

April 13, 2022, Softball Contest Between Home Tint and Farmers Insurance

The National Anthem had barely been completed before the hits started flying at this evening's game between Tom Neagli's (3/4, RBI) visiting Home Tints and Sean Curry's Farmers. Maybe it was the rousing music hand-picked by play-by-play announcer Peter Day. Or God's gift of a mild northern breeze on a clear, mid-70's evening. Or possibly the loud and supportive stadium-packed crowd on hand – including the likes of the ticket-season-holding Hinsons, Bob “Yes, I'm-getting-younger-every-year” Kuhfuss, Mike “Git-er-Done” Conley, and many other softball-loving Ranchers. Celebrities were spotted signing autographs for the fans as well – stars such as Kirk Douglas (scoreboard operator), Danny Thomas (Farmers' 2B), and ... Jim Reese.

Dave Riddle's (4/4) ringing shot to left was the first of 8 hits by the HT's in the 1st inning, netting them 5 runs on the scoreboard. Back-to-back-to-back doubles by Dale Frazier (4/4, 2-doubles), Mike Lorenc (3/4, HR, 5 RBI), and John McNemar (2/4, double) temporarily stunned the Farmers' defense. But they rebounded quickly once they came to the plate in the bottom of the inning. #50 – Bob Laderach (3/4) ignited the Farmers' attack with a simple ground ball to 2nd ... that he beat out. You could hear the ever-quotable Jim Reese commenting in the stands, “gotta love the guy that can outrun a ground ball to 2nd”. The hits kept coming until Danny Thomas (2/4, 3 RBI) provided the closing shot with a deep fly to center over everyone's head and, boom, and, the game was tied, **5-5, after 1.**

In the top of the 2nd, John Gauthier (4/4, 2 doubled) speared a line drive off the bat of Marlene McNemar (2/3, 2 RBI), then fired to 1st for an inning-ending double play, netting HT's with no runs. George Keller (2/3, double) led off the Farmers 2nd with a screamer to center and, by the time Steve Tafoya (3/4, 3 RBI) was providing a run-scoring single to left, the tally was **9-5, Farmers, after 2.** Had it not been for the heads-up play by pitcher Paul Vargo (3/4, RBI), the score would have been 10-5. On the last play of the inning, hard-hitting 4-hole slugger Jackie Fox (2/4) laced a hard hit up the middle – literally. Paul let the ball pass right through his legs (as he was not a designated fielder) to the SS (a designated fielder) who fielded the ball and stepped on second for the force out to end the inning.

Mike Flatt provided the loudest fireworks of the evening in the top of the 3rd with a long HR drive to the fence, providing Mike and Dave Riddle the opportunity to cross the plate. But no more. Farmers implemented the shift of all shifts with FIVE outfielders in right field when Dale Frazier came to the plate. Dale – that is a true sign of respect. After holding Dale to a double, Jackie Fox made a great running catch in deep center field off Mike Lorenc's bat, and the inning ended with no further damage. **After 3, Farmers up 9-7.**

More impressive glove work was on display in the 4th, beginning with a Kelly Wissink (3/4, RBI) catch of a high pop behind home plate. The inning ended when SS Mike Lorenc went far to his right to grab a hard ground ball, then turned and threw wide to first baseman Mike (HR) Flatt, who came off the bag to make the catch-and-tag all in one motion. Awesome. In between those two plays, 9 more runs scored. **After 4, Farmers were still leading 14-11.**

The 5th inning was Home Tint's inning. After a leadoff single by Dale F, hard-hitting Mike Lorenc tapped a slow grounder to third that turned into a 2-run homerun. Yeah, it happens sometimes. The hits started coming after that - provided by Lisa McGlaston (3/4), Dianna Duncan (3/4, 4 RBI), Jeff Duncan (4/4), Paul Vargo, and the Neagli duo (Killer and Captain Tom – sounds like a rock band, right?). Between all those hits was a great running shoestring catch by nimble center fielder Bill Smiley (3/4, double, 2 RBI). In the end, however, 5 more HT runs on the board. Farmers followed with 2 of their own, and the score was tied going into the 6th, **16-16**.

Between innings, Peter Day had the place rocking with the loud, thunderous ...“WE WILL ... WE WILL ... ROCK YOU”. Home Tint could smell blood at this point. Having been behind the entire game, they put the pedal to the metal and piled on 5 more big ones. Ty Nelson (2/3, RBI) started the inning off with a triple, and boom 5 more runs for the Visitors. When the Farmers were unable to score in the bottom of the 6th, Home Tint stayed in the field and **Farmers** batted in the Buffet Inning, **down 21-16** (Flip-Flop). The Farmers managed to get 2 on base, but with 2 out, the future looked bleak for the home team. But no one was leaving the stands early. Things started to happen for the Farmers. Kelly Wissink singled home a run. Jay Wissink (4/4, 2 RBI) singled home a run. Sean Curry (3/4, double, RBI) doubled home a run. And Danny Thomas singled home the tying runs before the final out was made. Holy Cow. We've got a tie game going into the final at-bat. Home Tint's turn. After Jeff D and Paul V reached base on singles, the mighty **Killer** – Rosemary Neagli (4/4, 4 RBI) comes walking to the plate. Having already been at bat 3 times before, and having delivered three RBI-singles, could she do it one ... more ... time? Ball one. Foul. Sean pitches a 12-foot arching curveball. Boom. Killer connects. The ball goes long, it goes high (real high) and drops safely into right field for a game-producing, run-scoring single to win ... the ... game. Go to war, Miss Agnes (as Chuck Thompson used to say, on Baltimore Orioles WJZ-TV). **Home Tint** comes from behind to win this nail-biter **22 – 21** over the never-give-up Farmers. Another Barn-Burner at Robson's Field of Dreams. Can't wait to see what happens here tomorrow - Thursday evening.

George Wendt, thanks for keeping the scorebook for this one. And to our very active and accurate umpires - Bob Collins, Gary Warrick, and Rocky Dudley - who had several very close calls to make this evening. By the way, Gary, that was a classic dive to the ground when you were trying to avoid Dave Riddle's screamer over second in the 6th.

Footnote: These two teams have played 3 games each – 6 games. And five of those games have been won or lost by 1-run. Parity at RRSA.

Cheers,

Dale Hill