

Locker Room Talk

By John J King

Characters

Coach Lawler Male coach of the Titans, a Texas High School Football team.

Assistant Coach Mellis Female offensive coach of the same team.

Chad Rogers 18 y.o. Star quarterback of the team.

Setting

Coach Lawler's office, just after a practice. Lawler's desk and chair, a second chair on the other side. A chalkboard or Whiteboard for play mapping.

Locker Room Talk

Coach Lawler's office. Coach prowls back and forth behind his desk.

Chad Rogers sits nervously across the desk.

Assistant Coach Mellis leans against the chalkboard. It would be delightful if, throughout, MELLIS holds and preps a hot dog, but every time she goes to take a bite she's surprised out of eating.

COACH

Son, you'll forgive my language, but we don't need that girly crap on this team. Just won't cut it.

CHAD

Yes sir.

COACH

When you go out on that field, I want you mad, mean, and vicious. I want manpower.

CHAD

Yes, sir.

COACH

What the hell happened to the Chad Rogers of last season? The Manhandler!

CHAD

I don't know, sir.

COACH

Well you better find out and man-up. What do we say?

CHAD

Dominate, Destroy, Destiny, Sir!

COACH

That's right. You want another trophy on the mantel you better make that your mantra. We went 11 and 1 last year because you lifted this team into your giant hands, cradled them like a puffed up piece of leather we call a football, and carried them the distance. It was mighty, wuddin' it, Coach Mellis?

MELLIS

Sure was, coach.

COACH

By god, it's been a privilege to Manage you, son.
But this is your senior year. Last chance to win state. My last year too, as coach. We don't win state this year, well that's something you and I will just have to live with the rest of our lives.
Don't sound good, do it?

CHAD

No sir.

COACH

Son, I want us to go the distance, and you're my only hope to get us there.
I don't know what you did on your summer vacation but I am sick of seeing you out here playing like a girl. Last chance: don't puss out on me now.

CHAD

Yes sir.

COACH

First game's tomorrow night against Central. I want to see you manifest your meanness, come out killing, okay?

CHAD

Yes sir.

COACH

All right. Coach?

MELLIS

One more thing Chad. Some of the cheerleaders said you was in their locker room after practice yesterday.

COACH

Can't say I blame you, tiger, but we've got rules to follow.

MELLIS

And, I will remind you we have post-practice meetings every day. Mandatory. Well?

CHAD

Coach, I -

MELLIS

No buts, Chad. No peeping in the girls room, no skipping out on team meeting.

Understood, Chad?

COACH

Sure thing, coach.

CHAD

All right. Dismissed.

COACH:

Chad goes to the door but turns.

Well? What.

CHAD:

Coach I can't attend the post-practice meetings.

COACH:

Why the spit not, Rogers? You got Barbie practice with the cheerleaders?

CHAD

I can't be in the locker room.

COACH

Can't be in the locker room. You hear this, Coach Mellis?

MELLIS

Corn nuts, sir.

COACH

Corn nuts, Chad! You got allergies?

CHAD

No

COACH

You got athlete's foot?

CHAD

No

COACH

You got some weapons-level B.O. I ain't heard about?

CHAD

No sir.

COACH

Then why in tarnation can't you be in the locker room, when I tell you to be in the locker room?

CHAD

It's like coach said. We have rules to follow.

COACH

Coach Mellis, do you understand what the sugar he's saying?

MELLIS

No I do not, coach.

COACH

Rogers, what the sugar are you saying?

CHAD

Title IX, coach.

COACH:

Title. What?

MELLIS:

It's the gender equality --

COACH:

I know what the chunk it is, Mellis, it's the Fraggie Rockin' reason I get here at 6 in the a.m. on Tuesdays for the dad-gum lady bowling team. Now please explain to me, Chad Rogers, the correlation between lady bowling and you attending your team meetings?

CHAD

Sir, yes, sir. Title IX and the new provision that all students must abide regulations according to the gender assigned to them at birth, means that I cannot join you and the team in the men's locker room. Sir.

COACH

What's Chad saying, coach Mellis?

MELLIS

I think Chad is saying that he's a - that - sh--- Chad is --

COACH

Are you saying what Coach Mellis can't say you're saying, Chad? That you're... you know.

CHAD

Sir. Yes, sir.

MELLIS

Spell it out for us, Chad.

CHAD

Spell, ma'am?

COACH:

Spell. It. Out.

CHAD:

F, sir. My birth certificate - my original one - has an F on it.

(CHAD hands over a birth certificate. COACH examines it for a very long time.)

COACH

Look at that, there, Mellis. What's that say?

MELLIS

Says "F" Coach.

COACH

This is an unusual turn of events, is it not?

MELLIS

Yes sir.

COACH

Turns out our star quarterback on our star team, the man who's supposed to lead our men's football squad to Men's state, can't, because our main man is a Girl.

MELLIS

Woman, Coach.

COACH

You're 18, Rogers?

CHAD:

Just last week.

COACH

Happy Crappity Birthday. You're a woman now, is that what you're telling me, Chad Rogers?

CHAD

No sir. Sir, I am a man.

MELLIS

Birth certificate says otherwise, Chad. Wait. Is it Chad? Or is it - oh!

