

May the Best Fan Win

a play by Jonathan Rand

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Cast of Characters

MERV, sportscaster

TIM, sportscaster

BAXTER, sports fan

FELTON, sports fan

P.A. ANNOUNCER, offstage voice

Production Notes

IMPORTANT NOTE: By and large, Baxter and Felton's eyes are glued to the unseen downstage television screen. Their facial expressions, movement, food-chewing, etc. are consistently lazy and nonchalant, starkly contrasting Merv and Tim's exuberance.

Merv is essentially based on famed play-by-play man Marv Albert, and Tim includes hints of color commentators Ron Jaworski, Tim McCarver, and others. If these names are unfamiliar, see video examples online.

Feel free to use crowd noise sound effects (oohs, ahhs, cheers, boos, etc.) whenever it makes sense.

While all characters are male, they can be played by actors of any gender.

Formatting note: Most of the script is split in half, with the left side of the page devoted to Merv and Tim's dialogue, and the right side of the page for Baxter and Felton's actions.

(Opening theme music. Sportscasters MERV and TIM are either seated at a table or standing. Elsewhere on the stage is an empty couch and coffee table.)

MERV. Good afternoon and *welcome* to our live broadcast of the matchup we've all been waiting for: the championship showdown between future hall-of-famer Donald Baxter and rookie sensation Michael Felton. Don't let the chilly weather here in downtown Crazytown fool you – the mood here is *white hot*. I'm Merv Johnson, and here to my right is my partner-in-crime Tim Bixby. Tim, is there any chance this matchup could possibly live up to the hype?

TIM. Merv, I do believe it just might. I'll tell ya – I've literally got goosebumps. Feel my arm.

MERV. Those are indeed *literal* goosebumps.

TIM. Merv, I simply cannot *wait* for this literal clash of the titans.

MERV. Well, wait no further, as we now move to the starting lineups with Public Address announcer, Roddy Wilcox.

(Standard crowd-amping intro music plays.¹)

P.A. ANNOUNCER. Crazytown, make some noooooooooise!!!²

(Cheering.)

At five-foot-seven ... from Syracuse ... He's a grown man with a wife and two kids but still plays video games ... Donalllllld Baxterrrrrrr!³

(We hear the crowd cheering as BAXTER enters, totally blasé. He carries a bowl of chips, places it on the coffee table, takes a seat, and points the remote control downstage to switch on the unseen fourth-wall television.)

P.A. ANNOUNCER. At five-eight ... from Kentucky ... He's still single due to his fear of commitment and overuse of Axe Body Spray ... Michaellllll Feltonnnnnn!

(We hear the crowd booing as FELTON enters, also blasé, carrying a six-pack. FELTON gives a nonchalant man-wave, to which BAXTER – whose eyes stay locked to the screen – responds with a halfhearted point to FELTON, who sits and also stares at the screen. The sound of a referee's whistle.)

MERV. And awayyy we go.

TIM. Now as we get started, Merv, I'll say this: *everything* hinges on this first quarter. It's all about which player establishes himself early.

MERV. But so far, Tim, we are seeing a *tepid* start from both men.

TIM. Merv, we're seeing literally no eyeball movement, and in this league, you *have* to have eyeball movement. But listen, Merv – we both know how *explosive* these men can be, and how this game can turn on a *dime*.

MERV. As if on cue, Donald Baxter with the first move, and what a move it was!

(Due to a play on the screen, BAXTER barely pumps his fist in the air. FELTON does nothing.)

¹ Suggestions: "Get Ready for This" by 2 Unlimited or "Sirius" by The Alan Parsons Project

² The P.A. Announcer can be piped in, spoken offstage, or performed by Merv or Tim, in which case, "with Public Address announcer, Roddy Wilcox" would be cut.

³ Use actual heights of the actors.

TIM. *(With a knowing chuckle:)* Merv, I said it during the Crazytown Copy Center Pre-Game Show. Baxter *loves* to start strong. He *really* set the tone there.

MERV. And so far Felton has simply *not* responded.

TIM. I don't think his head's in the game, Merv.

MERV. And *another* strong move from Baxter!

(BAXTER casually takes a chip from the bowl and eats part of it.)

TIM. Merv, is that what I think it is?

MERV. It is *indeed* a Tostitos Scoop!!

TIM. And Felton still looks lost out there. You have to wonder if he's a hundred percent.

MERV. And here comes Baxter with a double – no, a *triple dip*!! How often do you see that?!

