

7 April 22 Article by Liz Malone

It was a balmy 68 degrees, with wind gusts close to 30 mph, at the Field of Dreams on Thursday evening, as State Farm took on Rodney Landscaping in a high scoring battle of the bats that included no less than five...count 'em...FIVE home runs (four inside the parkers and one that sailed over the right field fence, courtesy of Mr. Blecher), two triples, NINETEEN doubles, and a multitude of singles too numerous to count! The crowd was a bit sparse on this wildly windy night, but those of us that were there were in for a treat! Just as Dorothy and Toto were seen flying overhead toward Oz, all six of us (plus an adorable dog named Stan) removed our hats, rose to our feet, and turned to face the flag as our announcer, Jim Reese, always a crowd pleaser, got things started with the playing of our National Anthem. George Wendt, heading up the crew in blue, then quickly called the first batter to the plate, and we were underway.

The first inning was an enticing foreshadowing of things to come. At the top of the inning, Rodney Landscaping sent seven batters to the plate, scattering line drives, high fly balls, and hard grounders to every corner of the field and scoring five runs before barely ten minutes had passed. When State Farm stepped up to the plate in the person of Scott (Scooter) Wilson, they knew they had their work cut out for them. Not one to procrastinate when there is a job to be done, Scooter started them off with a high fly ball to center field. The wind got a hold of that ball, and it just took off. One second, the center fielder was looking the ball into his glove, and the next thing he knew, he was looking over his shoulder watching it hit the center field fence. Well, "Scooter" is called "Scooter" for a reason! He was off to races! A lead off inside the park home run! Oh my! Next up...Coco Ondina. Hard line drive out to right field and yes...you guessed it...he rounded the bases as well, and just like that, State Farm had two runs on the board. Pete Martin stepped up next, lofting a high fly ball toward center field. The wind played tricks with the outfielders once again, pushing the ball away from the center fielder toward right center field where it dropped in for a double. Johnny B. then stepped up to bat and clearly thought this windfest looked like fun, as he drove a long high fly ball deep, deep, deep...gone! Over the right field fence! Folks...that marked the third home run of the inning. It was going to be quite a night! But State Farm wasn't done. Gary Warrick immediately stepped in and muscled a ball into left field for a stand up triple. Our very own Bob Collins was right there at 3rd base to make the call. Safe at third...Tracy Kucharski up to bat. A strong single to the right side of the infield drove Gary in for run number five and ended the inning. Phew! End of one...we're all tied up. 5-5.

Inning number two was more of the same. The bats did not slow down. The runners did not slow down. The high fly balls and hard line drives did not slow down. And maybe most importantly, the wind did not slow down. Doubles off the bats of David Carl, Pat Snider, Ron Schwertner and Jose Raices combined with hard singles by the Hinson duo (Debbie and Jerry) and Alan Stark led to another five run inning for Rodney Landscaping. And, to keep this record crowd (now up to 11 shivering humans...and one faithful dog) on the edge of their seats, State Farm answered with five more of their own. The RBI's were piling up. By the end of the second inning, all but two of the State Farm players had crossed the plate. Rodney Landscaping wasn't far behind, and if Mr. Reese's game analysis is to be believed, even the wind had been credited with an RBI or two. End of two...score still tied, 10-10.

On to the middle innings...

The top of the third brought the first 1-2-3-ish inning in this strong offensive battle. Strange word...ish. You know...like "almost...but not quite." State Farm tried, but Steve Bentley poked

one through the left side of the infield for the visiting team's lone hit. In the bottom half of the inning, State Farm continued to use a combination of hard line drives and high fly balls swirling around in the atmosphere to keep the Rodney Landscaping defense off balance and put five more runs on the board. As we headed into the fourth, Rodney Landscaping was itching for a comeback. Dan Patrick got the ball rolling with a strategically placed ground ball down the third baseline that, despite Pete Martin's best efforts to fan over the baseline with his glove, remained just barely in fair territory. With one out on the board, Alan Stark's line drive to left moved Dan over to second for Debbie Hinson, who sent a shot between shortstop and third to load the bases. With Luay Ashoo stepping into the box, Rodney Landscaping was threatening a big inning! The pitch dropped in and Luay nailed it...right on the sweet spot...a sharply hit line drive! Unfortunately for Luay and his RL teammates, it was hit directly at the shortstop, Coco Ondina, who made the catch and, in a heads up play, threw immediately to third, doubling off the runner and ending the inning...and the rally. Ouch! State Farm then added five more runs in their half of the inning so that at the end of four, State Farm had taken the lead, 20 - 10.

So now..let's end this thing...

In the fifth inning State Farm's defense held Rodney Landscaping to just one hit off the bat of Jose Raisces, a hard shot single straight up the middle. Rodney Landscaping's defense kicked in as well, limiting State Farm to just two runs off four hits. The highlight of the inning was yet one more inside the park homerun, this time off the bat of State Farm's Gary Warrick. This brought us to the sixth inning, during which Rodney Landscaping turned the tables and scored a run of their own while holding State Farm to just two hits, and ending the inning with a stunning double play at third base by golden glover, Pat Snider, who scooped up a chopper off the bat of Arnie Randall, tagged his bag for the quick out, and launched a rocket over to first for the inning ending double play. Kudos to first base umpire, Mike Conley, who was right there to make the call. End of six...State Farm still led 22 - 11...but the buffet inning had arrived, and...well...

Alan Stark began the inning with an infield hit that landed him on second base with no outs and Debbie Hinson headed to the plate. A hard shot to short landed Debbie on second base, watching Alan cross the plate, and bringing RL one run closer to victory. Luay then sent a fly ball out to center field, moving Debbie to third. When Ron Schwertner stepped into the box, he had runners on the corners with one out, RL down by 10. Ron sent the ball sailing out to left center field for one of those nineteen doubles I mentioned earlier, scoring Debbie and sending Luay to third. State Farm's lead was down to single digits! Jerry Hinson drove in another run with a hard ground ball to short that allowed Luay to score from third. Rodney Landscaping was closing in! Larry Guerra then launched a deep fly ball to right field, sending Ron hustling toward home, and leaving Larry standing proudly on third base with an RBI triple. State Farm now led by eight, with Steve Bentley headed to the plate. Steve tried the old squeeze play with a "bunt" in front of the plate that he beat out for an infield hit. Men on first and third...two out. Rodney Landscaping were threatening once again! State Farm pitcher, Gary Warrick, finally decided he had seen enough! He bore down hard on the next batter, recording a strike out for the final out of the game and saving the day for State Farm gray.

According to the official scorekeeper, Peter Day, and scoreboard operator, Sean Curry, the final tally of Windfest 2022 was State Farm 22 - Rodney Landscaping 15. Great job, gentlemen!

And just like that, week two is in the books. Each team gathered their bats, bags, and gloves and headed off into the night to enjoy some good grub, spend time with friends new and old,

and relive the glory of the game at the after parties. Thanks to all the loyal fans who came out this week. Looking forward to seeing you at the field for week 3!