

ODD MAN RUSH

**A Harvard Kid's Hockey Odyssey from Central Park to Somewhere in
Sweden with Stops along the Way**

Bill Keenan

Sports Publishing

Advance Praise for
Odd Man Rush

“Bill Keenan's keen eye for the ice game is unique for its excellent insights. He combines that with an original tale that's matched for its compelling drama by his crisp writing.” --Stan Fischler, author of more than 90 hockey books, Emmy Award-winning broadcaster

“This is the real deal: Giving us more than a hockey book, Bill Keenan fills an arena with wit, passion, and good old story-telling. You hear the voices, and feel the fear and awkwardness of a stranger in a strange land. Both exotic and at the same time heartfelt and homespun, these stories will appeal not just to fans of the game, but fans of good writing.” --Bill Gaston, author of six shorty-story collections, five books including *Midnight Hockey*, and winner of the CBC Canadian Literary Award, the National Magazine award, the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize, and the Victoria Book Prize

“From the prestige of Harvard NCAA to the humbling European minor leagues, an honest and often hilarious look at a side of the hockey world that is not very well known and rarely written about.” --Neil Smith, President and G.M. of the 1994 Stanley Cup Champion New York Rangers, and current NHL analyst for Rogers Sportsnet

*“This might be Bill Keenan’s first book—but it won’t be his last. His bang-on descriptions of the characters he played with and the coaches he toiled under will literally have you laughing out loud. Even if you’ve never been to the leafy Ivy League, or tried to score on (or off!) the ice in Sweden, he has you skating right along with him. One of the best hockey memoirs out there—Keenan definitely scores on this *Odd Man Rush*.”* --Deb Placey, NHL Network & MSG Network hockey host

ODD MAN RUSH:

1) When a hockey team enters the offensive zone and outnumbered the players on the opposing team by one or more players, e.g. two-on-one, three-on-two, three-on-one, etc.

2) When a young American hockey player from New York City skates around Europe, trying to figure out what the hell he's doing with his life.

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PROLOGUE

Relieved from the penalty box, I haul ass across the ice as the chanting grows louder.

“*KEE-NAN DU ARSCH-LOCH!*” Clap clap, clap-clap-clap. “*KEE-NAN DU ARSCH-LOCK!*” Clap clap, clap-clap-clap.

The last time a crowd chanted my name, I was seven. And asleep. And dreaming.

“*KEE-NAN DU ARSCH-LOCH!*” Clap clap, clap-clap-clap. “*KEE-NAN DU ARSCH-LOCK!*” Clap clap, clap-clap-clap.

Everyone on the bench cheeks to the right to make room for me. “Oleg, what’re they saying?” I shout to our hulking Russian centerman over the roar of the crowd.

“Nothing. Zey chant nothing,” Oleg shouts back devoid of emotion.

“No, they’re chanting something,” I demand. “I hear my name.”

“You not hear your name.”

“Yeah I do.” I put my gloved hand next to my helmet, cocking my ear as best I can while wearing a glove and a helmet. “Hear it? *Keenan dooo something.*”

“Fine. Zey say something. But I not hear Keenan.”

“Oleg, they’re saying Keenan. *Keenan dooo something.*” I remove my helmet, spray some water on my head then run my hand through my hair as I gaze into the crowd.

Oleg sighs. “Fine. Zey are yelling, like, *Keenan sucks. Keenan sucks. Keenan...*”

“Okay, okay,” I interrupt him quickly strapping my helmet back on my head. “I got it.”

“Wait,” Oleg says. “Zis is not *sucks zey* chant. Zis is something more worse zan *suck*. I don’t know which word zis is in English.” He grins evilly and looks up at the ceiling of the arena. “*Behind*, maybe? *Behind circle*? Keenan is a *behind circle*? But something more worse.”

“You mean *asshole*?”

He bangs his stick on the boards. “*Asshole!* Right.” Still grinning, he adds, “Zey don’t like you, buddy.”

“Thanks for the clarification,” I grumble, then pick up a water bottle, spew a stream of water on a Herford player as he skates by before squirting a few pumps into my mouth, then spitting it onto the ice.

