



THE OLINE POEM

Some come from the game with no scars, no pain-

We emerge with bloodied hands, and bones so sore that it takes a few hours the next morning before we can walk upright.

Some come from the game with pants still shiny, shirt barely dirty-

We are only faintly recognizable, as the mud and grass of trench warfare take all the newness and shine from our uniforms and our souls.

Some come from the game with impressive stats of yards rushing and passing-

We measure our progress in short bursts that no paper will keep track of, that no record book will ever immortalize.

Some come from the game with parents loudly bragging and fans cheering as names come over the P.A. system-

We deal in a world of brutal anonymity, silent except for the grunts of collision and the quick praise of our coaches.

Some come from the game with egos blazing, claps on the back, the sounds of the crowd in their head-

We measure our worth by the holes we open for players with smaller numbers; their brief nod is our only applause.

Some come from the game as prima donnas, barely working in the off season, giving lip service to the idea of physical improvement-

We spend our time in the weight room, iron plates and shiny steel our friend, our enemy, our taskmaster.

Some come from the game with thoughts of I did this, or I did that-

We recognize that the parts build a greater good, that teamwork is not an outmoded concept in today's world.

Some come from the game thinking of us as swamp things in uniform, they joke about our speed, our hands, and our seeming lack of grace-

We take the brunt of the jokes, even laugh along, and just as we take the brunt of the physical force aimed at them.

In our little world we stand. Our boundaries are the sleds and the chutes. Our teachers are men who dwell in the dual

worlds of detail and violence, who teach by a voice that can either wake the dead or gently ease two hours of pain.

This is our world.

It starts with us.

WE ARE THE LINE.

-- Paul Shanklin, Voorhees HS, New Jersey, 1991

