

The Season's Not Over



Brian Gotta

To my four biggest fans...from their biggest fan



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Chapter One

The ball whistled as it left Eddie Thompson's hand and made a loud pop when it hit the leather catcher's mitt. The batter, Tommy Remakalus froze. Eddie knew the instant he heard the sound of the ball smack into the glove what the call would be.

"Steeee-rike three!" yelled the ump. "You're out!"

"Way to go, Eddie!" yelled Andy at second.

"Yeah!" echoed Steve at third

Eddie got the ball back after the infield threw it around. He made it a point not to let his emotions show on the field, but inside he felt like pumping his fist. Tommy Remakalus was one of the hardest outs in the Oakdale City League, and he almost never struck out. To get him looking meant that Eddie really must have it going today.

Eddie played for the Coyotes, in the North Division of the City League. Tommy's Blackhawks were also in the North Division. Even though this was only the fourth game of the new season, everyone knew that these were the two teams that figured to be fighting it out at the end of the year for the division title. The winner would probably get to play the Sharks, who had won the South Division the past two seasons, for the Oakdale City Championship.

Both the Coyotes and Blackhawks had started the season with three straight wins and now, in their first head-to-head match-up, the Coyotes were up 2-0. If Eddie could just get two more outs, he'd have his second shutout of the season. But more importantly, he'd pin the Blackhawks with their first loss and give the Coyotes a one game lead in the standings.

Up stepped Danny Anderson to the plate. Danny was the Blackhawk's center fielder, fast as a gazelle, and always dangerous to lay down the bunt for a base hit. He looked long and hard at his third base coach giving signals. It was the bottom of the last, so it was now or never for the 'hawks.

"Watch for the bunt!" Coyotes Coach Tom Haffner yelled. Steve moved in at third. "Andy, you've got first if Chase charges!" Andy took two steps over from his usual position near second, towards first base.

Danny was a lefty, and he raised his hand to the umpire as he dug in his feet. Eddie went into his windup and delivered. Plunk! Sure enough, even though everyone was expecting it, he laid down a drag bunt towards first base. It was perfect. It rolled past Eddie, and Chase had to charge in to field it. Danny Anderson flew down the baseline and it looked for sure like he would be safe by a mile. But in one smooth motion Chase pounced on the ball, whirled, and threw a bullet to Andy who was covering the base. Bang-bang! No one could tell which hit first, the ball in Andy's mitt or the speedster's foot on first base. The ump pumped his fist, "Got him!" he yelled.

The Coyote fans went wild. "All right!" yelled Steve from third.

"Way to go, boys!" Coach Haffner said. "Let's get the last one!"

"Nice play, Chase!" Eddie said.

Chase didn't say anything back to Eddie. But a moment later, when Andy yelled, "Awesome play, dude!" he smiled and said, "Thanks."

Chase Collins and Eddie were the Coyotes' two top pitchers, usually alternating each start.

Eddie thought about how, in the first game of the season, Chase had pitched and won a three-hit, one-run ballgame against the Red Birds, the team that looked like the weakest in the league. Eddie had pitched the second game and shutout the Flyers, 6-0.

After that game one of the guys on the Flyers had told Eddie that now he was in the lead for the “Golden Arm Trophy.” Eddie hadn’t ever heard of it until then. When he asked Coach Haffner what it meant, the coach acted like he didn’t want to tell him. Finally, he explained that there was a trophy the league was giving out for the top pitcher of the season, and the award was based on which player had the most wins. You got extra points every time you pitched a shutout.

In the third game of the season, against the Lightning, Chase had gotten into trouble early, giving up two doubles and a homerun in the second inning. With the Coyotes already down 3-0, he walked two straight batters, and Coach Haffner took him out, replacing him with Darren Webber, the team’s regular center fielder and third pitcher.

Darren got them out of the jam, and the Coyotes inched their way back into the game. Then with the score 3-2 Lightning in the bottom of the last, Chase walked and Eddie drove one over the right field fence for a game winning, walk-off homer. Darren had been the winning pitcher because of Eddie's homerun.

Now, in the fourth game, with the Coyotes clinging to a slim 2-0 lead over the Blackhawks in the last inning, Eddie focused on getting one more out. The only thing standing in his way was the Blackhawk’s pitcher, Isiah Morgan.

“C’mon, Eddie!” Darren yelled from center. “One more!”

Eddie appeared to be in command, slipping two quick strikes past the hitter. But then he got one up in the zone and Isiah blasted it. It was well over Darren’s head and bounced over the wall for a ground rule double.