The final five minutes of the game are chaos. Still leading 1-0, we exchange breakaway chances with Herford, but no one scores. In the last minute, with their goalie pulled for an extra attacker, they pepper our goaltender, Hans, with shot after shot after shot. Hans uses every inch of both his pliable body and his sure stick to deny them. On the bench, even more chaos ensues. Word has it that some of the more hammered Herford fans are in the midst of breaking into our locker room in an attempt to steal our clothes, one of their charming traditions. Making the trip

back to Neuwied in my jockstrap—in a bus permanently pumping at meat locker—is not something I'm excited about, but our veterans, having seen this before, assure us that our fans will counter with a strong defense.

Traditionally, after the final buzzer, both teams line up for a civil post-game handshake, but there's no chance that's happening tonight because our opponents are a bunch of *arschlochs*. More importantly, the participants in the Westphalia Regional Figure Skating Qualifier are already lining up to take the ice. We mob Hans in his goal crease, then skate towards the Neuwied section of the arena and give our loyal, rabid fans a well-deserved stick salute while a few remaining Herford fans fire their empty beer cans at us.

Moments later in the locker room, while my teammates peel off their sweat-drenched equipment—and as Oleg, Mother Russia himself, makes a show of scraping the ice from his skate blades—the goalie receives a big round of applause and a few celebratory tape balls rocketed at his face. Hans nods in appreciation with a wave and a few curses.

Like every other goalie I've known, Hans has his idiosyncrasies. In between periods, he takes six bags of gummy bears from his locker, dumps the candies onto the floor, then piles the oranges, greens, and yellows into one mound, and the reds into another. Then, very gently, with his thumb and index finger, he picks up a single red one, stares at it lovingly, then pops it into his mouth, savoring every chew. It must have something to do with red being a power color, like Tiger Woods always wearing a red shirt on Sundays.

I walk to Hans' stall and pick up the empty gummy bear wrapper. "Worked again, huh?"

"What?" he says.

"You know, the gummy bear bullshit you do between periods."

He shrugs. "I like the way the red ones taste. The green ones, and the yellow ones, and the oranges ones, not so much."

I stare at him. "That's it?"

"That's it," he says.

"So it's not like you think the red ones give you extra strength, or good luck, or something?"

He gives me a funny look. "Of course not. That would be weird."

I linger a few seconds, wondering if Henrik Lundqvist eats Hershey bars, or bananas, or smokes a pack of Marlboro Reds during intermissions, then I tap Hans on his leg pads. "Great game."

Returning to my locker, I join in the celebration: "Atta way, fellas," I yell. "Great fuckin' win tonight! We owed those fuckers after that fuckin' shitshow against them last month. Fuckin' great team win, boys! Great fuckin' win!" As I finish my soliloquy, Willi, with a bag of ice taped to his shoulder, downs his beer, tosses it off the side of the trashcan then tries to fire up the boom box, but there's no outlet in the locker room. There rarely is.

As I pull my jersey off, something cold and round hits me in the nose. Wiping the ice from my face, I make out Oleg's grin from across the room.

"Nice shot, jackass," I say.

“Заткнись, иди на хуй,” Oleg responds.

I can't tell if he likes me or not. For that matter, I can't tell if I like him.

After a road win, the long bus trips home can be more fun than the game. Victories bring a team together. Also, rumor has it we're stopping at McDonald's. The players who tend to keep to themselves in the front of the bus will roam towards the rear where the loud guys rule. Even at Harvard, when the fun times were rare, some of those Saturday night bus trips home to Cambridge from the North Country¹ of upstate New York bordered on fun.

Coach Donato would sit up front laughing like a halfwit while watching *Family Guy*, though we wondered which jokes he found funny. Our designated team impressionist would grab the mic and imitate Ervin, our team hypnotist (you read that right). Finally, in the back of the bus, it was all about the “would you rather” game, your typical Harvard intellectual meeting of the minds most often led by our captain and future Pittsburgh Penguin defenseman, Dylan “Dicer” Reese: “Would you rather make out with a dude for five minutes, or have him suck your dick for one minute?” “Ricky couldn't last a minute!” someone would shout. “Especially if Stevie was givin' him the gummer!” another would add.

“Jesus Christ, who shit themselves?” Coach Donato would yell from the front row, peering his head around towards the back of the bus. “Probably you, Donuts,” the guy sitting in the row behind me would say just loud enough for the surrounding players to hear. “Head's usually up his ass...shouldn't be hard for him to crack the case,” another player would add from an unidentifiable seat a few rows back.

After wins, pretty much everything is funny.

But here in North Rhine-Westphalia, the tales are told and the insults are hurled in German, and I can't participate—and that's too bad, because this is the time when twenty individuals become a team. This is when the bonds are created, friendships are forged, and you learn which guys would take the make out session and which ones would opt for the blowie.

