issue, continuing our series on the Heroes of Driptown, we will have exclusive features on Billy Blockem and Mick Muscle.' He was so excited he could hardly speak. He was sure that the papers would sell out in no time at all. So the next Friday, he rushed round to the newsagent at 6 o'clock in the morning to make absolutely sure of getting his copy. He bought two copies, one to read, and one to put carefully away in his collection of Billy and Mick memorabilia.

He ran all the way home and spread the paper out on the dining room floor. It was brilliant! There were photos and features, all about what Billy ate and how Mick exercised, and lots and lots of other things. But when he got to the back page, Billy could hardly believe his eyes. It said: 'This week's competition is an exclusive chance for someone to be Billy Blockem for a day, and Mick Muscle for a day! It couldn't be easier! Just send us your name and address and why you want to be Billy and Mick and we'll select the winner next week.'

Without thinking Billy grabbed a pen, a piece of paper, and an envelope. He scribbled ' Billy, 16 Bridge Street, Dripton. I want to be Billy and Mick because I think they are the most brilliant, greatest, stupendous, fantastic, wonderful, incredible, amazing, heroic people ever.' In no time at all, he was at the corner of Bridge Street posting his letter.

But as he walked back home a thought suddenly came into his mind, "How can I be Billy for a day when I'm this small? And how can I be Mick for a day when I'm this skinny?"

He started to panic.

"I've got to be taller. I've got to have more muscles!"

He rushed out into the garden shed. He found a couple of bricks and picked them up. They were very heavy. He picked up one and then the other and then the other again. Five times he tried and then his arms were aching terribly. But he was determined. He struggled and struggled again and again, picking up the bricks. Every now and then he would measure his muscles but, for some reason, they stubbornly stayed at six and a half inches round.

"I must be taller!" he said to himself.

He jumped up and started hanging from a bar that ran across the shed above his head. It made a terrible creaking sound but he stayed hanging there until his arms were about to drop off. He kept measuring himself but, for some reason, he stayed at 4 feet 3 ½ inches, and didn't get any taller. So he tried tying the bricks to his feet but then he couldn't lift himself up at all!

"This is terrible!" he wailed to himself.

Every day after school for the whole week Billy went out to the shed and picked up his bricks and hung from the bar. He did press ups and sit-ups and ran round and round and round the garden.

Early one morning, Mum found him running round the garden pulling the wheelie bin behind him.

"What are you doing Billy?" she asked.

"Growing!" he shouted.

Mum didn't ask any more.

Billy kept measuring his muscles and his height but nothing happened. He didn't grow any bigger at all. He was very disappointed.

"I can't be Billy or Mick for a day like this," he moaned to himself. "I'm too small and too skinny."

On Friday he didn't even bother to go and buy the paper. But when he got home from school the doorbell rang. Billy opened the door and Grandpa rushed in looking very excited.

"Congratulations Billy! Congratulations! You must be so excited! I mean, I'm excited, so you must be very excited!"

Billy looked blank.

"Are you alright, Billy?" asked Grandpa.

"Excited about what?" asked Billy.

"You mean you don't know? You haven't read the paper? You've won the competition. You've been chosen to be Billy Blockem and Mick Muscle for a day. You're the winner!"

Billy looked more disappointed than Grandpa had ever seen him look before.

"But I can't be Billy," he said. "I'm too small. And I can't be Mick because I'm too skinny. Ring them up and tell them to choose someone else."

"What do you mean?" said Grandpa. "That doesn't matter Billy. You're fine as you are. You might not be as tall as Billy or as strong as Mick, but you've still won the competition!"

Billy's face began to brighten up a bit.

"You mean, I can still be Billy and Mick for a day?" he asked.

"Of course you can," said Grandpa. "You won, didn't you?"

The next day a big luxury car drew up outside Billy's house. Billy climbed in and was driven to the football ground. Grandpa went as well, just to keep him company. All morning Billy trained with the Driptown team and in the afternoon he played right back, Billy Blockem's position, in the big match against Oldcastle. It was a brilliant match and, five minutes from full time, Driptown were winning 2 - 1. Suddenly, Frank Falcon, the Oldcastle winger, came running straight at Billy. Billy knew that if he didn't tackle him he was sure to score, so he did a brilliant running tackle and managed to pass the ball on to Mick Boots, the Driptown forward. Mick did a fantastic run up the pitch and hammered the ball into the back of the Oldcastle net. It was 3 - 1 to Driptown and the match was all over.

The next day the car came and picked Billy up again. This time it took him to the Town Hall where Mick Muscle gave Billy a few wrestling tips before he had to face Hacker Harris in the ring.

"You can do it, Billy! You can do it, Billy!" shouted Grandpa.

The bell went and Billy took a flying leap at Hacker. Hacker was so surprised that he spun round and tripped over his own feet. He crashed to the floor and slid out of the ring, spraining his wrist and his ankle as he hit the ground. Hacker had to be carried off to hospital on a stretcher and Billy was declared the winner, much to every one's surprise!

Grandpa came home for tea. They had Billy's favourite, tomato ketchup and honey sandwiches and chocolate cake.

"You did it, didn't you?" said Grandpa to Billy. "You didn't have to be tall or strong, you just had to be you -my Billy. By gum, I'm right proud of you, right proud."

Billy blushed, and took a great big bite of his chocolate cake!

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