



Just like Skip!

By FRANK RICHARDS

EVERYONE agreed, afterwards, that it was just like Skip! Indeed his best chums, Tom King and Dick Warren, declared that Felgate men might have expected something absolutely idiotic, in anything in which Skip Ruggles had a hand.

It was, in fact, Skip all over, though no doubt it was the limit, even for the fathead of the Fourth. But who could have dreamed that even Skip could have been so very asinine an ass?

Certainly it led to the most remarkable football match that had ever been played on the Felgate ground, or on any ground. For weeks afterwards fellows grinned over that match. It was at least funny, if it was not football. It remained on record as the only football match ever to be won by

both sides! In that respect it made history.

Skip, of course, acted in good faith and with the best of motives. He always did. Really it was rather decent of Skip to be so keen about Felgate football, from which personally he was ruthlessly excluded. Skip, who couldn't have hit the side of a house with a Soccer ball—not even a large mansion!—did not expect to play in that match with Quinn's. He was prepared to stand round and cheer. So it was in a purely altruistic frame of mind that he fixed it up.

Felgate men had never even heard of Quinn's till Skip told them. They played regular matches with Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood, Carcroft—but Quinn's they knew not. But it seemed that Skip Ruggles had met a Quinn's

man in the hols, and that was how it came about. He had a letter from his friend at Quinn's on the very day that a match with Carcroft had to be scratched. He was reading that letter in Study Four, while Tom King and Dick Warren were rather grumpily discussing the news from Carcroft. They had flu at Carcroft and couldn't come.

"Might have let us know sooner!" grunted Tom King.

"I suppose they hoped it would be all right, right up to yesterday——," said Warren, tolerantly.

"Oh, blow!" said King. "No game this afternoon——."

Skip looked up from his letter.

"That's a queer coincidence!" he remarked.

"What is?" grunted Tom.

"This letter's from old Tomlinson at Quinn's——."

"What's Quinn's?"

"It's a school, of course——."

"Never heard of it." Tom King turned back to Warren. "We'll have to fix up a pick-up or something——."

"You listen to me," said Skip. "I said it was a queer coincidence. Quinn's had a match on for today, and it's been scratched too. Tomlinson mentions it in this letter." It was at this moment, that the bright idea germinated in Skip's fat brain. "Look here, why not fix up a game with Quinn's?"

"Oh!" said Tom, dubiously. "We've never played them, whoever they are——."

"I'd like to see old Tomlinson again—we got quite pally in the hols," said Skip. "He's junior captain at Quinn's. He's got left for this afternoon, just as you have, and I'll bet he'd be glad of a

game. Look here, if you like I'll ask Charne to let me use his 'phone, and ask him. What?"

"Oh!" said Tom again, thoughtfully, and Dick Warren nodded. Good ideas were not, as a rule, expected from Skip; but this seemed rather a good one. The Felgate footballers wanted a game—no doubt the Quinn's footballers wanted one also—and both were left with a vacant date on the same day. Indeed this seemed rather unusually bright on Skip's part.

"Well, if they'd come over at such short notice——!" said Tom.

"Why not?" said Dick Warren. "Suit both parties."

"I'll cut down and 'phone," said Skip. "What?"

"Oh, all right."

The plump Skip rolled out of Study Four. He was feeling quite braced. In football matters, Skip was generally nobody and nowhere. His belief that he could play Soccer was shared by no other fellow at Felgate. His opinion on any point in the game was valued by nobody. If he talked Soccer, even his best friends advised him to forget Soccer and think about marbles! But now, for once at least, he was going to be useful in Soccer affairs. He was going to fix up a game to fill up that vacant date, though his own role would be only that of a looker-on. It was very pleasant to Skip to give pleasure to his friends, he was a good-natured chap. In quite a cheerful mood he rolled away to ask Mr. Charne for leave to use the telephone.

Tom King and Dick Warren waited for him to come back to the study, not much impressed perhaps. Skip's idea



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was not too bad; but Skip was such an ass, that it seemed improbable that anything in which he had a fat hand would turn out useful. Ten to one, Quinn's couldn't or wouldn't come, and Skip would come back and tell them so—unless he got wrong numbers on Charne's telephone and never got through to Quinn's at all. So it was a little surprise when Skip rolled in with a beaming fat face and the news that it was all right.

"OK," said Skip. "They're coming. Tomlinson—good chap Tomlinson—said he would be jolly glad. They'll be here at three."