Coach Haffner called time and came out to talk with Eddie. The two of them along with Chase and the team’s catcher, John LaPointe, met at the mound.

“You feel all right?” Coach Haffner asked Eddie.

“I’m great,” Eddie replied with a smile

“You know we could bring in Darren to finish it off if you're tired.”

“I'm fine, Coach,” Eddie said. “I'm still pitching a shutout.”

“All right,” Coach Haffner said. “Go get 'em.”

Eddie noticed that Chase seemed to snort in disgust and walk away when he heard Eddie say, "shutout". He wondered why that made Chase so mad. The only thing he could figure was that it had something to do with the Golden Arm Trophy.

Eddie bore down. The next hitter was Carlos Ramirez and he could rake. Again Eddie got ahead in the count 1 and 2. Again he got one up too high.

Crack! Carlos smacked a line drive base hit to right-center! Darren sprinted to his left and made a great snare on one hop. He planted his right foot, spun around and heaved a strike into Chase who was on the grass for the cutoff.

Isiah Morgan was around third and the coach was waving him home. The Coyote's shortstop, Ricky Garcia was yelling, “Four! Four!” It looked like it was going to be a close play. Eddie was backing up the plate and John LaPointe had his mask tossed to the side awaiting the throw. A good relay from Chase and they had a chance!

It never came. Chase pumped but held the ball and looked Carlos Ramirez back to first. He ran it in and called time.

“What are you doing?” Ricky yelled. “We had him!”

“Chase, we could have nailed him!” Steve cried. Eddie said nothing, but he was disappointed. There went his shutout.

“We don't need another runner in scoring position,” Chase said to the whole team. He motioned to the runner at first base. “If I throw home, he goes to second. Let's get an out.”

The next hitter drilled a hard one-hopper in the hole between short and third. Against most teams in the league it would have been a base hit, but Ricky was there with a great

backhanded snag. His momentum carried him into the outfield grass. Yet in one motion he jumped and threw the ball to Andy at second, just ahead of the sliding runner, to get the force. It was an incredible play. And the game was over.

The Coyotes got together along the first base line and yelled, “One, two three, Blackhawks!” then lined up to shake hands. Practically everyone on the opposing team told Eddie he pitched a great game.

Eddie made it a point to congratulate each of his teammates. Chase was putting his gear away in his bag when Eddie approached him. The first time he told him “good game,” Chase didn’t respond, so Eddie figured he hadn’t heard him. The second time, Chase mumbled “good game” back but didn’t look up. Eddie wasn’t sure if he was imagining it or not, but it seemed like something was bugging Chase.

The Coyotes were now 4-0 and leading the North Division. After one more game, they’d be playing the Sharks, with Eddie on the mound again. If both teams were 5-0 heading into that contest, Eddie thought, that would really be something.

Chapter Two

Eddie rode home from the game in the front seat with his mom. Angela Thompson was a young-looking woman, with reddish-blond hair, and big, moist, blue eyes that sparkled when she looked at you. Eddie liked the way she always smelled like flowers.

“You played an awesome game, buddy,” she said smiling at him.

“Good game, Eddie,” echoed his little sister Kaylee, who was in back. She was buckled into one seat and Bubble Gum, her stuffed pink poodle that Eddie had given her for her birthday, was wearing the seatbelt next to her.

“Thanks,” Eddie said. He stared out the window of the car.

“What’s wrong?” his mother asked him.

“Oh, nothing I guess.”

“I can tell. What’s up?”

“Well, it’s just that last play of the game, when Chase didn’t throw home. We had him out, and I could have had my second shutout!”

“The team won, isn’t that what’s important?” his mom asked.

“Yeah, it is. I just wish I knew why he didn’t throw home.”

That night at dinner the subject came up again. Eddie’s dad had been at the game, but gone right back to work afterward.

Dave Thompson was a serious-looking man with dark brown eyes and coarse brown hair. He had a way of looking at you sometimes like he knew what you were

thinking. Now at dinner, he was talking to Eddie about the game.

“So, how does it feel to be 4-0?”

“I’m 2-0, Dad,” Eddie replied.

“I was talking about the team,” his dad said, looking sternly at him.

“Oh, yeah,” Eddie mumbled. Then he brightened up and said, “You know, if we win our next game and the Sharks do too, when we play them we’ll both be 5-0! And I’ll pitch that one!”

