

THE SEVENTH INNING AT THE WATER BASEBALL GAME

By ARTHUR MORGAN LANGWORTHY

FRANK WILLIAMS had accepted his city cousin Joe Fisher's urgent request to come to town for the fourth of July week. Joe's chums also joined in the invitation, his previous visits having gained him a fine reputation as a resourceful leader and juvenile amusement provider. So Frank had barely arrived before he was planning how to spend Independence day. Here is the program Frank finally worked out:

"A. M.—Grand flotilla leaves Old wharf at 9:30 o'clock. Arrives Sandy beach at 10. After saluting American flag the water baseball game begins. Lunch after game.

"P. M.—Day fireworks to usher in reading of declaration of independence, followed by motor boat races and water sports."

This met with the boys' enthusiastic approval, and as it required several days' busy preparation I will pass over this time and begin the history of the great aquatic fourth, as Frank called it, at once.

The Old wharf juts out into the Prairie river, which flows through this suburban section of the city. Every boy who owned a boat and every other boy who could borrow one came there early on the morning of the fourth.

But judging from the frowning faces and excited gestures of some the occasion was not quite as pleasant as it ought to be.

Enough had happened the preceding night to spoil one event on the schedule, for the little waterside shed, which the Junior motorboat club used as its clubhouse, had been broken into and every motorboat stolen! Not a trace of the thief was discovered, but this didn't prevent a certain person being suspected. However, nothing could be done, and starting time compelled them to leave for Sandy beach minus their boats and their tempers, too.

But the splendid "grand flotilla" soon caused them to cheer up. And it was an imposing parade that sailed down stream to Sandy beach. The motor boat Zip II headed the line. She was the only unstolen motor boat left, and she was a real one and not a toy model like those taken. You probably remember Zip II if you read what Frank did with her after the great junior boat regatta.

The Zip II was gayly decorated with bunting and made slow progress because of her rather long "tow," which was hemmed in on either side by all sorts of water craft, from sailboats to rowboats, rigged out with flags and banging small cannon every other minute.

Finally the Zip II arrived at the beach and the ceremony of saluting the American flag took place. A large silk flag was unfurled at her bow, while every one took off his hat first and fired off crackers and toy cannons in a salute.

The Zip proceeded to dispose of her tow, and we come to the "water baseball" section of the program, for the "tow" consisted of no less than nine small rafts. But first a great shedding of clothes occurred in the bathhouses along shore, as everybody put on bathing suits. Then they laid out the "playing field" on the broad reach of smooth water off Sandy beach. Each of those nine rafts represented a player's position on the water diamond. The largest raft, made of pine boards 12 feet long by 6 feet wide, however, contained three positions—for catcher, batter and umpire—with a home plate marked out. First, second and third base floats were 6 feet square and large enough to hold both base "swimmers" and basemen. Pitcher's, short-stop's and the three outfield floats were 4 feet square and only buoyant enough to support the single player necessary for these positions. The water diamond was laid out on a much smaller scale than the shore diamond, being only about two-thirds as large.

The opposing teams were the Water Dogs, who were really proficient water baseball players, and the Land Crabs. The Land Crabs, as the Water Dogs nicknamed them, were known ashore as the Invincibles and boasted that "baseball was baseball on land or water," and they'd show the Water Dogs "some real baseball now," etc.

Frank played the part of umpire and general director, for when you arrive at the dignity of a "promoter of amusement enterprises" you can't very well play on one side and direct both sides. So Frank in his bathing costume swam to the umpire's position on the big float. Ten minutes was given to the accompanying fleet to resolve itself into a lot of floating grand stands spread out in a half circle at the back and sides of the water diamond, leaving the outfield a free expanse of water stretching away for more than a hundred and fifty yards across the river.

The Water Dogs took the field first. When all were stationed on their proper floats the first "batter up" stepped to the "plate" on the big raft.

"Play ball!" cried Frank, and the game began. It was a jolly game to watch, for the harder the players work to win the funnier they grow. It is one thing to be a star player ashore and quite another to repeat your performance on a wobbly little float that turns over if you look at it. And the Land Crabs found that out during the early innings of the great fourth of



July match. And that big rubber ball which took the place of their regulation baseball, and looked as big as a balloon, was about the most slippery object they ever tried to handle, especially when they had to swim for it. Besides that, there were no "fouls" in this game, as every time the batter hit the ball it was "fair," no matter where it struck, and the batsman must swim for first. A broad flat bat was used, shaped somewhat like a cricket bat, but aside from this innovation and the larger ball the game was practically the same as ashore.

After six wet, merry innings were splashed through to the delight of the audience, the score stood 9 to 3 in favor of the Water Dogs, who "joshed" their opponents unmercifully.