And right now, it'd be nice to know what's going on.

“*Dumme ziege!*” someone yells. I perk up. It means “dumb goat,” I think, and there's one in every story. A few guys smile at me so I nod and laugh. Despite their empathy, I remain on the periphery, not yet in on the jokes and possibly the butt of them.

All that said, at twenty-two, there's no place I'd rather be than on this bus returning home with my teammates. But that's the way it works with me and hockey. Even when it's horrible, it's wonderful.

¹ North Country was the road trip each year to play at St. Lawrence and Clarkson, the longest roadie of the season for us.

CHAPTER THREE

Crimson Crazy

I'm sure for most of the world, the locker room in Harvard's Bright Hockey Center was just another locker room. But most of the world didn't know any better.

It was the first week of September, a few days before I was to begin my freshman year. I was alone, and I slowly walked by each locker, the strap of my equipment bag digging a groove into my shoulder, the remainder of my luggage clogging up the hallway. When I got to the stall in the far corner of the room, there it was: My nameplate. Above my locker.

Mine.

Noting how pristine all the upperclassmen's lockers were, I carefully placed each shin pad, elbow pad, and glove in its proper spot. Once everything was in its place, I took a deep breath, knowing this was the last time the air in the room would be breathable.

Eventually, the rest of the team piled in. Some acknowledged me. Some didn't. The freshmen recruiting class included one goalie, two defenseman, and five forwards, and prior to college, most of us had crossed paths at one time or another. Nicky Coskren, a forward from St. Sebastian's School in Needham, Mass., was a fellow Paul Vincent acolyte. Nick Snow, another forward, played on an EJ rival, the New England Coyotes. Steve Rolecek captained Andover Prep School, and we had gone head-to-head in a few summer showcase tournaments. And Stevie Mandes, a junior, was my teammate back on the New Jersey Rockets. Some of the upperclassmen had come from the top American Junior league, the USHL—there was the former captain of the Lincoln Stars, and the leading scorer of the Sioux Falls Stampede—and there was a slew of NHL draft picks. My team at Apple Core had some good players, but the competition here was a whole new level.

Aside from the a couple conversations, I didn't know too much about the coaching staff. Coach Donato had just finished a successful NHL career. He seemed like most hockey players I'd come across from Boston—he liked the word “fahk” but couldn't pronounce the letter “r.”

Due to a bizarre NCAA rule—and, as even casual followers of college sports know, there are a *lot* of bizarre NCAA rules—the coaching staff was prohibited from running practice until October, but they could monitor these so-called Captains' Practices, which were led by the senior class. Three of our coaches, fueled by caffeine and sugar donuts, sat in the stands, where they assessed and judged all the while scribbling in notebooks.

When the coaches got on the ice the following week, I longed for the days of being assessed and judged.

On October 1st at 6:30 AM the inappropriately named “skill sessions” began, and I say inappropriately named, because there was no skill involved in these thirty minute, puke-inducing outings.

The coaches herded us onto the ice in groups of four—usually one guy from each class—and blew the hell out of their whistles. “Summer's over, boys,” Coach Donato yelled in between whistles, a huge smile plastered on his round mug as we skated up and down and up and down and up and down. “Time to get to fahkin' work, yah fahks! Let's fahkin' go! Pick it up. Again!” he'd yell as the whistle

would sound and we'd take off. Goal line, blue line, goal line, red line, goal line, far blue line, goal line, suck wind, suck wind, vomit (optional), repeat.

As soon as we got pucks involved, a typical practice went something like this: player loses a tooth from a hit, player skates off ice with tooth in hand, coach calls him selfish because lines are now uneven, player who inflicted the damage has his father who's a dentist fix the tooth, player who inflicted damage enters dental school five years later².

Although he seemed to get off on screaming at us non-stop during practice, Coach Donato's off-ice exchanges were, conversely, to the point and fahk-free. "Willy, keep pushing the older guys," he told me. "You gotta prove to us that you deserve that spot more than they do. You gotta get stronger on the puck. Cornell's forwards are bigger than our defenseman, and their defenseman are NHL-sized. You won't be effective if they can knock you around. We need you heavier. Keep working in the weight room and doing what the strength coaches tell you." All I could think at dinner that night as I ate until nausea set in was why the hell was the freshman fifteen only reserved for the girls at Harvard?