"Oh, good!" said Warren.

"Well, it will be a game," said Tom. "Of sorts, I expect—I've never heard of Quinn's—."

"Tomlinson had never heard of Felgate before I met him in the hols", remarked Skip.

"Oh, don't be an ass, Skip," said Tom King. It was true that Felgate had never heard of Quinn's, but it seemed rather absurd to suppose that Quinn's had never heard of Felgate!

"Well, he hadn't—!" said Skip.

"Bosh!" said Warren, decisively.

"Did you talk Soccer with him in the hols?" asked Tom, with a grin. "He won't expect much of a game here, if you did."

"No, I didn't—never mentioned football at all, so far as I remember. If you'd put me in the team sometimes, I'd have something to talk about," said Skip, reproachfully. "Look here, Tom—I'll play this afternoon, if you like...." Perhaps Skip had a gleam of hope.

"If I like!" repeated Tom. "My dear chap, that's the largest size in "ifs" that I've ever heard of!" He rose from his chair. "I'll go and tell the fellows that there will be a game on, after all. You go and ask Snooks of the Second for a game of marbles, Skip."

Tom left the study, and Warren followed him, laughing. Skip was left shaking a sad fat head. There was no place for him in the match he had fixed up for his friends. Still, he had fixed it up, and that was something. They were getting a game, though neither Skip, nor any other fellow at Felgate, guessed or dreamed what that game was going to be like.

It was in the changing-room that it came out. Of course nobody had thought, or dreamed, of anything of the kind. Certainly Felgate men hadn't—equally certainly, the men from Quinn's hadn't. Skip ought to have known what he was talking about, but then, did Skip ever know what he was talking about? Tomlinson was the only Quinn's man Skip had ever met, and he had never talked football with Tomlinson. Skip hadn't given it a thought—thinking was not poor Skip's long suit, anyhow. So it happened. The Felgate men took the Quinn's game for granted—the Quinn's men asked over to Felgate to play football, took the Felgate game for granted. As it turned out, both had taken too much for granted.

Tomlinson of Quinn's was an agreeable fellow. His men, quite a crowd of them, seemed agreeable fellows. King and Warren, and the rest were quite pleased to make their acquaintance; and they looked, too, fit and sturdy and likely to give the home team a good game. It really seemed that old Skip had done the right thing for once in a way—till it came out. It might have transpired from a chance word at any moment, but as a matter of fact it was not till fifteen Quinn's men changed for the game that something like the amazing truth dawned on the Felgaters. Even then it was hard to believe. Could even Skip have done this?

Alas! he could!

Skip was there, chatting cheerily to his pal of the hols while they changed. Skip seemed to have noticed nothing—seldom did Skip notice anything. But



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Tom King, after a startled whisper with Dick Warren, came across to Tomlinson of Quinn's. Tomlinson of Quinn's, with a jersey half on, had ceased to listen to Skip, and was staring from the window. He seemed intrigued by something he had not hitherto observed—apparently the goal-posts on the Felgate ground.

“Oh, scissors!” King heard him murmur. Then he glanced round at the Felgate junior captain. “I say! Those posts—.”

"What about them?" asked King, though he guessed now.

"They're Soccer——."

"Well?"

"Well!" said Tomlinson, staring. "As the game's Rigger——."

"You play Rigger at Quinn's?" asked King. He knew, of course, by this time, that Skip had made the biggest and most idiotic blunder of his idiotic and blundering career. But even yet it was hard to credit.

"Naturally," said Tomlinson.

"Our game's Soccer," said King.

They looked at one another. Skip looked at both of them, and his cheery fat face fell. Even Skip realised now that he had put his foot in it—quite a large foot!

"Your game's Soccer!" said Tomlinson, as if dazed. "You've got a Rigger team to come over when you play Soccer! Is it a joke, or what?"

"You didn't know our game was Soccer?"

"Of course I didn't. Didn't you know our game was Rigger?"

"Of course I didn't."

"Great pip!" said the Quinn's captain. "But—but—but—Ruggles, you ass, why didn't you tell them our game was Rigger?"

"Oh, crikey!" said Skip. "I never knew—never thought about it!——."

"Why didn't you tell them our game was Soccer?" roared Dick Warren.

"Never thought of it——."

There was a buzz of voices in the changing-room. Some of the fellows were laughing. Undoubtedly, this was the oddest football fixture that ever

had been fixed. King and Warren did not laugh. They looked at their fat chum as if they could have eaten him.