And now came the "lucky seventh." "Everybody up!" yelled the crowd, determined to follow the time honored custom of the shore games, where all rise in their seats at the beginning of the seventh inning and stretch for luck.

But probably none present will ever see such another seventh as this was destined to be! A disaster occurred right at the start that seemed to omen anything but good luck. The "Everybody up!" business was overdone in one of the floating grandstands and it upset. Great excitement ensued as volunteer young life savers rescued some bedraggled little girls from the four feet of watery depths.

Shortly after this unpleasant accident Frank happened to glance down the river, when something caught his eye. He uttered an exclamation of surprise and called the attention of the catcher, Joe Fisher, to it.

Joe looked hard and then turned a long face to Frank. "No doubt of it; I'd know the Big Chief anywhere. I wonder what Ben's up to now."

For the Big Chief belonged to Ben Jordan, and its cruises along the river had the reputation of usually terminating in some outrageous piece of mischief. It was a rakish, piratical looking sloop, and its black paint made it look more forbidding than ever as it glided up the river. A closer view showed it crowded with Ben's "gang" and "armed to the teeth." They began firing re-

volvers and shooting off firecrackers as they approached, and the game came to a pause as players and spectators gazed open mouthed at what happened next.

For when the Big Chief arrived at the edge of the outfield Ben suddenly drew the canvas covering off something in the bow and revealed a brass cannon that glittered in the sunlight.

"Play ball!" yelled Frank, trying to dispel the panic he saw coming. "Say, don't let that fellow scare you; keep right on with the game!" he commanded, and the players reluctantly continued, but the errors were awful, because the side in the field kept one eye on the Big Chief. As the Land Crabs were at bat, they took advantage of the Water Dogs' inattention and piled up seven runs, taking the lead and making the score—Land Crabs, 10; Water Dogs, 9. The inning was still unfinished when Ben's next move interrupted the game completely. For most of the ball players suddenly found too deep a "personal interest" in what took place now to think of the game.

A cry of rage went up as they watched the Big Chief.

"Look! Look! Our motor boats! We knew Ben Jordan took 'em—this proves it!" they cried, for the boats were in plain sight and purposely held up by Ben and his "gang," so no mistake could be made. Yes, Ben Jordan was the midnight raider. He had evidently not forgiven Joe Fisher's triumph over him, and what followed after the Junior motor boat regatta, of which perhaps you've read.

Still, considering what now happened, you couldn't call him a thief, for, to the astonishment of his enemies, he gave an order: two of the boats were launched in the water, and then started to race directly back to their rightful owners. Ben was returning the motor boats.

Great was the outcry against Ben Jordan's act of revenge. To give Ben the credit, it might be said he didn't intend to hurt any one. His short fuses proved this in the case of the Fried Egg, and in the other racers that followed.

Ben's raid had netted him 15 boats,

THE MANCHURIAN TIGER

The long haired tiger is found throughout Manchuria wherever there is hilly country, but I never heard of them being found on the plains. They are extremely difficult to bag and are by no means numerous. The only time when it would be possible to systematically hunt them would be in the winter, when the snow is on the ground; the months of January and February would be the best. I hunted in Manchuria in October and November, and although I saw a good deal of spoor, I never saw or heard a tiger or even heard of one having been seen in the neighborhood.

A Chinese farmer told me that during an experience extending over 40 years he had only twice seen a tiger; this man was a keen hunter and did not confine himself to one district, so that tigers must be very scarce. Before the snow falls there is really no method that one can adopt for tiger hunting. The natives hold the tiger in a certain amount of veneration and awe and would not, I fancy, be willing to impart any information even if they had it. I tried leaving out kills, but met with no success. Any attempt at beating the thickets and long grass would be quite out of the question, as it would be impossible to get the beaters, and the chance of coming unexpectedly on a tiger is very small.

A few tigers are, however, trapped and shot every winter by native hunters, and the procedure seems to be as follows: Whenever fresh tiger tracks are seen in the snow they are followed up by two or three men, and if they are discovered early in the day and the sun is shining the tiger is often found lying asleep among rocks on the crest of a ridge. If he be found in this way the hunters creep up silently and all

fire at the animal together, as no Chinese would venture to tackle a tiger single handed. If, however, the spoor is not seen till late in the day, and if the weather be very cloudy the hunters content themselves with watching at some point where the tiger has passed, as they say it always comes back on its tracks, and they may be able to get a shot as it passes, or if it does so in the night they can follow it up the next day.

I was unable to verify this statement, as although I did once find tracks in the snow, they were soon obliterated by fresh snow falling. The winters in Manchuria are very severe, and tents could not possibly be used. One would have to live in one of the sable trappers' huts that are scattered through the forest.

