

FADE IN:

INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME - 1987 - NIGHT

20,000 SCREAMING FANS, all on their feet for --

SUPER: 1987 TEXAS 5A HIGH SCHOOL STATE FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

ON THE SCOREBOARD: CLEAR LAKE 17, CONROE 21. A minute left.

ON THE FIELD, the CLEAR LAKE OFFENSE lines up. TWO CONROE LINEBACKERS actually GROWL at quarterback MARTIN PEAVEY, 17.

But Martin's eyes are steady, in control.

MARTIN

Down! Hut, hut!

Both teams EXPLODE OFF THE BALL, Martin drops back. He doesn't see the CORNERBACK on his blind side blitzing...

Martin cocks back to pass, but gets BLASTED IN THE CHEST.

ON THE SIDELINE, Clear Lake's Head Coach, JEREMIAH STAPP, 55 and astoundingly grizzled, throws up his arms.

Cheerleader CLAIRE MILNER steps out of formation, worried.

CLAIRE

Martin...

He's still down.

COACH STAPP

Aw, hell. Get a trainer! Trainer!

Martin struggles to a knee, cradling his hand. The crowd CHEERS as he waves his Coach and TRAINER back off the field.

IN THE HUDDLE, the offense gathers around Martin.

MARTIN

Guys. Problem.

He slowly raises his throwing hand. It shakes. And his index finger looks like it's growing out of the back of his hand.

Everyone goes white except LUCKY, a lineman, who goes green.

MARTIN

It's dislocated. I need somebody to pull my finger.

Somebody LAUGHS, but Martin's look shuts him up.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

There's twenty seconds left in the biggest game of our lives. I'm not going out standing in a huddle.

The tailback, DAVE ENSTEIN steps forward. Swallows hard.

Martin closes his eyes, nods, and Dave grabs the finger. He YANKS, and Martin's BONES SNAP BACK INTO PLACE.

ON THE SIDELINE, Coach Stapp watches the clock tick down.

COACH STAPP

The hell are they doing?

BACK IN THE HUDDLE, Martin wobbles on his feet a little.

DAVE

You gonna pass out?

LUCKY

I think I am.

Without warning, Dave gives Lucky a NIPPLE TWISTER.

LUCKY (CONT'D)

OWWWWW!!!!!!

DAVE

How about now?

LUCKY

No, I'm better now. Thanks.

DAVE

Martin?

Martin takes a deep breath, and his eyes flutter open.

INT. ASTRODOME - MOMENTS LATER

Lined up, Martin flexes his right hand, trying to get feeling in it. The clock ticks down. :04...:03...:02...

MARTIN

Down!

The Offensive Line FIRES OFF THE BALL. Martin rolls to his right on a bootleg, Lucky pulls and runs a step behind.

A LINEBACKER CHARGES at Martin, but never sees Lucky, who FLATTENS HIM -- opening a lane for Martin to THROW.

He sets his feet and LAUNCHES a wobbly, lame duck of a pass.

Everyone watches it, seemingly forever. All is SILENT.

Until a Clear Lake receiver PULLS IT DOWN in the end zone.

THE SCOREBOARD CHANGES -- CLEAR LAKE 23, CONROE 21.

The place GOES NUTS. Coach Stapp, Claire, the Cheerleaders, the whole team, and a throng of fans STORM THE FIELD.

Slowly, the SOUND OF CHEERING gives way to the drone of a distant LAWN MOWER, and the green of Astro turf --

DISSOLVES TO:

EXT. MARTIN'S BACK YARD - DAY - PRESENT DAY

-- the green of a perfectly manicured suburban yard.

MARTIN, now 42, sweating too much but in decent shape, still holds a football, now in the back yard of a McMansion.

MARTIN

Just watch what I do.

He FIRES...to his daughter RACHEL, 10. She takes the ball in the gut but hangs on, shoots Martin a look.

RACHEL

Maybe if you went slower...

MARTIN

We've got a winning tradition in this family. I'm counting on you to keep it going.

RACHEL

But I don't like sports. Why can't Sebastian do it?

Martin starts to say something, but just sighs.

EXT. CLEAR LAKE HIGH SCHOOL - FOOTBALL PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

Behind his face mask, SEBASTIAN PEAVEY, 17, blinks sweat from his eyes. Thin and nervous, playing linebacker. He looks across the line of scrimmage at the QB GARZA, 16.

GARZA

Down! Hut!

Garza HANDS OFF to HARRIS, the tailback, who RUNS AT SEBASTIAN. Sebastian doesn't know what to do, and finally just CLOSES HIS EYES.