

A photograph of football players in red helmets and jerseys on a green field. The players are in a three-point stance, ready for the snap. The focus is on the players in the foreground, with others visible in the background. The lighting is bright, suggesting an outdoor setting during the day.

DISTRICT 13™

# BEFORE THE SNAP

 SADDLEBACK™  
EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHING

# 1

Taras got off the bus. Derrick followed. He was moving slowly. His leg was sore.

“You gonna make it?” Taras asked.

“Huh?” Derrick replied.

“My grandma gets off the bus faster than you.”

Derrick put his backpack on. “She a receiver? She after my JV spot?”

“Forget about grandma,” Taras said. “Worry about *Colton*. That fool wants blood. He’s trying to take you out, man.”

“For real,” Derrick said. He shook his head. “Cheap shots. All the time. He’s messing up my legs. I swear. Guess he’s sick of seeing me start.”

They walked down the block. It was a cool, fall day. School had just started. The boys had practice after school. They were on their way home.

“Know what gets to Colton more? Than seeing you start?” Taras asked.

“What’s that?”

“His girl staring at you,” Taras said.

Derrick tried not to smile. But he couldn’t help it. He had to! Taras

was right. Tasheka was eyeing him. Derrick didn't know why. She was cool and popular. He was always nervous. And he got bad grades. Still, he liked her attention.

“She's not his girl anymore. Right?”

“That's right! She's his *old* girl. So when you two gonna hook up? When you gonna ask her out?”

Derrick shook his head. “I just got done with one cheerleader. Remember? I don't need another one.”

Taras rolled his eyes. “Come on. That was kid stuff. Amber Linn was like a little sister. Not a hookup.”

Derrick didn't like talking about Amber Linn. “You don't get it, T.”

“Lose the nerves, Derrick.  
Tasheka likes you. She’s single.  
You’re single. She’s hot! Ask her out.  
Enjoy it! What’s wrong with you?”  
Derrick didn’t answer.

## 2

Derrick's leg hurt. Going up stairs was hard. Too bad he lived on the third floor. He took each step slowly. Colton really hit him hard.

Derrick's mom was home. She was putting on lipstick. Derrick rolled his eyes. "You seeing *him*?" he asked.

"*Him*?" she replied. She didn't like his comment. Not one bit. "You

mean *John*? The first man I've seen in five years? Since your father left? Then, yes. I am going to see *him*."

Derrick dropped his backpack on the floor. He walked to his room. He'd met John a couple of times. He wasn't impressed. He was too polished. What did he want from his mom?

Derrick sat on his bed. He had to look at his leg. He pulled his jeans down. Yep. There it was. One hell of a bruise.

Derrick heard the phone ring. His mom answered it. Derrick was sure it was John. John the bank teller.

His mom knocked. "Derrick? It's for you," she said. Derrick pulled up his pants. He opened the door.

“Who is it?” he asked.

Something was wrong. He could tell by his mom’s face.

“It’s Linny, baby.”

Derrick’s heart sank. Forget about his leg. Now his heart hurt.

“Want me to wait?” his mom whispered. “Until you get off the phone? I’m sure John wouldn’t mind ...”

Derrick held out his hand. “Go,” he said. His heart was racing. He hadn’t talked to Amber Linn since they broke up.

“Good luck, baby,” his mom said. She left. Derrick took a deep breath.

“Linny?”

“Hey, Derrick.”

“How are you?” he asked.

She was silent. Derrick couldn't take it.

“Linny?”

Amber Linn started to cry. Derrick felt terrible. He cared about Amber Linn. Always had. Always would.

“Linny, stop crying and ...”

“I have something to tell you,” she said. “It's big, Derrick. It happened right after we broke up.”

“What? What happened?”

“I swear Derrick. It was *after* we broke up. I ...”

Derrick heard her inhale.

“I'm pregnant. You don't know the guy.”

Now the pain moved to his stomach. It wasn't possible. How

could it be? With some other guy?  
They just broke up a couple of  
months ago.

Derrick sat on his bed. He felt  
sick. He couldn't speak. He didn't  
know what to say.

"Everyone will think it's your  
baby, Derrick. If they find out it isn't,  
then ..."

That didn't sound right. Derrick  
was in shock. But he wasn't deaf. He  
forced himself to focus. "What do you  
mean, *if*?"

"I'm going to look like a huge slut.  
Everyone will know."

"Know what, Linny? What are  
you getting at?"

"That I ... was with someone  
right after you."