“Does that make you nervous?” Dave Thompson asked his son teasingly.

“No!” Eddie shot back. “They’re the ones that should be nervous!”

Eddie’s dad laughed. He took a bite of the grilled fish on his plate.

“Honey,” Eddie’s mom said, looking at her husband. “Eddie wondered why Chase didn’t throw the ball home in the last inning, and he was a little upset about it after the game.”

“I noticed that he was upset too,” Mr. Thompson said.

“Well, we had the guy dead, and I could have had the shutout,” complained Eddie.

“O.K. there are two things here,” Mr. Thompson said. “First, you did a good job not saying anything out there. Some of the other boys got on Chase about it, and you know you should never get on a teammate; only encourage him, right?”

“I know,” Eddie answered. He’d heard that many times before.

Eddie’s dad coached a lot of the teams Eddie played on, and not only baseball. This season he had explained that he couldn’t commit to coaching the team because of a new job he had taken, but he still had made it to every game so far, and helped out with practice whenever he could.

“Secondly,” his father continued. “Why do you think he should have thrown home?”

“Because we had him!” Eddie asserted. “And that cost me my shutout!”

“Ah, there’s the reason,” Dave Thompson said, looking unhappy. “The shutout. Let me ask you this. If the score were 10-8 when that kid came around third with two outs, should he have thrown it home then?”

“I don’t know,” Eddie answered, looking down at his broccoli.

“You *do* know. You know that was going to be a close play, and I’ll admit, I think you had him too. But if the catcher drops the ball, or it’s a bad throw, then what happens to the runner at first?”

“He goes to second.” Eddie said sullenly.

“Right. And now, the tying run is on second *and* there’s no force. When that last batter hit the ball in the hole to Ricky, the only play he could have made was the force at second. But if the runner was already there because Chase had thrown the ball home, that would have been an infield hit, not the last out of the game. So it turned out that holding that runner at first was the right thing to do, wasn’t it?”

“Yeah.” Eddie admitted.

“You’ve got to understand son, that team is first and personal goals are second. Don’t confuse that.”

Eddie ate the rest of his dinner, which included dessert of strawberries with whipped cream, without talking about baseball.

The next time the Coyotes got together at practice, Coach Haffner had the players work on fundamentals and conditioning. They all did the “button on the cap” drill where they rolled the ball to a partner and watched to see that he kept his head down on the grounder. You were supposed to tell the other player if you didn’t see the button on his cap as he fielded it.

While eight of the players rolled balls to one another, one hit off the tee. One more was at the plate getting live pitches from Coach. But today, instead of hitting, which is what all the boys wanted to do, he had them practice bunting. After a station at the tee, followed by twenty or so bunts, it was a hard run out to the centerfield fence and back, then more fielding.

After about a half-hour of this, some of the players groaned to the coach.

“C’mon, Coach, let’s scrimmage!” Andy complained. “We’ve done this forever!”

Omar, the team’s left fielder, added, “We could go five on five if you pitch and we make right field an automatic out!”

Coach Haffner wasn’t swayed. “We’re going to keep working on the basics until I think you boys are ready to graduate.”

Terry McMahon, the right fielder, said, “Coach, we’re doing drills we did in T-Ball, and we’re undefeated!”

“Time out!” Coach Haffner barked. “That’s exactly what I’m talking about!” Everyone held up what they were doing and waited for what was coming next. Eddie had been thinking along similar lines as Terry, but had kept quiet. He figured that Terry wished now he’d done the same.

“Do any of you know why we’re undefeated?” Coach asked. He was not smiling.

Eddie thought of a funny remark to say like, “Because we haven’t lost!” or “Because I’m on the team!” but he knew Coach was not joking around and he kept it to himself.

Eddie liked Coach Haffner, and so did Eddie’s dad. In an early preseason game with the score tied in the bottom of the last inning, there had been a close call at first and the umpire ruled against the Coyotes. Chase argued the call with the ump, and threw down his glove.

Coach Haffner didn’t like that. He calmly called time out and walked out to first. Eddie was on the pitcher’s

mound and had figured Coach was going to talk to the umpire about the call. But instead, he picked up Chase's glove, handed it to him, and told him to have a seat on the bench.

He brought in Phil Brown, the youngest kid on the team, to play first. Phil had only played in the outfield and wasn't the best fielder on the team. But there he was, tie score in the bottom of the last, playing one of the most important positions.

Even though the game was just an exhibition against the Comets in the South Division, the Coyotes all wanted to win. Eddie worried what would happen if there was a tough throw over to first in a critical situation.