CHAD

My name is Chad, coach.

COACH

Is this why you've been poking around in the girls locker?

CHAD

I have not been "poking around," sir. I have been washing and changing as befits the end of practice, and in the locker room assigned to me by the restrictions of Title IX.

COACH

Well, Mellis. There you have it.

We can't let a female play on our team, but we can't win without Rogers. Now what are we supposed to do?

CHAD

Sir, permission to speak, sir?

COACH

Go-head.

CHAD

Sir, I do not consider myself a female, sir.

COACH:

I didn't consider you female either, but --

CHAD:

Sir, the gender noted on my birth certificate is a gross and unfair assumption of my gender based on the physical circumstances at my birth.

COACH
Coach Mellis, what is she --

CHAD
Coach my gender is Male.

COACH
I just don't follow, Rogers.

CHAD:
Sir, did you ever buy a can of vegetables, say Sweet Peas?

COACH
My wife does the shopping. Mellis?

MELLIS
Canned Vegetables?
(Can MELLIS be eating a hot dog?)

CHAD
Did you ever hear of a can of, say, Sweet Peas, said "Sweet Peas" on the label, shelved with the other Sweet Peas, only - when you opened it - come to find it was carrots all along?

COACH
What in the cuss are you saying, Chad?

CHAD
Sir, sometimes the wrong label is put upon the wrong product. There's nothing wrong with the label, nothing wrong with the food in the can, just that the label and the food don't match. I'm saying I am a mislabeled can of peas, sir. On the inside I have always been carrots.

COACH
William Fracking Shatner.

CHAD
Permission to use the play-board, sir?

COACH
Granted.

MELLIS and CHAD exchange a look, then MELLIS passes off the chalk/marker.

OK: Bear with me. I think this will be fun.

CHAD draws a series of Xs and Os like a Football Play. In the backfield he draws an XY where the running back might go.

CHAD:

In the backfield at the beginning of the play: me: XY. Now: QB's got the ball - this X - and we're running an option. Follow?

COACH & MELLIS

Mm-hmm.

CHAD

After the snap, QB sees coverage is good and decides to run. Keeps this X.
(CHAD adds X to his piece: he's XXY now.)

CHAD

I got a little bit more X, now. Now one of the things you love about me, Coach, is when I run downfield, the defense grabs at me and I'll just drag 'em.

COACH

Dragged that Kennedale punk 15 yards last year.
(CHAD adds more Xs as he draws himself going down field.)

CHAD

Pretty soon, by the time I've run 18 yards - or call it 18 years - well, I'm not the XY I appeared to be, to someone who didn't know me. When I didn't even know myself. But here I am: 18 years later, I ain't no girl. I'm just me.
*(He circles himself in the end zone: XXXXXY.
If MELLIS has a hot dog, this is a good time to spit it out, or over-shoot mustard on it)*

MELLIS

It's unnatural.

CHAD

Far from it. People like me have been known in all kinds of species, throughout the annals of history.

COACH:

Did you say "Annals" of history, Rogers?

MELLIS

I didn't know the anus had anything to do with it.

CHAD

The body has nothing to do with it. It's all here. And here.

(He points to his brain and his heart.)

COACH

Son, I hear you. Mellis?

MELLIS

Her birth certificate has an F on it, Coach.

COACH

Mellis? That ain't any different than the F in his math class last fall, and we saw our way past that.

MELLIS

What are you suggesting, Coach?

COACH

It's clear to me we have a quarterback who - for medical reasons no one need know about - cannot use the men's locker room.

MELLIS

I cannot have this man body in my girls' locker room.

COACH

Not suggesting that neither. What if... what if there were some OTHER kind of locker room. A neutral one, that isn't for either specific gender.

MELLIS

And QB is the only one who can use it? That might work.

COACH

That OK with you, Chad?

CHAD

That sounds great, coach. But I still ain't supposed to come to the locker room for the meeting.

MELLIS

I got it. What if we have the meeting in the meeting room!

COACH

Dag nabbit, Coach Mellis that is brilliant.

MELLIS

Had to do that last year when Sherry Davis made the wrestling team.

CHAD

With respect, sir: the other guys might ask questions. They'll notice.

COACH

No, no no. No, son. See here -

(COACH wipes the board clean and starts a new play.)

This what we do: Patriots'-Ravens. Trick play. I'm Brady, Mellis you're Edelman. I run right, get the rest of the boys headed into the locker room. When they're not looking, I flick left to you, Mellis. By the time they know what hit 'em --

CHAD

I'm sitting pretty in the meeting room, eating Coach's hot dog.

(CHAD has in fact stolen Mellis' hot dog and takes a big ole bite).

MELLIS:

Dagnabbit that's good! That's quite a maneuver.

COACH

Know what, Mellis? Maybe all this inter-gender nonsense will get us some new plays.

MELLIS

Hell, coach, I'm just a lady with a clipboard.

COACH

Put 'em in, team. Destroy on three!

CHAD:

Uh, Coach? What about "Destroy Gender Barriers?"

COACH

Right on, Rogers. Ah, shoot I fracking love football season!

COACH, MELLIS, and CHAD:

One! Two! Three! Destroy Gender Barriers!

END of PLAY.