

5. FOOTBALL TAKES OVER

Geoff took to football like a duck takes to water. He soon found himself wanting to play more and more, but how could he without hurting his father's feelings? He knew that all their father had ever hoped for was for him and his younger brother to play baseball. It was Dad's dream for them to play in the big leagues, and Geoff didn't want to destroy it. However, baseball just didn't have the same relevance in his life as it did in his father's. How could he destroy his father's dream so easily? The man had taught him everything there was to know about playing baseball.

As he sat in his bedroom doing his homework, Geoff contemplated telling his brother about his new love outside of baseball. Before Geoff could figure out how to bring it up, Pat was standing in his doorway, tossing a ball up and down.

"Geoff, want to play some catch?" asked Pat.

"No, thanks. I'm too busy, bro."

"Is something bothering you?" Pat asked. "You haven't picked up a baseball for a while. You don't even mention baseball like you used to. What's up?"

"It's nothing. I've just been so busy with schoolwork lately," Geoff lied.

"Come on, Geoff. Don't mess with me. This is your twin brother you're talking to," Pat said. "I know something's been bothering you. Tell me about it. Maybe I can help."

"I doubt it," said Geoff.

"Try me," Pat said.

After a long silence, Geoff said, "I don't know how to say this."

"Well, you can start by opening your mouth and letting the words flow," said Pat.

He took a breath. "I've been playing football with the guys at school during recess and I really like it," Geoff said.

"So? There's nothing wrong with that," Pat replied.

"No, there's much more to it than that," said Geoff. "I like it a lot more than baseball and I've been looking for a way to tell you so that maybe we can throw the ball around at home."

"Sure, no problem," said Pat with a grin. "We can't live by one sport alone."

Just as Geoff had been introduced to football at school, Pat was soon following in his twin's footsteps, and he joined the group when they got together after school to play some football. And, just like his brother had, Pat soon found that there was something magical about the sport and was soon making adjustments to his schedule in order to participate in football and baseball.



For weeks, the twins continued to sneak behind their father's back to hang out with their friends after school and play football. While football was fast replacing baseball as their favorite sport, the twins were careful not to let their father know what they were doing. The twins loved their father, especially for everything he had taught them about the game of baseball. But though they didn't want to hurt him, their passion for football was gaining momentum — so much momentum that baseball was about to take a back seat to football. But how could the twins tell their father the bad news?

Pop Warner football tryouts were coming up, and now that they were 9, Pat and Geoff could try out for the Junior Pee Wees or the Franklin Chargers' D squad. The twins knew they had to tell their father, and soon. But how?

After dinner one night, the twins approached their parents about playing football. The reaction the boys received from their parents was not what the two had been expecting.

While their father, who was calm and collected, thought it was a good idea to give other sports a try, it was their mother who hoisted the flag of concern.

"Charlie, do you think it's safe to allow them to play football?" Mrs. Bentley asked.

"Sure. Why not? They're only going to be playing with a group of kids their own age and size. There's nothing to be alarmed about," Mr. Bentley reassured his wife.

"Well, if you promise me that no one is going to get hurt, then I guess it'll be all right," she said. "But if either one of them gets hurt, it's all over!"

With their parents' blessing, the two high-fived each other before they headed into their bedrooms to finish up their homework.

Not long after they signed up to play football for the Franklin Chargers, the twins, along with their father, went to purchase the proper gear in order to play their new sport safely and protected.

The twins would be playing in the Junior Pee Wee division. Being their first year in the league, they were placed on the same team in order to make it easier for their parents in regards to transportation, practices and games.

After watching the Bentley boys for a couple of weeks during practice, Coach Roger Parent decided to put the twins on the defensive line. He had noticed something special in the way they worked together and interacted with one another.

When told of the coach's decision, Geoff was more than enthusiastic, while Pat just took it in stride.

"This is going to be great," said Geoff as the boys waited for their mom to pick them up from practice.

"What do you mean?" asked Pat.

"We're playing defense," Geoff said excitedly.

"So? It's just a position," Pat said. "It's not as glorious as quarterback or running back."

"Yeah, that may be true — but we get to hit people," said Geoff. "And we get to do it together, turning them into Bentley sandwiches!"

"I guess you're right," said Pat. "When we get through with them, nobody is going to like the Bentley brothers."