The next batter hit a tailor-made grounder to Ricky at short, who flipped to Andy for the first half of what looked like an easy double play. But Andy's relay to first was high and Phil had to leap for it. He came down bobbling it, but held on.

"In there!" the ump yelled. "Didn't touch the base!"

"Geez!" everyone heard Chase yell inside the dugout. Eddie knew Chase thought he'd have made the play.

"My fault, Phil," Andy said. "Bad throw."

Phil looked at Andy, then down at his cleats. Even though Andy had done a nice thing by accepting the blame for the play, you could tell Phil still felt crummy that he hadn't caught it cleanly.

The Coyotes had eventually won the game in extra innings so no damage was done by the error. But when they were driving home, Eddie's dad made a point of mentioning how much he respected Coach Haffner for taking an important player out of the game in such a critical situation.

"You know, son," Dave Thompson said, "I'd have done the same thing. I'm not sure a lot of coaches would have."

"I know," Eddie said.

"You boys might not always agree with Coach's decisions, but I've been watching him at the practices and

during games. He really stresses the fundamentals and sportsmanship. He may not be the most fun coach you'll ever have, but he'll have this team as good as it can be by the end of the year. You watch."

Now, Eddie thought about how his dad's prediction seemed to be coming true. Coach Haffner asked the team, which had all stopped practicing, the question a second time.

"Does anyone know why we're undefeated?"

No one wanted to answer. Coach wasn't a mean guy, but he was serious about the team and no one knew what to say. So they all just listened.

"We're undefeated because we do the little things better than anyone else," Coach said, answering his own question.

"Do you know who else practices the fundamentals like we do?" he continued. "The Sharks. The reason they've won the league title all these years is that they know how to bunt, how to field, and they're smart. Another team that looks tough is the team we're playing tomorrow, the Blazers. We've got our two biggest games of the year coming up this week. And the only way we'll win either of them is if we can do the fundamentals as well as they do."

The Coyotes went back to practice, working on Coach Haffner's drills. But Eddie was already looking past tomorrow's game and thinking ahead to Saturday. "If only we can win this next one against the Blazers, I'll get to pitch against the Sharks in the biggest game in Oakdale City League history!"

Chapter Three

Before the big showdown with the Sharks on Saturday, the Coyotes had a match-up with the Blazers. The City League consisted of eight teams, four in the North Division, and four in the South.

Every team played the three others in its own division twice, and the four in the other division once, for a ten-game schedule. Most games were on Saturday, with an occasional weekday contest thrown in. The top two teams from each division made the playoffs, with the divisional winners playing for the City Title.

The afternoon of the game against the Blazers, it looked like it might rain. Eddie's dad arrived just as the Blazers were taking the field and the Coyote's leadoff hitter, Ricky Garcia, started swinging a bat.

The Blazers were one of the youngest teams, but they had the biggest, fastest pitcher in either division, Cal Carter. Cal looked like he was five years older than anyone else in the league, was as tall as his coach, and he wore thick glasses that he pushed up on the bridge of his nose before every pitch.

"Oh no, Carter's pitching today," moaned Steve Benjamin.

"Listen, guys," said Coach Haffner. "I know he throws hard, but every pitch is right down the middle. Just stay in and meet the ball and we'll have no problems."

That was easier said than done for Ricky because he didn't stay in very well, and he didn't meet the ball. When Cal fired the first pitch, Ricky jumped back like it was inside. The problem was, the ball was down the pipe.

“Strike one!” yelled the ump.

“Hang in there, Ricky!” yelled Coach Haffner.
“Don’t bail out.”

The next pitch was the same place and this time Ricky swung, but he stepped towards third base instead of towards the pitch. He wasn’t close. Then Cal struck him out with a change-up that Ricky missed by a mile.

The next hitter for the Coyotes fared no better. Andy Sedivy tried to bunt his way on once, then swung wildly at two pitches over his head, then sat down.

Coach had Eddie batting third with John La Pointe in the cleanup spot.

“Let’s go, Eddie, get a piece of it!” Phil Brown yelled from the bench.

Eddie walked up to the plate thinking, *That’s right, just get a piece of it.* Only he was he was so nervous he could hardly hold the bat. After watching his first two teammates not only strike out, but look badly doing so, the Blazers fans were clapping and cheering for another victim. Eddie didn’t want to be that victim.

