

## Tropical Storm Baseball

At five o'clock tropical storm warnings were posted for my neighborhood and I had tickets to the seven-thirty baseball game. Would the rain and wind let up? Would the game be canceled? Would my dad let me go? It was agonizing to wait for the answers to these questions but by seven o'clock the weather cleared and my dad suggested we head for the ballpark. When we arrived we found that there weren't very many people attending the game and we had our choice of seats. We sat right on the first base line and I got ready to enjoy the sights and sounds of the evening.

When we sat down the groundskeepers were raking the infield. Dust rose in small clouds as the wind blew the dirt into miniature tornados. The players soon came on the field to exercise and warm up. I could read their names on the back of their bright white uniforms. Some of the men were smacking on their chewing gum or spitting out a stream of tobacco juice. In no time at all we stood to sing along with the organ playing the *Stars Spangled Banner*. Then the umpire yelled, "Play ball." The first man at bat was on our team. Slowly he wiped the sweat off his hands and picked up a smooth wooden bat. However, he didn't last long as he struck out on the first three pitches. The second batter hit a long drive into left field and he slid into second base with a cloud of dust rising around him. The umpire yelled, "Safe!" When the third batter watched two balls go by, you could hear the coach yelling instructions. The catcher was also sending hand signals to the pitcher. Something different was coming up. The expression on the players' faces told me that they meant business. Suddenly, the pitcher threw a fastball right over home plate. The bat connected with the ball and it went sailing over the fence into the stands. The roar of the crowd surrounded me like a gust of wind as we were all cheering and jumping up and down. Our team had made two points on that homerun.

After we settled back into our seats I noticed how few fans were in the stands. Not many people decided to brave the wind and rain to watch the game. Although those brave souls who were at the ballpark sure seemed to be enjoying the evening. People were drinking the cool beverages and eating hot food. The peanuts, popcorn, and cracker jacks were all favorite snacks, but you could also purchase chicken dinners or loaded nachos with hot cheese and spicy peppers. The appetizing aroma made you want to buy something from every shouting vendor that walked down the aisle. The camera often caught a scene of the fans enjoying their favorite food or just clowning around. With the large television screens the evening seemed more like a circus than a ball game. However, soon the crowd was focusing on the player at bat and yelling instructions to the pitcher. Sometimes the noise was deafening.

It was a terrific evening and the weather didn't stop the game or the fun. In fact, the brisk wind mixed with the excitement of the crowd to encourage the players to do their best. Our team won!