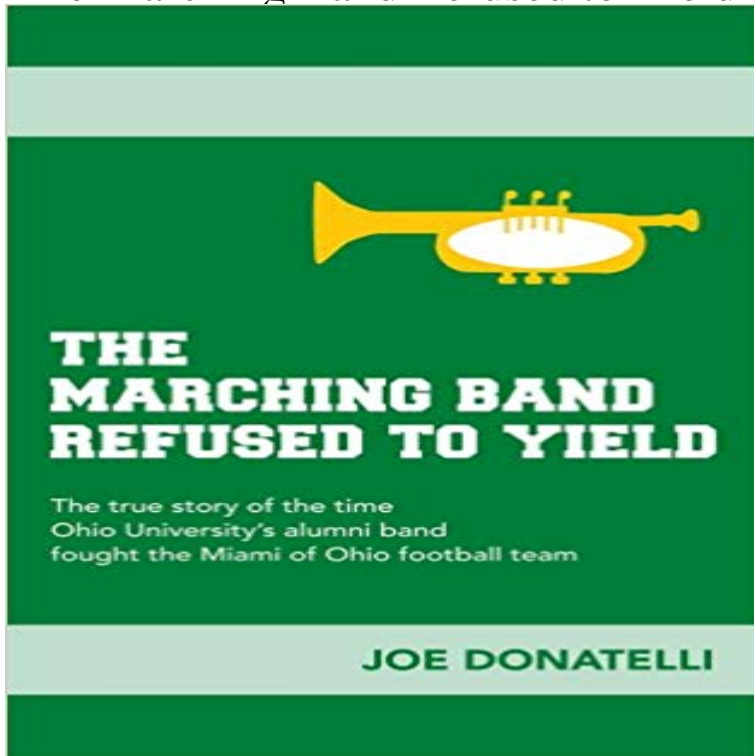


## The Marching Band Refused to Yield



The true story of the time Ohio University's alumni marching band fought the Miami (of Ohio) University football team--and who really won that day. Excerpt: Scott Coffey felt something was wrong. He and the rest of the Ohio University Marching 110 were playing the final song of their halftime set. It was the 1992 homecoming game. Homecoming was a big show for the Marching 110, and the band was (in Coffey's words) grooving. So why, the saxophone player wondered, were the fans booing? Ohio's home crowd never booed the Marching 110. Then he saw them. Coffey played in the third row from the back, but at 6-foot-2 he could see the visiting team's sideline in front of the Ohio student section. A handful of Miami (of Ohio) University football players were throwing and kicking footballs right in front of the band. Normally teams waited for the band to clear out before taking the field, or they warmed up on another part of the field. But there was Ohio's archrival Miami during homecoming, no less occupying almost the same space as the student marching band. Coffey couldn't believe it. Neither could the crowd. The 100,200 members of the alumni band had just finished performing, and they were incensed. This was disrespect. The alumni band members who were still on the field began waving and yelling at Miami's special teams players to let them know they were not welcome near the student band. Coffey was the 110's field commander that season. He had trained incoming members in marching fundamentals and was responsible for keeping the band's marching and maneuvering sharp. His attention drifted to the sideline as he tried to focus on the music and choreography. His training told him, No matter what happens on the sidelines, the show must go on. But what was happening on the sidelines? The alumni band members couldn't get the players' attention, possibly because a

combination of the music and crowd booing made it almost impossible to hear on the field. Instinctively, the alumni band formed a wall to protect the student band, putting themselves between Miami players and the 110. The crowd roared in approval. At this point, the band could no longer hear itself play probably a first for the 110 inside Peden Stadium. It was inevitable. A Miami football player and a band member tangled and fell to the ground. The rest of the Miami football team was taking the field, and they were bewildered to see one of their teammates underneath some guy carrying a horn. Moments later a kicked ball fell into the ranks of the student 110 during a dance break, and a Miami player ran into the bands formation to catch it. Two alumni band members gave the player chase. A Miami coach dashed across the field towards the alumni band guys. Miamis players jumped up and down the way some guys do when theyre about to see a fight. The musicians in the formation surrounding Coffey looked at him, their wide eyes saying, What are you going to do, Scott? What are we going to do? Coffeys first instinct was to put down his instrument and run to join his Band of Brothers, as hed later call them. These guys were loyal beyond measure to each other, Coffey later said. I believe the alums still look at the program the same way. Thats what it was about in those days. If he ran to help, the 110 would collapse. His gut said, Go. His training said, Stay. It all happened very quickly.

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