(BAXTER dips the same chip into some dip, eats a bite, and then dips a third time and finishes the chip.)

TIM. This is getting ugly, *fast*. Felton better focus, or he'll never climb out of this early hole.

MERV. He reaches for the remote for a volume change... here it comes... OH! *Denied!!*

(FELTON starts to ineffectively fiddle with the remote control.)

TIM. Oh my, Felton and the remote are simply *not* on the same page.

MERV. And he mistakenly flips the Input Source from HDMI to AV-1! *What* an embarrassment!

TIM. Merv, the last thing you want to see is an early fumble.

MERV. He cannot connect!!

TIM. And the crowd here at JP Morgan Chase Living Room is letting him hear it.

(The crowd boos.)

MERV. Ohh! And Donald Baxter *steals* the remote, *with* authority.

TIM. Classic homefield advantage, Merv. You just gotta love his remote control control.

MERV. It's — a — *blowout!*

TIM. And with a commanding lead like this, you gotta think he'll get aggressive now.

MERV. Baxter reviews his options, fakes left, jukes right — and then an *unexpected move* to the Merlot! *Unbelievable!*⁴

TIM. Unbelievable is right, Merv! This guy's a career PBR man. We never expected wine, let alone a red, let alone a *varietal*. What a bold play.

MERV. But hold on! Out of *nowhere* Baxter is *stuffed* at the line of corkage. Folks, he is *cork-blocked*.

TIM. Merv, his Achilles' Heel is, and always will be, beverage penetration.

MERV. Twenty seconds have come...and twenty seconds...have gone.

TIM. We may witness history here, Merv. The record is twenty-eight seconds.

MERV. Oh my. OH MY!! Donald Baxter has *shattered* the world record of cork-related incompetence!

TIM. Now let's see if Felton can take advantage.

MERV. And a *powerful* move by Michael Felton.

TIM. Merv, it was a twist-off!

MERV. The cork was never even on the field! *What* a mental error!

TIM. And he knows it, Merv. Look at his face; look at his body language. That will haunt him forever.

(BAXTER *casually* takes the remotes, easily hitting the few various necessary buttons on the remotes to fix the TV situation.)

(BAXTER *moves* his hand from a beer to a soda, but then reveals a bottle of wine.)

(BAXTER *can't* open the bottle with a corkscrew.)

(BAXTER *gives up* and puts the bottle on the table.)

(FELTON *casually* picks up the bottle and easily twists off the cap.)

(BAXTER's *face hasn't* changed. Or he's *yawning*.)

⁴ If it's a problem for your theater to reference alcohol, see the Appendix for alternate language.

MERV. Tim, could *this* spark a turnaround for Felton?

TIM. No question, Merv.

MERV. But wait, now Baxter fights back with a difficult five-point play attempt. He lets it fly...

(After a play on the screen, they celebrate a little and BAXTER holds up his hand for a high-five.

FELTON doesn't notice it and casually celebrates on his own.

BAXTER's hand remains up in high-five position.)

OHHHH! Re-jected!

TIM. Merv, that has to be one of the best blocked shots I have ever seen in my twenty years of watching dudes watch sports.

MERV. Get that *outta here*.

TIM. And Baxter just can't believe it. He is *still* hanging out to dry.

MERV. Oh no, is he — ? I think he might... *Ohhh! Donald Baxter pretends he is stretching!*

(BAXTER tries to play it off like it was never a high-five, with a little stretch.)

TIM. Merv, how quickly the tables turn. Baxter has lost the upper hand.

MERV. Tim, *was* that pun intended!?

TIM. Merv, I *don't* even know what I'm saying.

MERV. Don't look now, but it's only getting *worse* for Baxter, who simply *drifts* off into a catnap.

(BAXTER starts to drift off to sleep.)

TIM. Merv, now I've seen *everything*.

MERV. He is simply *unconscious!!*

TIM. I mentioned this yesterday on the Toyota Tundra Radio Show: Felton *loves* to catch his opponent sleeping.

And here we go — we're seeing just that right now.

(All while casually chewing and mostly watching the game,

MERV. THE BOWL IS ON THE HEAD!

FELTON places an empty, large bowl on BAXTER's sleeping head.)

TIM. That's right; it's Felton's signature move "The Fiesta Bowl." But now will he take full advantage?

MERV. OHHHHHH! He! Just! Got!
Instagrammed!

TIM. Hashtag *embarrassing*.

MERV. I *still* use a rotary phone!

TIM. *Really*, Merv.

MERV. The internet *frightens* me!

