STANLEY AND JEROME

 He sat in his tiny office with his head between his hands. On the office door, it read Stanley Dombrowski, Football Coach. Stan had come to Rolling Rock College from Wilson High School, where he was a successful coach. As students referred to it, the Rock was looking for a coach to turn around their failing football program. Stan, however, could only produce a four-win and six-lost record in his first year, but he beat the Trinity College Trojans, the Rock's hated rival. With the start of a new year, Stan was confident he could have a winning season if he could only strengthen the team’s weak defense. He headed home to partake in his favorite relaxation, playing the saxophone. Stan was an accomplished sax player whose favorite composition was Claude Debussy's Rhapsody for Orchestra and Saxophone. Stan excelled on the sax and could have joined the Davenport Philharmonic, but his goal was to become a professional football team coach.

 Leaving the Athletic Building, he saw a sight before him that he couldn't believe. Strolling across the campus was a six-foot-two, 230-pound giant of a man who could be the missing piece for the team's defense. He had to recruit this physical specimen.

 This specimen was Jerome, a junior student from Wetumpka, Alabama, who had come to the Rock from Junior College on a music scholarship. Jerome was

considered a violin child prodigy. At seven years of age, he had already mastered the finger positions, and at ten, he could play Bach's Partita No. 3 in E major for solo violin. Jerome's goal was to play the first violin in the Birmingham Philharmonic. His mother had worked two jobs to get the money necessary for Jerome's violin lessons and looked forward to the day when Jerome reached the pinnacle of being the first violin.

Stan approached Jerome and introduced himself. He asked if he would like to join the football team this season. Jerome responded, "I have no interest in playing a game where people enjoyed knocking each other down and would never consider playing a game that could damage my valuable fingers.” Stan realized Jerome would not change his mind, so he wished him luck and headed home to play the sax.

 As expected, the current football season matched last year's four and six record. However, the team beat Trinity College again, so the dean considered it a good season. But Stan knew Jerome was the missing piece necessary to improve, and he was confident he could devise a plan to get Jerome to change his mind about playing football in the coming season.

 The following year, when the coach called Jerome, now a senior, into his office, he could not believe what he saw standing before him. Jerome was now six foot five and weighed 250 pounds of muscle. Coach Stan now initialed his devious plan. Stan said, "Jerome, I never see you with any girls, and the rumor is that a big guy like you who plays the fiddle and not football must be gay." Stan's devious tactic did the trick; Jerome said, "I'll show them I am not gay; give me a uniform."

 Stan’s confidence that Jerome was the missing piece to a winning season proved factual. He became an all-state linebacker and led the team to a nine-and-one record, good enough for the Rock to be selected to play in the Lettuce Bowl on December 15th. The date, however, was a problem, for it was the same day the Birmingham Philharmonic held auditions for the first violin. Jerome had to decide whether to accede to his mother's dreams or play in the bowl game.

 After the football season, despite winning the bowl game and going nine and one in the regular season, Coach Stan was fired. His one loss was to the Trinity College Trojans, costing Dean Smith to lose a case of beer bet with Dean Jones of Trinity. Stan could have gone one and nine and kept his job if he had only beaten the Trojans. But all was not lost for Stan. He is now the lead sax player in a jazz band.

 As for Jerome. He is not playing the first violin with the Philharmonic. But thanks to Stan, he is playing first-team linebacker with the Buffalo Bills, and his multiyear, multimillion-dollar contract was more than enough to pay back his mother for the sacrifices she made working to earn money for Jerome's violin lessons.