

CHOICES

BREAK

all

RULES

ELEANOR

ROBINS

Chapter 1

We Need to Believe

It was Friday night. Cole was at home. He had his radio on. His cell phone chirped. He had a text message from Anna. Anna was his girlfriend. Anna's text message read: *Call me?*

Cole turned the radio down. Then he called Anna. Cole said, "Hi, Anna. When did you get home?" Cole asked. Anna had gone to see her little sister Sara's play. That was why she and Cole didn't have a date.

"A few minutes ago," Anna said.

"How was the play? Did you have a good time?" Cole asked.

Anna said, "The play was OK. But I wish you had been there with me. Where are you now? What have you been doing tonight?"

Cole said, "I'm at home. I have the radio on. I'm trying to find out the Oak Hill game's score."

The winner of the game would play Dawson High in the state finals. Cole was on the Dawson High team. He played tight end.

He hoped that Oak Hill lost. Oak Hill had the best team in the state. And Cole didn't want to play them in the state finals.

Oak Hill had the best running back in the state. His name was Garrett. And Cole didn't think Oak Hill could lose with him on the team.

Anna said, "I will hang up. You can listen to the radio."

"You don't have to hang up. I can find out the score later. I'm sure Oak Hill will win," Cole said.

"I will still hang up. I know you want to find out the score right away. You can call me tomorrow morning," Anna said.

"OK. I will talk to you then," Cole said.

Cole turned the radio back up. He thought about the Oak Hill game. Cole couldn't keep his mind on his homework.

About twenty minutes later, his cell phone rang. He turned the radio down. Then he quickly answered his phone.

A boy said, "Cole. It's me, Jeff. I just found out who won the Oak Hill game."

Jeff was Cole's best friend. Jeff was on the Dawson High team. And he was a tight end, too.

"Great. Who won?" Cole asked.

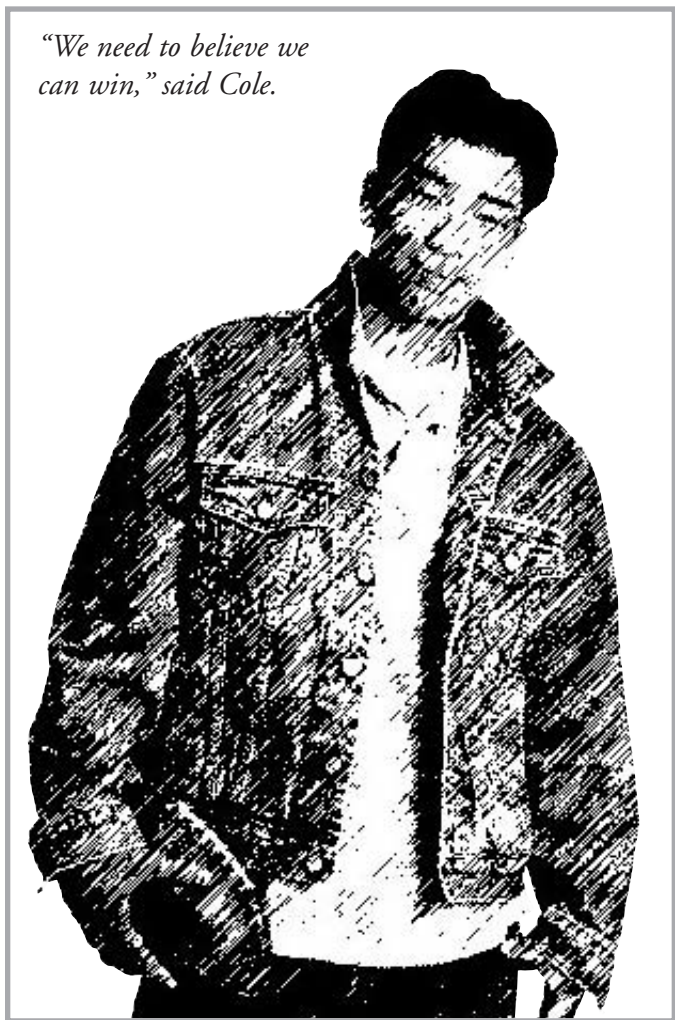
"Bad news. Oak Hill won," Jeff said. "I just heard it on the radio. Oak Hill won by 21 points," Jeff said.

