



Three Strikes and YOU'RE OUT

Sorry moments in sports history

LOOSE BALLS

When I was 11, I was playing softball with my cousins in a field behind our grandparents' house. I was up to bat. My hair was so long I could almost sit on it. They pitched the ball with such a spin on it that it flew into my hair and just hung there tangled. I screamed, and everyone was on the ground laughing. I yelled, "Don't just lay there, get it out of my hair!" It took them about 15 minutes to get it out. I wore my hair up to play softball after that.

Another time, in my early 20s, I was playing first base. Someone hit the ball, and it was thrown to me. It bounced in front of me and went up the back of my baggy shorts. I had to reach down the back of my shorts to get it off my rear. The worst of it was that a guy I had a crush on was behind me coaching first base. I was embarrassed, but I laughed about it like everyone else.

*Sharon Hardin, Rutherfordton,
Rutherford EMC*

MY FIRST SPRINT

At my first high school track meet, I ran the 100-meter race. At the starting line, I lined up with other runners. When the gun fired to signal the start of the race, I sprinted. I heard a second gunshot, but I kept running. As I was sprinting, I noticed that nobody was ahead or beside me. This made me run faster because I knew I was in the lead. Sprinting towards the finish line, I heard cheers from the crowd in the stands, and my teammates were coming from the finish line cheering me on. It was then that I realized my teammates were running onto the track, waving their hands, and yelling for me to stop. When I understood what they were yelling, I stopped running. Later, a teammate explained to me that a false start had occurred, signaled by the second gunshot. Any experienced track runner would have stopped after the second gunshot. But it was my first track meet and one I'll never forget.

*Sandra Bretschneider, Morganton,
Rutherford EMC*

KNOCK DOWN, DRAG OUT

About 15 years ago, when I was in high school, my church joined a youth basketball league. I was not very good at basketball, probably because I was scared of the ball. But my brother and his girlfriend were on the team and were our only hope.

We still didn't win, but we scored. One night, in one of our final games, we actually had a chance of winning (with no help from me). The other team tried to score but the ball bounced off the backboard. My brother and his girlfriend both jumped for the rebound, and on the way down my brother elbowed her in the head and knocked her out.

They paused the game while they revived her, then took her to the hospital.

We decided to play on despite the loss of one of our best players. As soon as we resumed, my brother dislocated his toe. He was unable to walk, and they couldn't relocate his toe on the courtside. As they carried my brother away to the hospital, the other team felt sorry for us and called the game.

Two days after a good report on the concussion and relocation of my brother's toe, we celebrated at Pizza Hut. We'd hoped to celebrate a win, but instead we celebrated surviving our basketball game.

Tabitha Ashley, Saluda, Rutherford EMC



Thanks to everyone who sent in stories of sorry moments in sports. You can see more on our Web site. Next month we'll publish some of your favorite photos. (Deadline was August 15.) For the remaining themes and rules of our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series, see page 19. Also, make plans to send in stories for our new series, "I Remember." See page 14.

MEANWHILE, AT HOME PLATE

I played catcher for my softball team when I was 9, because I wasn't much good at any other position. During one game, the batter had a great hit, so my team was in a frenzy trying to get the ball back to tag out runners. But no luck. One, two, three girls ran across home plate.

After they scored their runs, we couldn't find the ball! While my teammates looked all over the field and argued amongst themselves, I remained in my position, patiently waiting for the game to start back. Wouldn't you know it? The ball had been underneath me the whole time! At least I had on the catcher's mask to hide red cheeks as I threw the ball back to the pitcher. Needless to say, I was never anyone's MVP, and that was my last year playing softball, too.

*Tracey Hatcher, Chinquapin,
Four County Electric*

THE 3-POINT SHOT

I was the captain of my varsity cheer-leading squad my senior year. My best friend had always been one of the starters on the male varsity basketball team. He was a 4.0 student, valedictorian of my senior class, and has gone on to be quite successful in medicine. He and I did everything together, including attending prom. While we really were "just friends," I had always bragged to my family and friends about how smart he was.

One night at an away basketball game, he went to shoot a 3-point shot. He made it! He began to celebrate and looked around a bit confused when he noticed that no one else was cheering. He immediately realized what everyone else had already figured out. He had just scored three points for the opposing team.

Well, I could no longer refer to him as my "genius prom date." To this day, he is remembered as the guy who shot the basket at the wrong end of the court. We all still love him anyway.

Elizabeth Rice, Huntersville, EnergyUnited

GETTING TO FIRST BASE

Like many parents in North Carolina, mine enrolled me in tee-ball at age 5. I have few memories of the practices, but I do remember my first game.

The field was wet and covered in puddles from a spring rain. As I stepped up to take my first turn at bat in what would end up being a less than illustrious tee-ball career, my coach Mr. Knight walked up and whispered encouragingly in my ear. He said, while pointing to a large puddle in the path to first base, "Alright, son, after you hit the ball, run around that mud puddle right there as fast as you can."

Eager to please, I drew back my bat and smacked the ball off the tee. I paused, amazed at how hard and fast the ball had taken off. Then I heard my coach's gruff voice yelling, "Run!"

I took off toward first base and soon encountered the mud puddle. I began furiously running circles around the mud puddle. Excited that I was following my coach's instructions, I was unaware that the other team was getting close to retrieving my ball. After several more circles, I spotted my coach frantically telling me to move on to first base. I made it an instant before the first baseman caught the ball.

The many parents and others gathered to witness this grand event were highly amused by my puddle-circling skills. Now at age 37, I rarely see Coach Knight, but when I do, he always reminds me of my illustrious sports day many years ago.

*Roger Brandon, Fleetwood,
Blue Ridge Electric*

NICE MOVE

As Yogi Berra said, "It's 90 percent mental; the other half is physical."

Every coach I ever played under emphasized the mental part of the game. Regardless of the sport, the coaches worked us with hours and hours of drills in "real game situations."

In my sophomore year of high school, I was the football team's quarterback. We were 27 yards from the goal line, and we called a "student body left, quarterback bootleg right." I faked

the handoff, and the linebacker who keyed on me looked at me for a second and headed the opposite direction where everyone else was going. I took off with nothing but green pasture between me and a touchdown. Then I saw a lone defender on the 2-yard-line. Instead of doing what I had been trained to do (head fake, stutter step, roll, run away at an angle), I somehow decided it would be a more glorious score to plant my left cleats in the chest of that defender. As everyone cheered, I leapt toward the end zone, and ran right into that defender who promptly tackled me on the 2-yard-line.

The exhilaration from the sidelines turned into groans. My coach was smiling (but not happy) and yelling, "Why did you do that? Why didn't you head fake... or something?"

All of those practices! All those drills. And now just mental anguish. I really don't know why. 🙄

*Michael Allen, Indian Trail,
Union Power Cooperative*

send us your best EARN \$50

Here are the themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series. Send us your stories and pictures about these themes. If yours is chosen for publication, we'll send you \$50. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

November 2009 Family Discipline

Your ideas for teaching kids good manners and behavior. *Deadline: September 15*

December 2009 Funny Family Traditions

Strange traditions in your family, not necessarily just for holidays. *October: June 15*

Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. One entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos should be a minimum of 1200 by 800 pixels.
4. E-mailed or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published. We retain reprint rights.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
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