He watched first pitch come over the plate. It wasn’t a baseball that came at him; it was a streak of white paint. It seemed that the instant he saw it leave Carter’s hand, he heard the smack in the mitt for strike one.

Wow! Eddie thought. *That was the fastest pitch I’ve ever seen.* He dug in and tried to concentrate. The next pitch was on its way. It was coming in too close! Eddie jumped back.

“Strike two!” yelled the ump.

“That was....” Eddie began to argue the call but then he clammed up. His dad always told him not to ever argue with umpires. He stepped out of the box and thought about that last pitch. It sure looked inside, but he had to admit, when he jumped back he had closed his eyes.

“C’mon, Eddie!” his dad shouted from the stands.
“You gotta hang in there.”

“Just meet the ball, Ed,” Coach said.

The next pitch came in fast and smacked the catcher's mitt. Eddie froze. It looked like it could be called either way.

"Outside," said the ump, as the Blazers fans moaned their disapproval. "Just missed."

Eddie had a one and two count going against him. The crowd was clapping for the side to be struck out, and Cal Carter squinted to the catcher and pushed his thick glasses up over his nose. He wound up and fired.

Crack! Eddie felt the bat meet the ball and saw it bound towards second. He put his head down and sprinted towards first, looking only at the base, and listening to the first base coach, Ricky.

Three steps from the bag he saw the first baseman reach out and heard the "Whack!" of the shortstop's throw in his glove. Three outs.

"Made a great play on you," Ricky said, as Eddie ran past. "Thought you had a base hit there."

Eddie took off his helmet and got his glove. *I'm just glad I hit it*, he thought to himself. *That guy throws heat.*

Either the Blazers hitters weren't great or Chase was just as good as Cal Carter, because he shut them down in order too. When he came back into the dugout, Eddie said, "Nice inning, Chase."

Chase looked at him for a second or two before saying, "Thanks."

The next inning John LaPointe started the order. John was a stocky kid with sandy-brown hair and maybe the best all-around athlete on the team. He played hockey in the winter and was also the star of his soccer team. He didn't seem nervous at all at the plate, and calmly rocked a 1-1 pitch into center for the Coyote's first hit.

Chase was next. Omar was yelling from the bench for him to "crank it" but he struck out swinging.

Darren came up and popped out weakly to the catcher, and then it was Omar's turn to try to move the runner up. He whiffed on three pitches.

In the Blazers half of the inning the first two batters reached base, one by way of a walk, and the other with a single up the middle. Chase bore down and struck out the next hitter, and then Cal Carter stepped up. Even though he was batting down in the order because he was in a slump, he was still intimidating at the plate.

The bat looked like a toothpick in his hands, and everyone knew that if he got a hold of one the score would be 3-0 in a hurry. Chase stepped off the mound and kicked the dirt.

“Come on, Chase, take him yourself,” Eddie yelled.

Chase got on the mound and fired.

Crack! The first pitch was nailed into right center for a base hit! Darren sprinted to the gap with his glove outstretched and made a great snag on the first bounce. In the same motion he wheeled and planted to throw.

“Four! Four!” shouted Chase, Andy and Ricky all at once.

The throw was coming into Eddie low. He knew he’d have to cut it off, and had already seen the runner rounding third. It’d have to be a perfect catch and throw if he had any chance.

Reaching for the throw from center, Eddie caught and hopped all in one motion. He fired a strike to John LaPointe who already had his mask off and was ready to block the plate.

The runner slid hard. There was a cloud of dust and LaPointe held the ball in his glove up over his head for the ump to see.

“OUT!” shouted the ump.

But John wasn’t done. The other runners were trying to advance on the throw home.

The instant the umpire saw the ball in John’s mitt it was gone again as the catcher fired a rope down to third. Steve Benjamin caught it and tagged the sliding Blazer for the inning-ending double play.

“Woo!” screamed a couple of the Coyotes. “Yes!” yelled a few more as they sprinted into the dugout. Chase pounded John on the back as they ran in and Coach said, “That’s a way, Johnny! Nice play, Darren! Great relay, Eddie! That’s a way to play baseball!”

The Coyote fans, including Eddie’s mom and dad were going nuts. The Blazers fans sat in disbelief. One instant they thought they had a one-nothing lead with runners on second and third, the next instant the inning was over. It was easily the Coyote's best play of the season so far.

