

The Cliff House Football Match.

An Amusing Complete School Tale, dealing with the Adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, versus the Girl Rivals.

By FRANK RICHARDS.



"You must apologise to Wilhelmina after having treated her like that!" said Miss Clara frigidly. "Unless you do, I don't think I can consent to go on with the game!" "I—I couldn't help it!" stammered Bob Cherry. "I—I was only kicking for goal, you know!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER. The Great Match.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. An Extraordinary Challenge!
"Look at this, you chaps!" Frank Nugent came into No. 1 Study, in the Remove passage at Greyfriars, with a letter in his hand, and a puzzled grin on his face. Harry Wharton was seated at the table writing lines. Bob Cherry was sitting on the table and swinging his long legs—somewhat to the detriment of the lines. Johnny Bull was standing before the fire with his hands in his pockets. All three of the chums of the Remove looked inquiringly at Nugent as he held up the letter.
"What is it?" asked Wharton. "A bill?"
"Worse than that," said Nugent. "It's from Cliff House."
"Oh, good!" said Bob Cherry, interested at once. "From Marjorie?"
"No; it's from Miss Clara. It seems that she's secretary."
"Secretary?" ejaculated Wharton. "Secretary of what?"
"The Cliff House Football Club!" grinned Nugent.
"The what?"
Nugent grinned ruefully.
"It's a challenge," he said. "Miss Clara is secretary, skipper, centre-forward, and head cook-and-bottle-washer of the Cliff House Soccer Club, and she's written us a challenge to meet them in a match. A giddy team of girls! What are we going to say?"
"Wouldn't it be polite," said Nugent, with a shake of the head.
Wharton laid down his pen. A challenge to a Soccer match from the girls of Cliff House was a little surprising. Miss Clara and her friends knew probably as much about football as they knew about aerobatics or Sanskrit.
"Well, this beats it," said Wharton. "Of course we can't play it. Only, if we refuse the challenge they'll be offended, or think we're making."

"Miss Clara says it's fixed," said Nugent; and you know how determined she is. She's ringing her team over to-morrow afternoon; a half-holiday, you know. She says it's her idea. She's centre-forward. Marjorie Hazeldene is centre-half. Miss Wilhelmina keeps goal. And she says that Gertie Gunn is our slip."
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Who's batsman?" roared Bob Cherry.
"And she says we're to let her know when we first manage to begin, so that they can catch us in good time."
"Oh, crumble!"
Nugent proceeded to read out Miss Clara's letter, amid many chuckles from the chums of the Remove. Miss Clara's knowledge of the art of winter games was fearful and wonderful, and one thing was quite clear—that she had used her mind about this match, and that there was no room for a refusal.
"What on earth are we going to do?" said Harry Wharton at last. "We don't want to offend Marjorie & Co.; but—"
"Play 'em!" said Bob Cherry, with a chuckle. "After all, we can play a soft game, and take no to hurt them. Anything except let them lick us. That couldn't be stood, of course; and should be clipped to death!"
And, after some debate, the chums of the Remove agreed that the challenge should be accepted. There was really no other way out of it. Miss Clara was not the kind of person to let "No" for an answer, and the juniors were so anxious not to offend their girl chums at House School.

And so Frank Nugent, in his capacity of retort to the Remove Football Club, sat an to write a reply to the challenge. And it reply was duly posted to Miss Clara Trevelyan of Cliff House; and on the following morning so Miss Clara's reply, worded quite characteristically:
"Dear Nugent.—Right-ho! We'll be over very sharp. Look out for a licking."
"CLARA."

Harry Wharton, as captain of the Remove Football Club, was much exercised in his mind about that match. He selected his team with unusual care, picking out fellows who could be relied upon to be very gentle. The news of that unusual match was soon all over Greyfriars, and half the school announced their intention of being present to see the match. As Temple of the Fourth remarked, it would be worth seeing.
Long before the time fixed for the kick-off a crowd began to gather on Little Side. Nearly all the Remove were not in the team came as spectators, and a crowd of the Third and the Fourth. Coker of the Fifth came along grinning, with Porter and Groop, even some of the Sixth strolled over to Little Side for the great occasion. At half-past two, when the ball should have been kicked off, Harry Wharton's team was in the field ready.

There was no sign as yet of the Cliff House team. Apparently, Marjorie & Co. were allowing themselves the feminine privilege of being late.
The Remove footballers panted the ball about to keep themselves warm. At a quarter to three the whole crowd of spectators were chuckling.
"I say, you fellows, they're not coming, you're giving us, you know. He, he, he!"
"Blessed if I don't look like it!" Bob Cherry said, with an anxious glance up at the clock-tower. "If they don't come soon, we'd better get up a scratch match. Perhaps they've altered their minds."