Tigers do occur in Korea, at any rate in the north, but from what I have heard the conditions there are even more unfavorable than in Manchuria, and the country has been in a very unsettled state since the Japanese occupation. In addition to tigers the following game may be found in Manchuria: Bear (black and brown), wapiti, Sika deer (two species), roe deer, serow, wild pig, leopard and lynx—all, however, very scarce and hard to bag, with the exception of roe deer and pig.

Her Name for Him

"Mother," said a little girl who is very apt at naming things to suit herself, as the newsboy on the train entered the car with a large basket of fruit on his shoulder, "here comes the grocery brakesman!"

It's a good thing that poverty is no disgrace, or lots of us would be very disgraceful.

and he compelled their horror stricken owners to sit helplessly by and witness their destruction as they raced in.

That large sinister looking brass cannon trained on the diamond and the flourishing revolvers prevented any attack upon the Big Chief. But six boats were saved at that. The fuses went out on four, and daring under water swimming by Joe Fisher saved the others, the boy diving under and swamping them by grasping their keels as they passed, thus quenching the burning fuses.

This nettled Ben, who now boldly sailed the Big Chief right into the water diamond, relying on the brass cannon and the sight of his "gang's" revolvers to drive Frank's party off.

He seemed in a fair way to accomplish this final act of revenge, judging from the manner the "grandstands" scurried up the river. Frank was simply boiling over with anger at seeing Ben smash all his cherished plans for the fourth. He had retreated on board the Zip II with Joe Fisher, who was making ready to "run for it."

Frank jumped to where Joe was leaning over the motor and shouted:

"Joe, I've got a scheme! If you'll help carry it through maybe we'll win yet. I'll bet those pistols are only loaded with blanks—and the cannon, too!" He quickly explained his plan to Joe, who instantly acted. Ben saw the Zip II start upstream, but his elation quickly abated when this "real thing" in motor boats only followed the retreating flotilla a few hundred feet. Then she turned about and began to fly through the water, headed straight for the Big Chief!

Ben, seeing what this new move would mean, hastily tried to back out of the way, but the Big Chief only sluggishly responded in the light breeze to Ben's excited attempt to bring her about. The Zip II increased her speed at every foot, and as she was a larger, stronger boat than the Big Chief Ben had cause for alarm.

He screamed at Frank to steer off or he'd fire, but Frank at the steering wheel up forward in the little cockpit only crouched lower, while Ben drenched the engine with more oil.

Crash! But it was another sound besides the boom of the brass cannon! The Zip II struck Ben's craft squarely athwart her side. The gunwale caved in like pasteboard as the Zip's sharp prow splintered the light hull below the water line! Frank had not thought of doing any damage. He had simply intended to capsize the Big Chief in the shallows, but he miscalculated the Zip II's power.

But now see what happened! The collision was so tremendous that the force of impact happened to explode a box of giant torpedoes that stood up against the gunwale. This explosion ignited the Big Chief's entire cargo of firecrackers and powder. And as Frank, unhurt but badly shaken up from the shock of the collision and the cannon's discharge, backed the Zip II off he saw the Big Chief leap into flames, while Ben and his gang jumped overboard into the shallow water. One explosion followed another, until the piratical Big Chief, her hold a sieve, sank to the bottom of the Prairie river, only her burning mast and sail above the water!

Fortunately none of Ben's band was hurt, and they all escaped safely to shore, where they had the further humiliation of seeing Frank carry out the rest of his fourth of July program. It must have been a bitter sight after losing the Big Chief. Still, Ben had nothing but his own vengeful disposition to blame for everything.

But it took some little time for the excited teams to settle down and really play ball, so Frank adjourned the game until afternoon. The "day fireworks" had mostly been shot off by the time their turn arrived on the schedule, but the declaration of independence was read with great zest, and some of the audience interpreted it with quite a new meaning by pointing to the charred remains of the Big Chief, which seemed to stand as a monument of victory achieved by liberty and justice over oppression and injustice.

And the battle spirit quite permeated the Water Dogs, for when Frank ordered the interrupted seventh to be played out they seemed more fish than human. Then they showed the Land Crabs the fine points of the game and completed the inning by "pulling off" a trick that can only happen in water baseball.

A great "stunt" is to turn and swing with the ball as it passes you. A good batsman can knock what would be called on land a "foul" right over the catcher's head for a home run. And that's exactly what one of the Water Dogs did. The bases were full, too, and when he had cleared them the score stood 15 to 10 in favor of the Water Dogs.

The next two innings made no difference in the score, and the game ended a victory for the Water Dogs. The six rescued motor boats enabled Frank to hold the motor boat races and round out his great aquatic fourth successfully.

And when they asked him at home what kind of a time he'd had he said it was the most glorious fourth he'd ever spent, as well as being the most lively seventh inning that ever happened.