

"Running Wild: A Football Story"

by Josh Liller

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After years of losing, the Tigers had finally put together a winning season. They made it all the way to the championship game and all that remained was that final game against the Sharks. The weather was mild and the stadium packed as the teams took the field for the opening kickoff.

Vinnie Zinfini of the Sharks took the kick at his goal line. He got several good blocks, leaped over a would-be tackler, and took off down the left sideline for a touchdown. The Tigers got the ball, but things got worse. The Sharks blitzed heavily and it was overwhelming the Tigers offensive line. They did manage to score once when their fast running back Freddie Gray took a handoff, bounced to the outside, faked out a blitzing linebacker, and outran the cornerback for long touchdown. The Sharks struck back quickly as Pete Tanner faked a short throw to the left then went deep right to Lance Jastin, who had a step on the cornerback covering him. Jastin made the catch and won the foot race to the endzone. The Tigers' second drive stalled and they had to punt. Tanner struck again, this time hitting tight end Dan St. Johns on a deep post pattern. St. John bowled over the safety and rumbled into the endzone to make the score 21-7 in favor of the Sharks at halftime.

The Tigers got the ball to start off the second half. They had

talked about some adjustments to the game plan during halftime and felt confident they could make a comeback. The Sharks resumed their blitzing only to have Tigers' QB Mark Patterson complete a short, quick pass to one of his receivers. The Sharks blitzed again with the same result. After several minutes of this methodical attack, the Tigers finally scored to cut the Sharks' lead to a single touchdown. The Sharks marched down the field again thanks to accurate passing by Tanner. Then disaster struck the Sharks: as Tanner threw a pass, he was blindsided by a defensive lineman. After the play he had to be carried off the field and the Sharks had to settle for a field goal. Nevertheless, the score was now 24-14 in favor of the Sharks.

The Tigers saw their chance to strike. They sent in one of their linemen, Mike "Big Mikey" Ricks, to play fullback. On the first play, they gave the ball to Mikey. Seventy-five yards, eight plays, and countless broken tackles later, Mikey crashed through two linebackers and into the endzone for the touchdown. Sharks lead was down to 24-21.

The Sharks got the ball and proceeded to run. Then they ran some more. They were killing time to prevent the Tigers from scoring the one touchdown they still needed. Finally the Sharks were stopped and had to punt. The Tigers situation wasn't good: they had to go 84 yards in less than 90 seconds. They didn't have time to run the ball, so they brought in five receivers. The Sharks had stopped blitzing and had seven defensive backs on the field. Passes were

hard to complete and by the time they were at midfield, the Tigers had less than a minute left. One of the backup receivers still on the sideline suddenly had an idea. He went over to the coach and told him about it. After the next play, the Tigers called a timeout. The huddled on the sideline as the coach explained the idea. Two of the receivers stayed on the sideline while Big Mikey and Joe Miller - who had just devised the play - came in. The ball was snapped. Three of the receivers raced downfield while Miller ran a quick slant. The pass was right on target. Miller caught it and cut outside, running down the right side of the field as fast as he could. Three men to beat. He jumped over one. He spun around another. But the third was headed right for him. Then splat! The last defended never saw Big Mikey. With Mikey as an escort, Miller high stepped the last twenty yards into the endzone.

The crowd went wild. The Tigers had won 28-24. Their losing days were forever in the past. Joe Miller was carried on his teammates shoulders. They would've carried Mikey too, but he was too big.