



*Why the Big Ball Game  
Between Hot Grounders and  
the Grand Standers Was a  
Hot Game*

Carl Sandburg  
North American

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*Advanced  
4 min read*

Up near the Village of Cream Puffs is a string of ball towns hiding in the tall grass. Passengers in the railroad trains look out of the windows and the tall grass stands up so they can't see the ball towns. But the ball towns are there and the tall grass is full of pitchers, catchers, basemen, fielders, short stops, sluggers, southpaws and backstops. They play ball till dark and after dark they talk ball.

The big fast ballplayers in the Rootabaga Country all come from these ball towns in the tall grass. The towns used to have names like names in books. But now the names are all like ball talk: Knock the Cover Off, Home Plate, Chest Protector, Grand Stand, Nine Innings, Three Balls and Two Strikes, Bases Full and Two Out, Big League, Bush League, Hot Grounder, Out Drop, Bee Liner, Muffs and Pick Ups, Slide Kelly Slide, Paste It On the Nose. Now the Night Policeman in the Village of Cream Puffs stopped in at the Cigar Store one night and a

gang of cub ballplayers loafing and talking ball talk asked him if there was anything in the wind. And he told them this happening: "I was sitting on the front steps of the post office last night thinking how many letters get lost and how many letters never get answered.

A ballplayer came along with a package and said his name was Butter Fingers and he was the heavy hitter, the hard slugger, for the Grand Stand ball team playing a championship game the day before with the Hot Grounders ball team. He came to the Village of Cream Puffs the day before the game, found a snoox and a gringo and got the snoox and the gringo to make him a home run shirt. Wearing a home run shirt, he told me, you knock a home run every time you come to bat. He said he knocked a home run every time he came to bat, and it was his home runs won the game for the Grand Standers. He was carrying a package and said the home run shirt was in the package and he was taking it back to the snoox and the gringo because he promised he wouldn't keep it, and it belonged to the snoox and the gringo and they only rented it to him for the championship game. The last I saw of him he was hot-footing it pitty-pat pitty-pat up the street with the package.

"Well, I just said tra-la-loo to Butter Fingers when along comes another ballplayer. He had a package too, and he said his name was Three Strikes, and he was the left-handed southpaw pitcher for the Hot Grounders team the day before playing a game against the Grand Stand team. He said he knew unless he put over some classy pitching the game was lost and everything was goose eggs. So he came to the Village of Cream Puffs the day before the game, found a snoox and a gringo and got the snoox and the gringo to make him a spitball shirt. A spitball looks easy, he told me, but it has smoke and whiskers and nobody can touch it. He said he handed the Grand Standers a line of inshoots close to their chins and they never got to first base.

Three Strikes was carrying a package and he said the spitball shirt was in the package, and he was taking it back to the snoox and the gringo because he promised he wouldn't keep it and it belonged to the snoox and the gringo and they only rented it to him. The last I saw of him he was hot-footing it pitty-pat pitty-pat up the street with a package." The gang of cub ballplayers in the Cigar, Store asked the Night Policeman, "Who won the game? Was it the Grand Standers or the Hot Grounders took the grawy?" You can search me for the answer," he told the boys. "If the snoox and the gringo come past the post office to-night when I sit on the front steps wondering how so many letters get lost and how so many never get answered, I will ask the snoox and the gringo and if they tell me to-night I'll tell you to-morrow night."

And ever since then when they talk ball talk in the ball towns hiding in the tall grass they say the only sure way

to win a ball game is to have a pitcher with a spitball shirt and over that a home run shirt, both made by a snoox and a gringo.

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