

Dog in the Dugout

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From the diary of Angel Williams,
age 15

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Today was the best day of my life. I've wanted a puppy for as long as I can remember, and my dad finally agreed I could get one, but only on one condition. I had to hit a home run in today's game against the Edmonds Express.

I was excited, but I knew it wasn't going to be easy. The Express' pitcher, Amy Adams, was really good. She threw super hard, and she had a bunch of different pitches, including a nasty changeup that was nearly impossible to hit. I've never seen a girl throw a changeup as well as Amy. It was at least twenty-five miles per hour slower than her other pitches, and she used it to strike me out easily during my first two at-bats.

But that wasn't my biggest concern. My biggest concern was I had never hit a home run before. Never. In my entire life. I've played fastpitch softball for as long as I can remember, and I'm a good hitter (most days), but for some strange reason I had never hit a home run.

But then again, I had never had so much at stake. I wanted that puppy, and I wanted it bad. So I was going to hit a home run if it killed me.

I took a deep breath as I stepped into the batter's box. I dug my cleats into the dirt. I was nervous. Big time. It was the bottom of the seventh inning, so it was my last chance. I glanced at the stands and saw my dad sitting in the bleachers with the rest of the parents, watching

attentively. My team, the Seattle Sky, was losing 6-5 with two outs, but the bases were loaded so everyone was hoping I'd get a hit and we'd come from behind to win.

But I didn't care about that.

I just wanted that dog.

The first pitch was a nasty fastball, high and away. I knew I shouldn't swing at it, because it wasn't a strike, but I was too excited and I swung anyway.

"Strike one," blue shouted. In softball, we call the umpires blue because they wear blue uniforms.

I looked over at the stands. The parents (especially my dad) weren't happy with that swing at all.

The next pitch was in the dirt, for a ball, as was the one after that, but the fourth was pure heat. It blew by me so fast I didn't even have a chance to swing at it.

"Strike two," blue shouted.

I stepped out of the batter's box. My coach, John Smith, sent me signals from the third base coach's box, but I wasn't paying any attention at all. I was down to my last chance. One more strike and it was over. I could kiss that puppy goodbye.

Luckily for me, one more strike never happened. Amy tried to finish me off with her patented changeup, just like she had done earlier in the game (twice), but I was ready this time. I kept my hands back until the very last second, then swung with everything I had. Every muscle in my body tightened as I hit it.

And I didn't just hit it. I crushed it. Harder than I'd ever hit a ball before. It leaped off of my bat and raced toward the outfield fence. It was a monster shot, the best I've ever hit, and it cleared the fence by at least twenty feet (maybe more).

When I got to home plate, my teammates tackled me. It was a great pig pile, and I had tears of joy in my eyes. Everyone thought I was happy because I had just won the game, but my happiness had nothing to do with that. All I cared about was my puppy. I could hardly believe it, but I had done it.

And believe it or not, I had already picked out a name.

Homer.