"No such luck!" grinned Nugent.
Nugent was right. Just on three o'clock the Cliff House team arrived.
"Hallo—hallo—hallo! Here they are!" exclaimed Bob Cherry; and he was off like an arrow to greet Marjorie Hazeldene.
There were sixteen Cliff House girls in the party. Miss Clara, the football skipper, looked very businesslike.

"I think we're a few minutes late," she remarked airily. "I suppose you don't mind?"
"A—a few minutes!" murmured Wharton. "Oh, not at all! I—I hope we shall have a good game!"
"We'll give you all the game you want," said Miss Clara. "We haven't really had much practice, as we've only taken it up lately. But my men are very keen. Now, line up!"
"I—I say, she's not too far from choice of ends first!" suggested Wharton meekly.
"Oh, if you like—I don't mind!" said Miss Clara offhandedly. "But we're going to have this goal. I suppose you don't mind which you have?"
"No—not at all."

They tossed up, and Miss Clara lost the toss, but she proceeded to choose her goal all the same. Then she directed her team to line up. The Cliff House girls lined up. The juniors watched them in amazement.
"I—I say, how many are you playing?" Johnny Bull inquired.
"Sixteen," said Miss Clara calmly. "All the members of the club wanted to play, and it wouldn't have been fair to leave out one more than another, would it? You can play the same number if you like."
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I don't see anything to laugh at!" said Miss Clara, with some asperity. "If you fellows don't take a game like football seriously, it's time you did. I don't regard football as a joke!"

"Nunno! All right," said Wharton hastily. "We'll play eleven, though, the same as usual. Where are you going to put your men?"
Miss Clara gave her orders in a businesslike way.
"Now, then, buck up there! You're centre-half, Marjorie. You're wicketkeeper, Wilhelmina. You have to get between those posts!"
"Wicketkeeper!" howled Bulstrode. "Do you mean goalkeeper?"
"I don't see that it makes much difference," said Miss Clara laughingly. "Get into your place, Wilhelmina, please!"
"Ferry goot," said the German girl. "Vat is it I do here, hein?"
"You stand there, and when the ball comes you stop it. Now, you others, line up! Some of you stand back next to the goal. Now we're ready. I kick off!"

"Don't we kick off?" asked Wharton, in surprise. "As you chose your goal—"
"Of course, you can kick off if you like," said Miss Clara, with a toss of her golden curls; "but there is such a thing as politeness to visitors!"
"Oh, I—I forgot that! You kick off, by all means," said Wharton hastily.
"Please give me the ball. Mind, there is not to be any horrid, rough charging, and you are not to tread on our feet!"
"N-n-nunno!"

Coker of the Fifth had cheerfully consented to referee the match. He put the whistle to his lips and blew a loud blast.
But Miss Clara was in no hurry to kick off. She was pinning on her hat more securely, and taking her time about it. Coker blew again.
"I say, it's time to kick off, you know," ventured Wharton.

"Yes, I know," said Miss Clara. "You kick off, will you, Marjorie, while I fasten my hat? I've lost one of the pins."
Marjorie laughed.
"We'll wait for you, Miss Clara," said Bob Cherry solemnly. "Coker doesn't mind doing a solo on the whistle till you're ready."
"There, I'm ready now! Now whistle again, please, Coker."
"Certainly!" chuckled Coker. And he whistled again.

Miss Clara kicked off.
There was a rush of the Cliff House team for the ball. In the midst of a chorus of shrieks and excited exclamations they bore the leather down the field. There was a cheer and a roar of laughter from the crowd.
"On the ball! Go it!"
Miss Clara & Co. "went it." As there were sixteen of them against eleven, the odds were in their favour. And as they all charged together, it was quite a rush. Miss Clara captured the ball and caught it up in her hands, and ran on to goal with it. Coker blew the whistle as there was a yell!
"Hauls!"

Play ceased on the side of the Removeites, but not on the Cliff House side. Miss Clara charged on, and flung the ball into goal, over the astonished head of Bulstrode, the goalkeeper.
"Goal! Hurrah!" shouted Miss Clara.
"Didn't you hear the whistle?" yelled Penfold.
"Certainly I did!" said Miss Clara, panting with excitement and exertion. "But it is a goal, isn't it?"
"You have to stop play when the referee whistles!" gasped Wharton.

