

## ***Don't Cling to Your Mistakes***

On New Year's Day, 1929, Georgia Tech played the California Golden Bears in the Rose Bowl. In that game a young man named Roy Riegels recovered a fumble for California. The All-American athlete picked up the loose ball. But losing his sense of direction, Riegels ran sixty-five yards toward the wrong goal line. One of his own teammates ran him down and tackled him just before he crossed the goal line of the opposing team.

The strange play came near the end of the first half. At half-time the California players filed off the field and into the dressing room. As others sat down on the benches and the floor, Riegels put a blanket around his shoulders, sat down in a corner, and put his face in his hands, refusing to look at anyone.

A football coach usually has a great deal to say to his team during halftime. That day Head coach Clarence Price was quiet. There was a hushed silence in the locker room. When the timekeeper came in and announced that there were three minutes before play resumed, Coach Price stood up, looked at the team and said, "Men, the same team that played the first half will start the second." The players got up and started out, all but Riegels. He didn't move. The coach looked back and called to him. Riegels didn't budge. Coach Price went over to where Riegels sat and said, "Roy, didn't you hear me? The same team that played the first half will start the second."

Roy Riegels looked up, his cheeks wet with tears. "Coach," he said, "I can't do it. I've ruined you. I've ruined myself. I've ruined the University of California. I couldn't face that crowd to save my life!" Coach Price reached out, put his hand on Riegels' shoulder, and said, "Roy, get up and go back out there—the game is only half over."

Riegels finally did get up. He went onto the field, and the fans saw him play hard and play well, even blocking a punt late in the game. It was a hard-fought contest, which Georgia Tech won by a score of 8 to 7, and was then declared to be National Champions.

All of us have run a long way in the wrong direction at times. We have made some big mistakes. And there were certainly consequences for those choices. All of us should rejoice that the mercies of the Lord are "new every morning" (Lamentations 3:22-24).

Our mistakes do not mean that we are without hope. They do not mean that we cannot be forgiven. Life goes on. One day time will run out. But until that day we need to remember...because of God's mercy, the game is only half over.

*"If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared" (Psalm 130:3-4).*

*Robert*

**FOOTNOTE:** Roy Riegels was inducted into the Rose Bowl Hall of Fame in 1991. He died in 1993 at age 84. Then in 2003, a panel from the College Football Hall of Fame and CBS Sports chose Riegels' "Wrong way run in the Rose Bowl" as one of six "Most Memorable Moments of the Century. You can watch the run by going to the following web address: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEVR7fCxJ\\_U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEVR7fCxJ_U)