TIM. Wow.

MERV. Well, folks, we are *tied!!* What an *astounding* comeback by Michael Felton!

TIM. And as the clock ticks down on this game, both players are *hungry* for victory.

MERV. They survey the spread... there is not much edible remaining on the field...

TIM. Bear in mind there aren't any tater tots, despite their 99.4% approval rating.⁵

MERV. ...and out of nowhere, Felton *attacks* the same buffalo wing he finished hours ago!

TIM. Now we'll see how Baxter responds given the limited options.

MERV. He looks downfield, goes deep... and he *drains* five crumbs from an empty bowl of Ruffles!

TIM. These men will literally eat *anything* to avoid walking ten feet to the kitchen.

MERV. And Felton *unloads* a used ketchup packet!

But here comes Baxter who *knocks down* a couch cushion Sour Patch Kid!

But here's Michael Felton... from downtownwwwwn — *A banana!! A banana!! He eats a banana!!*

TIM. *Nutrition* from a *sports fan*? Merv, I am literally speechless.

MERV. *How — about — that!*

TIM. Wait a minute. Oh no... It looks like Baxter is down.

MERV. His heart and colon are *on fire!*

(FELTON *nonchalantly* takes a picture of the sleeping BAXTER with his phone and taps the screen.)

(FELTON *slaps* BAXTER's arm to wake him. BAXTER *groggily* removes the head-bowl.)

(They *casually* poke around on the coffee table to see what's left to eat.)

(FELTON *gnaws* the remaining meat from a chicken bone.)

(BAXTER *empties* crumbs from a bowl or bag into his mouth.)

(FELTON *polishes* off some ketchup from used packet.)

(BAXTER *finds* and eats an errant Sour Patch Kid.)

(FELTON *reaches* a little bit to grab a banana, and he takes a bite.)

(BAXTER *is holding* his stomach and slowly breathing in and out, still *casually* fixated on the TV, of course.)

⁵ If you're producing this play outside the *Crazytown* full-length play, cut this entire line.

TIM. You never want to see this, Merv, but at the same time, you can't be surprised. Both men were clearly at capacity and yet continued to commit mouth fouls. And this after Baxter's rehab from last year's seven-layer dip.

MERV. Seven *debilitating* layers!

TIM. Merv, this crowd has gone *silent*. You could hear a pin drop.

MERV. We now kindly ask everyone to say a prayer for a full recovery, and to honor this brief moment of silence.

(Pause.)

What's this? He's okay, folks! He's going to be all right!

TIM. Thank goodness.

MERV. And don't look now, but he's getting right back on the field!! *What—a—fighter!*

TIM. You gotta love the guts on this guy, Merv. What courage. What a warrior. What a true hero. This is a man you want to go to battle with.

MERV. And it is in *no* way disrespectful that we regularly equate sports to actual war.

TIM. Not in the least. Now, Merv, here comes the moment of truth. In these final seconds, we'll see which man turns out to be a loser, and which man also turns out to be a loser.

MERV. Ten seconds on the clock... With the game on the line... Here comes the final play... *Ohhhhhhhhh... YES! YES! Oh my goodness!!* This is the *greatest* game I have ever seen, at least since last week!!

TIM. What a finish, Merv! This is the happiest day of my life—far better than the birth of my child!

(But BAXTER smacks his fist against his chest, belches, and gives a nonchalant thumbs up.)

(BAXTER grabs one more snack and eats it.)

(BAXTER and FELTON start to rise off the couch together in gradually-building excitement, as the final play on the screen unfolds. Then they celebrate: each dances individually, then they hug, then they bump chests.)

MERV. Not so fast, Tim. I do believe we have an Olive Garden When You're Here You're Family Challenge Flag.

TIM. Here we go. Let's check that replay.

TIM. First we have the dance sequence. Oh no, Merv, I did *not* notice this in real time, but Baxter is intensely biting his lower lip.

MERV. Oh my!

TIM. That could cost him. And is Felton doing the *Cabbage Patch*? Talk about old-school.

MERV. *Michael Felton, living in the past!*

TIM. And let's take a close look at the man-hug. Oh no – there's a moist eye right there, Merv. We've got a cryer...

MERV. How *emasculating!*

TIM. And what is Baxter doing with his phone?

MERV. *Donald Baxter, watching a video of cats playing with yarn!!*

TIM. This is uglier than we thought, Merv. Let's hope at least the chest bump was clean.

Wait, did they even make contact? It may be too close to call.

