

**Honorable Mention, Prose**  
**Grades 7-9**

***“The Great ‘Catch,’” Avery Hoffman***

The team huddles up. I try to hear what the quarterback is saying, but all I hear is mumbling. The team then claps in unison, and they get into position. I walk up to Joey, the quarterback, and ask him what the play is.

“Go deep,” he says. I am confused but listen and also get into position.

While I am waiting for the play to begin, I look to the sideline where my brother limps around with crutches. I remember only 30 minutes ago, he had made a diving catch but came down hard on his head. I remember only 30 minutes ago, I was on the sideline. Now I am wearing his jersey and helmet proudly but nervously.

The number 18 always looked better on him than on me. That’s always what his number had been from the first year of high school until now. I am only a freshman playing on the varsity team, but they don’t have another choice. The Bulldogs need another receiver, and I am the closest thing to a receiver they got.

I focus back on the game. It feels like an hour before the play starts. I look at the scoreboard, 20-25, 3 seconds left in the game. The bulldogs are losing, and this is our last chance to win it.

I look at Joey as he snaps the ball, and the play starts. I follow Joey’s instructions and run as fast as I can towards the end zone. It feels like I am running forever. The cornerback that is guarding me is at least twice my size and twice my weight. I am panting so hard that I can barely hear Joey yelling my name, “SAM, SAM, SAM.”

I look back at him and I see the ball flying towards me. I run faster than I have ever run before. I lunge forward and fall on the ball...

*I dropped it!!!*

I stay laying on the ground with the ball against my chest when I hear cries of excitement. I am so confused. To my surprise, I then get lifted off the ground by my teammates. I carefully pick up the ball and show that I have it, and the crowd

goes even more crazy. I understand now. They all think I caught the ball, and I am the only one that knows the truth.

I am stressed out by the situation, but if everyone believes that I caught it, then why not be the hero? I keep pretending that I caught it, but I am not the best actor. I know that I am doing the wrong thing, but I feel so good about being the hero.

I walk to the sideline to meet my brother. He lifts me up in the air and hugs me so tight I can barely breathe. My mom then comes running down from the bleachers and gives me a hug as well. I feel great and guilty at the same time.

When the cheering dies down, my mom, my brother, and I head for the car. When we get home, I pull my brother aside and tell him the truth.

“I know you dropped it,” he said.

I then asked him if stuff like that ever happened to him and he nodded. So maybe I am a little like him, I think to myself.

*Avery Hoffman is in 7th grade at Heilicher Minneapolis Jewish Day School. He loves sports and likes to play drums, guitar, and piano.*