"That doesn't surprise me. But I hoped they would lose," Cole said.

Jeff said, "Yeah. Me, too. That Garrett guy is a good player. I don't think we can beat Oak Hill in the state finals."

Cole said, “We need to believe we can win.
If we don’t, we won’t have a chance,” said Cole

*“We need to believe we
can win,” said Cole.*



“Yeah. I know. I will try to think we can win. But I don’t believe we can. Unless something happens,” Jeff said.

“Like what?” Cole asked.

“I don’t know. But maybe something will happen that will help us. We need all the help we can get,” Jeff said.

“You are right about that,” Cole said.

The only thing that would help was if Garrett didn’t play. And Cole didn’t want Garrett to get hurt. Cole couldn’t think of anything else that could help Dawson High win.

Chapter 2

A Reason to Practice

It was Monday afternoon. Cole was at football practice. Jeff was there, too. They were talking about the Oak Hill game. Their friend Rick ran over to them. Rick was the back-up center.

Rick said, “I don’t know why I came to football practice today.”

“What do you mean by that?” Cole asked.

Jeff said, “Yeah. What do you mean by that? We all have to practice. So we have to be here today.”

“There isn’t any reason to practice. We will still lose on Saturday. There is no way we can beat Oak Hill. So why practice?” Rick asked.

Coach Brent blew his whistle. He was the football coach.

Coach Brent yelled to the team. He said, “Boys, all of you come over here. We need to get started.” The boys ran over to him.

Coach Brent said, “I think all of you already know this. We will play Oak Hill in Macon on Saturday afternoon.”

Cole knew the coach was right. All of the players knew it. And none of them were happy about it. They didn’t want to play Oak Hill.

Coach Brent said, “I want you to be rested for the game. So we will go to Macon after school on Friday.”

“That sounds good to me,” Jeff said.

Cole was glad about that, too. He wouldn’t have to get up early on Saturday. And then ride on a bus to Macon most of the morning.

Coach Brent said, “Our game with Oak Hill will be a tough one. And you will need to work hard all week. You will need to be at your best for the game.”

“Why does it matter, Coach?” Rick asked. Cole couldn’t believe Rick asked the coach that. Some of the other players looked surprised, too.

Coach Brent looked at Rick. He didn’t look pleased with Rick. “What do you mean by that, Rick?” he asked.

Rick said, “We have to play Oak Hill. And Oak Hill is the best team in the state. There is no way we can beat them. Not with that boy Garrett on the team.”

“That is the wrong way to think, Rick,” Coach Brent said.

“Yeah, Rick,” Cole said.

“Yeah,” some of the other boys said.

“You are wrong, Rick. We will beat them,” said another boy.

“Yeah,” most of the boys said. But not all of them looked as though they believed it.

Rick said, “No way. We will never be able to beat Oak Hill.”

Coach Brent looked at Rick again. He still didn't look pleased.

He said, "You might be right, Rick. But you need to think about something."

"What?" Rick asked.

Coach Brent said, "On any day the best team can lose. And on any day the team that isn't the best team can win."

Cole knew that was true.

Coach Brent said, "We might not be as good as Oak Hill. But this Saturday could be their day to lose. So we have to be ready to win."

Coach Brent told the team about some other teams that had won. No one had thought they had a chance to win. But they won anyway.

Then Coach Brent said, "So think about that, Rick. And all of you boys think about that, too. We might be able to beat Oak Hill. But you have to practice hard. You must be ready to beat them."