"Oh, nonsense!"
"And—and you're not allowed to pick up the ball, you know!" said Wharton feebly.
"Why, I've seen it done in matches!"
"Yes—but that's in Rugger!" murmured Wharton. "This is Soccer, you know."
"What's the difference?"
"The—the difference—"
"Really, I'm surprised at you!" said Miss Clara, shaking a reproachful finger at the Remove captain. "Of course, I know that boys don't like being beaten in games by girls, but really—really, you know—"
"Oh, my hat!"
"That goal counts, of course!" said Miss Clara. "Line up again! And please don't keep on whistling, Coker; it makes such a dreadful noise!"
"Oh, Coker!" said Coker.
"Kick off this time, if you like. We'll take it in turns. I want to be perfectly fair."
Harry Wharton kicked off. The referee ceased to whistle at the cry of "Hands!" The referee, in fact, was doubled up with laughter, and had no wind left to whistle with. In the Remove goal Bulstrode had plenty to do. He had to stop the leather every time it was tossed in at him, and he made some excellent catches. In the field the Cliff House team had it mostly their own way. The second goal was scored just on half-time by a masterly manoeuvre; Gertie Gunn collaring Bulstrode and jerking him out of goal, while Miss Clara triumphantly pitched the ball in. Then the whistle went at last.

"What is that for?" asked Miss Clara.
"Half-time!" gurgled Bob Cherry.
"Oh, very well! I'm, rather tired. We'll have a rest!"
"The interval's only five minutes, you know," Wharton hinted.
"Nonsense! I think a quarter of an hour would be better. I am quite out of breath."
"Oh, all—right!"
And a quarter of an hour it was. Then the Cliff House team came into the field again looking quite radiant. They had cause for self-congratulation, being two goals up against nil.
"I say, we change ends, you know," Wharton remarked, as Miss Clara was directing her terrible team to line up.
"Miss Clara shook her head.
"No, we can't change ends," she said decidedly. "We should have the sun in our eyes."

And the Cliff House team kept their end. The second half was quite exciting. Bob Cherry succeeded in getting the ball away before any of the visitors could pick it up, and he rushed it up to goal and kicked it in. Miss Wilhelmina made a wild clutch at it, and unfortunately caught it with her face, and then it rolled in goal. Miss Wilhelmina gave a dreadful shriek.
"Oh, dear! Ach! Mein goodness! I am all muddy, ain't it? Groopgh!"
"Oh, you dreadful rough boy!" exclaimed Miss Clara indignantly. "You have made Wilhelmina all muddy. Look at her face!"
"I—I can't help it," stammered Bob Cherry. "I—I was only kicking for goal, you know!"

"I think you might apologise to Wilhelmina after having treated her like that!" said Miss Clara frigidly. "Unless you do, I don't think I can consent to go on with the game. I don't like boogalanism!"
"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Johnny Bull.
"I—I—I'm awfully sorry!" stammered Bob.
"And we shan't count that goal," said Miss Clara. "You must take goals properly or not at all. Now we shall have to wait till Wilhelmina feels all right again. Gertie, you go into goal, too; it will be safer with two."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
And the game restarted. There were no more attempts to score on the part of the Remove forwards. They had resigned themselves to their fate. Goal after goal was triumphantly scored by the players from Cliff House, and Miss Clara's face was beaming with delight.
The crowd round the field, almost in confusion, a referee was superfluous in that match. It wanted still a quarter of an hour to time when Miss Clara held up her hand.
"We're finished!" she cried. "We're tired! How many goals have we taken, Marjorie?"
"Six!" said Marjorie, laughing.

"Oh, good! You can count that goal of yours after all, if you like, Bob," said Miss Clara graciously.
"Oh, t-t-thanks!" gasped Bob.
"You jolly well hadn't got a look in!" continued Miss Clara. "But don't take it to heart, you know—you may beat us in the next match. What you want is a little more steady practice. But mind you don't say any more that girls can't play football. Five goals ahead is a jolly good score—what?"
"Ripping!" said Bob Cherry.
And the Cliff House team went off the field, very well satisfied with their exploits. The spectators cheered them loudly. And the defeated team only entertained the victors to tea after the match, and bore their defeat with surprising cheerfulness. And when the visiting team departed, Miss Clara promised generously that she would play the Remove in another match very soon.
But Harry Wharton & Co. had their own ideas about that.

THE END.
(Next week's splendid complete school tale will deal with the adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. versus the Courtfield Council schoolboys.)