When Steve Benjamin came to the plate in the top of the third, the team was still fired up and banging on the dugout fence to encourage their hitter to get something going. Cal Carter, whose beautiful hit had turned into a double play, looked steamed, and kicked dirt from the rubber. He pounded the ball into his mitt, and looked hard at the catcher through his Coke-bottle-bottom glasses. Eddie hated to admit it, but he didn’t envy Steve, and was glad it wasn’t him at the plate. He figured everyone else, except maybe John LaPointe, felt the same way. However, all that bunting practice Coach Haffner put them through paid off as Steve Benjamin started the Coyotes half of the inning by laying one down perfectly between the pitcher and first baseman for a hit.

Terry McMahon batted last in the lineup and he looked long at Coach Haffner giving signals before he stepped in the box.

“Watch for another bunt!” the Blazers’ coach yelled. The fielders crept in at the corners.

The first pitch was low and outside, and Terry showed bunt then pulled back. It was called a ball, but now everyone knew what he was up there to do.

The next pitch was perfect and Terry laid it down. Both the third baseman and the first baseman rushed in. The first baseman fielded it and looked to second. He saw that Steve was already sliding in safely so he turned to first for what should have been an easy out. But no one was covering

first. By the time the second baseman realized his mistake and tried to get over, it was too late. Everybody was safe. The Blazers fans groaned, while the Coyotes players and their fans were cheering loudly.

Now the Coyotes had two men on with no outs, the top of the order coming up, and not one ball had even traveled more than ten feet!

Coach Haffner gave the signals to Ricky.

Will he bunt too? Eddie wondered. It made sense because second and third with one out would be a good situation to be in.

Ricky did. The third baseman pounced on it and because it was a good bunt, the only play was at first. They got it right this time and Ricky was sacrificed, but he had done his job and moved the runners up.

Andy was up next and the Blazers' coach told Cal Carter to put him on and load the bases. They probably figured that this way they could get a force at home, or that a sharp grounder would lead to a double play to end the inning. Eddie came up with the sacks full.

He stepped to the plate, his stomach full of butterflies. "C'mon," he said to himself. "Don't be nervous, just make contact!"

Cal Carter's first pitch came in at the knees and Eddie swung hard. Missed by a mile. Strike one.

"Don't try to kill it!" he heard his dad yell in the bleachers.

"Just put it in play," Coach Haffner instructed.

Cal pushed up his glasses, squinting like he was trying to see the catcher. His big shoulders rocked in motion and the next thing Eddie knew, the ball was a foot from the plate. He tried to get his bat moving but by the time his wrists came around, the ball had hit the glove.

"Strike two!" the umpire said.

Eddie licked his lips. His mouth was dry and his palms were wet. He wiped them on his uniform shirt and stepped back into the box.

The windup, and the pitch. Crack! Eddie had swung at a high fastball and popped it up. The pitcher, Cal was signaling for it.

“Infield fly rule-batter’s out!” the umpire yelled.

All of the Coyote runners held. When Eddie came back to the dugout Darren tried to make him feel better.

“He’s fast,” Darren said, “and you almost got a hit the first time up. This time you just missed it. Man, just another inch lower and that would have been a grand slam!”

Eddie didn’t say anything. He appreciated Darren’s words, but he knew that the first time up he’d been lucky to hit it, and this time up he’d felt even worse. Chase was on deck looking angry.

John LaPointe stood in the batter’s box. Bases loaded, two outs, and he’d had a base hit last time at-bat. This would be a great time for a repeat performance.

Cal Carter bore down and got the count to one ball and two strikes against the big catcher. But then he made a mistake by throwing an off-speed pitch that got up high. John nailed it into left for a single.

Both Steve and Terry sprinted home for a 2-0 lead and Andy, running on contact, made third. Chase couldn’t help his own cause though, as he struck out looking to end the inning. However, that didn’t put a damper on the team’s spirit. They congratulated John, as he strapped on his gear, for coming through with the big hit.

In the bottom of the third, the Blazers got two on again, but couldn’t produce a run. With two outs, their batter had hit a long fly ball to deep center that looked for sure like a double and a tie score, but Darren reached up on the run and hauled it in two strides before the warning track. Between the earlier throw to home and this catch, Darren was single-handedly responsible for saving three runs. He was having a great game in center.

The Coyotes couldn’t add any insurance in the top of the fourth, going down one, two, three.

Then, as Eddie ran out to his position at first, he thought he felt a rain drop. Then another.

Oh no, he thought. We have a 2-0 lead against Cal Carter, Chase is pitching great, and now it starts to rain. We don't want to have to start this game over because of a rainout!