MERV. Let's watch that again, this time in Crazytown Censorship Society Super-Slow Motion.

(With each iteration of the replay, TIM and MERV audibly react with "Ohhh!" and "Oh my!" and so forth.)

(BAXTER and FELTON go through the same celebrations as above, but in slow-motion. This time, we see what wasn't visible in regular speed.⁶)

(In slow-motion, we see a much different version, as BAXTER dances while doing that cheesy, intense look while biting his lower lip, while FELTON does the Cabbage Patch.)

(The slow-motion replay continues with their hug, where FELTON gets teary-eyed and covertly wipes his eye.)

(Then, mid-hug, we see BAXTER covertly check his phone.)

(A replay of the chest-bump.)

(Another replay, where it's clear that their chests never make contact. Much like in a football sideline

⁶ In the regular-speed version, the dancing, hug, and chest-bump are all quick and ordinary – nothing that would draw special attention. Only in slow-motion do we see the true details.

replay, the recording goes back and forth a few times to confirm.)

MERV. Ohh! They *cannot* connect!

TIM. Merv, this is remarkable. The officials have indicated that all the penalties offset. Which means:

MERV. We are going to overtime!

TIM. This entire game will come down to a sudden-death verbal shootout, where each player will speak actual words.

MERV. A verbal shootout! Tim, is this the first time *ever* that two men during a sporting event will exchange actual words?

TIM. It will, Merv, and I don't mind telling you: this will be *riveting*.

MERV. And the officials are set to begin this overtime thriller. Hold on to your hats, folks, because here...we...go...

(The sound of a referee's whistle.)

BAXTER. *(Simply:)* Hey what time is it?

FELTON. *(Simply:)* Four.

(The final horn blares. FELTON and BAXTER continue to look at the TV without emotion, as MERV and TIM lose their minds.)

MERV. OH MY GOODNESS!!

TIM. UNBELIEVABLE!!

MERV. IT'S OVER! IT'S OVER!

TIM. UNBELIEVABLE!!

MERV. FELTON SPEAKS FEWER WORDS AND THEREFORE COMES AWAY WITH THE STUNNING OVERTIME VICTORY!

TIM. UNBELIEVABLE!!

MERV. THE GREATEST COMEBACK OF ALL TIME ENDS WITH A WORD-IN-ONE!! A WORD-IN-ONE!!

TIM. UNBELIEVABLE!!

MERV. DO YOU BELIEVE IN MIRACLES THAT SHOULDN'T BE CONSIDERED MIRACLES BECAUSE THEY'RE ACTUALLY PRETTY INSIGNIFICANT?!

TIM. I do, Merv. I really do. Also: unbelievable.

MERV. Well, folks, we have just witnessed the *apex* of greatness. Everything in life from here on out will be a depressing, bitter disappointment. But don't change that channel. Next up: a replay of the exact same game you just saw. Tim and I will certainly be watching. Goodnight!

(The opening theme music plays, and if possible, we hear a voiceover of the beginning of Merv's introduction from the very start. MERV and TIM switch to the same demeanor as Baxter and Felton and reveal a previously hidden bowl or bowls. All four catatonically stare at their downstage screens and simultaneously take a bite of chips. Scene.)

End of Play

Appendix

Alternate non-alcoholic language from pg. 2

MERV. Indeed, Baxter reviews his options, fakes left, jukes right – and then an *unexpected move* to the Cherry Coke! *Unbelievable!*

(BAXTER *moves his hand from soda to soda, and reveals a bottle.*)

TIM. Unbelievable is right, Merv! This guy's a career Pepsi man. We never expected a Coke, let alone a specialty Coke. What a bold play.

MERV. But out of *nowhere* Baxter is *stuffed* at the line of twistage. The cap simply *refuses* to open.

(BAXTER *keeps trying to twist off the bottle cap in vain.*)

TIM. Merv, his Achilles' Heel is, and always will be, beverage penetration.

MERV. Twenty seconds have come...and twenty seconds...have gone.

TIM. We may witness history here, Merv. The record is twenty-eight seconds.

MERV. Oh my. OH MY!! Donald Baxter has *shattered* the world record of soda-related incompetence!

TIM. Now let's see if Felton can take advantage.

(BAXTER *gives up and puts the bottle on the table.*)

MERV. And a *powerful* move by Michael Felton.

(FELTON *casually picks up the bottle and easily opens it with a bottle opener.*)

TIM. It wasn't a twist-off, Merv! It was an old-school bottle cap!

MERV. *What a mental error!*