There were ten forwards from last year's Harvard roster who were regulars in the lineup, which meant there were six or seven guys (depending on injuries) fighting for the last two spots.

The other dynamic was that my teammates, and especially the teammates in my graduating class were already my best friends, and my eventual roommates for the next three years of school. We all knew the pressures one another were under, whether it was with schoolwork or girls or just life. If I had dicked around all semester and needed help, they were the ones who somehow found a study guide. If a girl I liked didn't feel the same way, they were the ones to point out her flaws. If I was sitting alone playing skills competition mode on *NHL 07*, they were the ones who picked up the other controller to play a best-of-seven series that I would inevitably lose. Hockey was what mattered most to all of us. It was our shared passion for the game that created a deep understanding of one another's hardships on and off the ice. However, we were each others' greatest competition. If one guy was in the line-up, that meant he took the spot of someone else. It wasn't personal; it was the way things worked. As strong as our bonds were, having success on the ice was always at the expense of someone else.

I must have had a strong enough pre-season showing as I was ecstatic (and somewhat shocked) to see my name on the dry erase board as the third line right wing for the season-opening game at Princeton.

As our bus pulled into the Hobey Baker Memorial Rink parking lot that bone-cold October night, I had a sense of confidence; after all, I had good memories from the last time I played at Princeton's Baker Rink. Now I'm not going to sit here and say I was a dominant force that game in '93—that's for you to decide; I'll just tell you the facts. I scored four goals for the North Park Mini Mites in a 4-0 shutout against the Beacon Hill Club—our only win of the season. Granted, the only time I was in my defensive zone that game was during the five-minute warm-up, and the opposing team's goalie was a shooter tutor. But hey, four goals are four goals.

Lying on the floor in front of my stall, I draped my legs over my seat and stared up at my Crimson jersey. I must have worked on my three sticks for an hour before that game, tweaking, adjusting, then re-adjusting, then re-tweaking. Like a hunter preparing his weapon, I futzed with and flexed those sticks. As always, each of my stick blades was meticulously taped, but for some reason, even though I'd taped several million blades, I couldn't get it just right. When I finally donned my jersey before warm-ups, it felt unusually heavy and uncomfortable.

² All true.

Then it was Donato's turn. "Important youse set the tone early, boys. Remember, these Princeton defensemen are real aggressive, pinch every chance they get. Forwards, youse gotta recognize this and look to blow the zone for a stretch pass. Wingers need to talk though. Can't have both a youse blowing the zone. Can't blow two guys. Only blow one guy." It was exactly the final thought I needed before my first college hockey game.

I played a quick shift in the first period, and another in the second. I tried to stay focused and engaged, but at times, it was tough, because my role that night was what, in hockey circles, is called the grocery stick: I was the guy who sat in the spot separating the defenseman from the forwards. I could have been replaced by a bucket of pucks. Or air.

After my token third period shift in which my line generated some offense, I came off the ice feeling confident, but knowing I most likely wasn't stepping on the ice again until the final buzzer sounded. If only there was a way to get one more shift and make an impression. It was like Coach Donato read my mind. After showering one of the refs with some impressively expletive-laden personal insults, Donato was assessed a bench minor for abuse of officials. I already had one leg over the boards when I felt Donato give me the tap to serve the two-minute penalty. As I glided across the ice to the box looking up at the scoreboard showing two minutes, seventeen seconds remaining in the game with us leading by one goal, my hope for one last shift had materialized assuming we could kill off the penalty.

With the two-minute minor about to expire, I could see Donato, one foot propped on the boards, waving his arms wildly for me to skate right to the bench. With my palms facing up, I plastered a confused look on my face. Despite the thick pane of glass in front of me, I heard his barking clearly, "Get to the bench. To the fuckin' bench!" But he didn't hear the voice in my head, "Fuck off, Donuts."

As I readied to exit the box, the Princeton goalie sprinted to his bench for an extra attacker as a Tiger forward broke the puck into our zone. Then, moments after my penalty expired, the Princeton player turned the puck over to one of our defensemen. Whacking my stick on the ice as I hurried to center ice, I yelled for the puck even louder than Donato was still hollering at me to get off the ice. My teammate snapped a perfect pass on my tape sending me on a breakaway...with no goalie. Streaking over the center red line, a thin layer of mist that I could almost taste was all that separated me from the open net. It was like a hockey mirage.