"Oh, you ass!" said King.

"Oh, you dummy!" said Warren.

"Look here——!" protested Skip, feebly. "I—I never knew—how was a fellow to know, if you come to that? I took it for granted——."

"Oh, kick him!" said Warren.

Tomlinson of Quinn's laughed.

"Well, here we are!" he said.

"Looks like a fizzle! Anything to be done?"

"If you'd care to play a Soccer game——," suggested King.

"Wouldn't be found dead playing Soccer," answered Tomlinson, politely. "But if you Felgate chaps know anything about our game, and would play Rigger——."

"Is Rigger a game?" asked Dick Warren, which was sarcastic, but a suitable reply to a fellow who wouldn't be found dead playing Soccer.

"Look here——!" said the Quinn's captain, warmly.

"Shut up, Dick!" said Tom King.

"That fathead Ruggles does seem to have landed us. Might have expected him to do something idiotic—but who'd have thought of this?"

"I—I say——!" mumbled Skip.

"You howling ass!" hooted Dick Warren. "You've fetched a Rigger team over here to play a Soccer school. I'm going to boot you——."

"But I say, I've got a suggestion to make," pleaded Skip. "Look here, if Quinn's won't play Soccer——."

"No 'if' about that!" said Tomlinson, very decidedly.

"And if you won't play Rugger—?"

"No 'if' about that either, fathead," said King.

"Well, then, why not each side play its own game?" asked Skip, brightly. "It—it would be a bit unusual, I know—."

"A bit?" said King. "Did you say a bit?"

"Well, it would be a game, and Quinn's wouldn't have come over here for nothing!" said Skip.

"Silly ass!" said almost every fellow in the changing-room. "Shut up!"

And Skip, perhaps realising, at long last, that he was indeed a silly ass, as all Felgate had long known, shut up.

But——!

Skip's suggestion, fantastic as it seemed, was adopted. It was, as even Skip admitted, a "bit" unusual. But after all, Quinn's had come over for a game, and did not want to waste the afternoon wholly. Neither did the Felgaters. It was unusual. It was even weird. But it was adopted, with a good deal of grinning on both sides. Perkinson of the Fifth, who was going to referee the match, almost fell down, when he was told. Then he chuckled, apparently looking forward to that game as a hilarious entertainment for a half-holiday. And quite a swarm of Felgate fellows came along to watch. Seldom, if ever, was such a game to be seen, and they did not want to miss it.

And in fact it was quite an exciting game, and well worth watching.

With two quite different codes in action, it could not fail to be interesting.

The odds were on the side of the visitors, for naturally they claimed to

play a full team. At first there were yells of "Hands" all round the field—Felgate were unused to seeing the ball handled. And when Quinn's scored their first try, fellows wondered rather how the score was going to be totted up.

When Tom King was laid low by a Rugby tackle, that unusual experience shook him up a little. But like Antaeus of old, he seemed to derive new energy from contact with his mother earth. And in spite of Rugby tackles, and all that "hands" could do, the Felgate men put the ball into goal again and again, while as it happened, no goals came to the visitors, though they did well in tries.

Perhaps that remarkable game degenerated into something like a scramble—still, it was a game, and both sides put plenty of vigour into it. Skip watched, and cheered, and waved his cap, and felt that after all he deserved well of his friends.

But remarkable as that match was in every way, the most singular thing about it was that it was won by both sides! That was more than a "bit" unusual, but it was indubitable. Each side claimed to tot up the score by its own code, as each had a right to do. The result was one that had never been known before in either Soccer or Rugger.

Quinn's scored fifteen points on tries, and the Felgate men, naturally, scored no points at all. Quinn's, therefore, had won by fifteen points to nil, and were quite satisfied with that result. But Felgate had scored no fewer than four goals, and had, therefore, won by four to nil. So the result was equally



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satisfactory at the Felgate end. Quinn's departed victors in their own esteem, leaving a victorious team behind them!

Why every man in the Felgate eleven kicked him, after the visitors were gone, Skip Ruggles did not know. But he knew that they did! Eleven football

boots, impinging upon his fat person, one after another, left him in no doubt on that point. It was agreed, on all hands, that what Skip had done was just like Skip. It was also agreed that if ever any Felgate man deserved to be booted all over Felgate, Skip did. And he was!