

KICKBALL, NOT BASEBALL

“I hate recess!” mumbled Andrew as he stared out his classroom window at the empty playground. Every day during recess, he sat on the sidelines of the kickball game. No one ever asked him to play.

“Andrew?” said Mrs. O’Donnell, his teacher.

Ugh! Caught daydreaming, he blushed and looked around. Everyone in class giggled or smirked, but not Mrs. O’Donnell.

“Andrew, would you lead the class to recess?”

“Okay.”

The bell rang and everyone cheered. Everyone except Andrew.

On the playground, Andrew trudged over to a bench. He watched his classmates start the daily kickball game. Mrs. O’Donnell approached Andrew.

“Don’t you want to join the game?”

“No thanks, Mrs. O’Donnell.”

Andrew sighed. The day was perfect for the game. The sun was shining in a clear blue sky and a breeze blew cool air across Andrew's face.

"They'd like you to play, Andrew."

"I'm no good at kickball. I've never played before."

"That's okay, dear, you can learn to play."

Mrs. O'Donnell patted his shoulder and walked away. Andrew sat in silence, annoyed that his classmates played kickball instead of baseball. Everyone knew how to play baseball.

"Look out!"

Andrew looked up to see a dusty red kickball bouncing toward him. Leaping up, he grabbed the ball with both hands. A slender boy wearing jeans with a green patch over the left knee ran up to him.

"Nice stop," said the boy. "I'm Adam. Want to play?"

"Okay," stammered Andrew, "but I've never played kickball."

"It's just like baseball."

Andrew followed him onto the field, his heart beating with fear.

"You're up, kid!" called an older boy.

Andrew hurried to home plate. The pitcher rolled the ball toward him. It spun wildly on its course. Clenching his fists, Andrew kicked it as hard as he could. BOINK! The ball bounced off the side of his foot and tumbled into the trees.

"Foul ball!"

Head down, Andrew started to walk away. He heard snickering.

"He gets another chance!" hollered Adam.

The second pitch was just as wild as the first. Clenching his fists again, Andrew ran and met the ball, his eyes following its wobbly path. WHAM! He kicked the ball high over the pitcher's head into center field.

“Run!”

He dashed to first base.

“Get the ball!”

He ran to second base.

“Hurry!”

As Andrew rounded third, he felt his heart pounding, his lungs ready to burst.

“Slide!”

Andrew dove toward home plate, the kickball whizzing overhead and bouncing off the backstop. As the dust settled, he felt his knee burning and saw home plate beneath him.

“Homerun!”

Adam ran up and helped Andrew to his feet as others circled him.

“Awesome!” said Adam. “What’s your name?”

“Andrew.”

“You need a patch for your jeans, too,” said Adam, laughing. Andrew looked down and saw a hole in his jeans, his scraped knee caked in dirt.

Suddenly, the bell rang. Recess was over. Andrew looked around at his new friends and at the kickball field.

“I don’t want to go in,” he said with a grin. “I love recess.”