First game as a member of the Harvard Crimson, and I was going to score my first goal on the same rink where I had played as a mini-mite. There was something poetic about it, a coming full-circle moment.

I'd seen clips on YouTube of guys on open-net breakaways being too nonchalant, trying to roof the puck and accidentally shooting it over the net. No chance that would be the fate of this biscuit. I knew where I was shooting—exactly where you're taught *never* to shoot as a kid—center of the net. Approaching the hash marks, I lifted my right leg, took one last look at the middle bar in the net, before leaning into my shot and *SNAP!*

If there were a pie chart depicting how a hockey player spends his time, a large sliver would belong to "Stick Maintenance." And now, when I needed it the most, my graphite stick had snapped. I watched helplessly as the puck trickled slowly to the net, only to be stopped by the excess snow just short of the crease. Then the buzzer sounded. The rules state that when a player's stick breaks, he must immediately discard it. Apparently, the referee thought I was trying to score with my stick after it had broken (he was right), and at the sixty-minute mark, with no time remaining, I was assessed a minor penalty.

Things improved the following day when, during the team meal, Coach Donato sidled over and said, “We thought you did good last night, Willy. But penalties are gonna kill us this year. This league is too tight on defense, and when I look at the scoresheet and see Billy Keenan with four PIMS, I need to make a change. You’re gonna be scratched tonight, but Duzie, [the team’s first line center] is feeling sick. So you might be going. Be ready.”

I dressed for warm-ups, my heart pounding so hard that the Crimson logo on the front of my jersey was thumping. It was Quinnipiac’s inaugural game in the ECAC. TD Bank Sports Center was filled to capacity, and the 8,000-plus fans were on their feet. It was a controlled chaos, much like the new hairstyle I was trying out. And just as those who encountered me for the first time needed a moment to take in the new ‘do, I too needed a second to adjust and acclimate to the spectacle now before me. It was the moment of which I had been dreaming.

After the game, my equipment was drenched in sweat—the pads, the helmet, the gloves. Everything felt as if it had been through the hockey game from hell. The reek had a life of its own, so much so that you could practically see it. Unfortunately, it wasn’t my sweat.

You see, Duzie, who’d been vomiting and shitting for the past fifteen-or-so hours, forgot to pack his equipment onto the bus before we left from Princeton to Connecticut. As an extra forward on the trip and with him being close in size to me, I was forced to hand over my gear to him (after warm-ups) when it had been deemed that Duzie—whose health level was at about 18%—would be more effective than me at 100%. The coaching staff’s confidence in me was touching.

After the game, Duzie handed me back my newly infected gear which I handled like radioactive waste. “Thanks for saving my ass, bud. I appreciate it.” He then ran to the toilet to throw up. Me, I performed an exorcism on my equipment, then took a six-hour shower in 500-degree water.

Later that week, it was freshman initiation time for the hockey team. Each of us newbies was assigned a character we were to dress up as, then given a list of tasks to perform: I had no idea I was joining Sigma Phi Puck.

After completing our third task of streaming gay porn on all the Widener library computers, it was off to Annenberg, the freshmen dining hall. We sat down at our usual table during the peak dinner hour. “May I have everyone’s attention, please,” Nicky Coskren yelled, and he yelled so loudly that he didn’t really need the megaphone. (Nicky, it should be noted, was dressed like a prostitute, or actually a “dime store hooker” as our instruction sheet called it, complete with fishnets, thong, and makeup.) “Introducing, for your viewing pleasure, Billy the Ballerina.” With that, Snowsy, dressed as Ronald McDonald, hit play on the boom box as I climbed up on the table that would soon become my stage.

Somehow, word had gotten out that I had done a short stint at the School of American Ballet when I was a kid...and quit laughing. It definitely improved my coordination and body control. Plus, my mom made me do it.

As I pirouetted on the table in front of Harvard’s entire freshman class, I wasn’t embarrassed because I looked like a fool and danced like an idiot; no, I was embarrassed because I knew the exact steps to the opening act of Balanchine’s *Nutcracker*, and, thanks to my skinny physique, my legs looked pretty good in the pink tights. When the music stopped, I curtsied, then officially retired from ballet.

My ballet skills didn’t stop my teammates from turning my room into the Official Harvard Crimson Hockey Team Party Room. For reasons that were never made clear, my roommate left school, and when word got out, it was unilaterally decided Keenan’s room was the party room. (Keenan, it bears

mentioning, had no say in the matter.) Although the sign outside my door politely instructed those who came in to PLEASE REMOVE YOUR SHOES, well, they didn't.

The first team party was the night of our initiation. Once the team-only part was over, the upperclassmen, in what appeared to be some final ritual, issued an eye-patch to each of us freshmen. "Don't lose 'em, boys," they told us. "You'll need 'em over the next four years." When the first batch of Harvard girls, an eager group of the heavyweight crew team known by the upperclassmen as "the furniture,"³ arrived at the party, it all became clear. A part of me wished I had two eye patches.

"Can you hold my drink while I use the restroom? I don't trust the older guys on your team. I don't want them to rooify me or something," said a girl with the BMI of a non-pulling NFL guard, and a face that lets you know God has his off days too. *Don't flatter yourself*, I thought as she left to take a leak in the urinal.

Fortunately, imports from some of the neighboring colleges trickled in, and many eye patches soon dangled around our necks. The night climaxed in my room with Nicky Coskren, myself, and two girls from Boston College.

Nicky was a smooth operator...that is, if your definition of "smooth operator" is "a stammering bundle of sexual neuroses." "S-s-o, uh, Ash-ashley, you wanna go check out that thing I was telling you about earlier? It's in my dorm room, right across the yard." The Smash, it turned out, was game to check out *any* things in *any* Harvard hockey player's room, even a stammering, nervous freshman.

After the couple stumbled out, it was just me and Jenny M. in my room.

"What's with the eye patches all you guys were wearing?" she asked.

"We had a pirate-themed party earlier so I guess some guys decided to keep them."

"Pirate-theme? But you're dressed like a ballerina and your friend was dressed like a hooker, sort of."

"It's complicated," I said, fiddling with my tutu and removing my ballet slippers.

"I know hockey players," she said, bailing me out. "And they're not that complicated." She was right about one thing. Easy Mac knew hockey players. But so what if she'd been *friends* with virtually all my upperclassmen teammates and most of BC, BU, and Northeastern's hockey teams. She was cool, sexy, clearly a Beanpot fan but, most importantly, willing.

"So I hear you have a girl back home?" she said taking a seat in my desk chair. The plan worked just as the upperclassmen had advised us freshmen.

"Well," I said. "There're shades of gray." This was black and white though. I didn't have a girlfriend, never did. "We're sort of on and off—pretty hard to stay together now that we're so far away," I said. She smiled and slowly walked to my bed. I started having flashbacks of the Princeton game, hoping I wouldn't foul up this open-netter.

Easy Mac then pointed to the bag of pretzels on my desk and slurred, "You mind if I have some? Drinking six vodka tonics makes me kinda hungry."

"Help yourself."

³ On a scale from 1-10, the furniture comprised the null set.

“Me and Ash love Harvard.” She opened the bag of pretzel sticks and salt poured onto my sheets. “Crazy things happen literally every time we’re here. It’s super funny.”

“Yeah, there should be a reality show about you two.” I took a sip from my water bottle then placed it on a coaster.

“Totally,” she said twirling a lock of hair around her finger. “So, must be nice having your own room, huh?” Pretzel dust spewed from her mouth.

“Uh, yeah. Sure. Great fun. You want a plate or something?”

“Oh, that’s okay. I’m fine. You’re sweet though.”

“Thanks,” I said. “Listen, I’m pretty tired and got practice tomorrow. I might just head to sleep.” I could hear Coach Donato’s voice in my head, *Finish your chances! Bear down and fahkin’ finish!* But the pile of crumbs kept growing and eating at me.

“Is that right?” She leaned back on my bed, crossing her tanned legs and thrusting her breasts forward. “No room for me in here?” she whispered, tilting her chin down and pouting her lips.

I was tempted. I mean, it would’ve been my first college hook-up, and the locker room reviews on her were incredible.

She then began fellating the pretzel stick, creating a sea of salt in my sheets. “I really should get to bed. I got practice really early.” Then she bit the pretzel. I winced as she blew me a pretzel-filled kiss.

I couldn’t take it any longer. “For God’s sakes, could you watch where you’re eating those things? I changed my sheets last night.” After she stormed out of my room, I spent fifteen minutes vacuuming.

The Harvard hockey team is tiny and insular, and they gossip as much, if not more than your average ladies bridge club. So naturally, after Easy Mac told The Smash about Pretzelfast, she told a bunch of guys on the team, who told everybody else on the team, earning me a new nickname.

Move over Dilly. Welcome, Negative Game.