

28 March 2024

Jeff Duncan, thanks for opting to cover the Farmers - Safe Lifts game in lieu of the Rangers Season Opener. Here ya' go, folks:

Your intrepid sports reporter was offered two choices this week from his sports desk boss. One choice was the Texas Ranger's home opener and the other choice was the Robson Ranch softball game between Safe Lifts and Farmers Insurance. I chose Robson Ranch softball for the fun, camaraderie, friendships and the pure joy of watching "slightly" older folks play a game just for fun. As it turns out, it was the correct decision as this was one heck of a softball game that went to the buffet inning for the outcome.

The blue crew for the game were all veteran umpires led by George Wendt at home plate, Clyde Ziegler at first base and the newly retired Keven Buckrucker at third base. In the press box, Peter Day handled the play by play, Bob Riley cooked the scorebook and Linda Cawley handled the scoreboard. Our own Rhonda Gunther gave a stirring rendition of our national anthem and George says let's play ball. Safe Lifts is a new team sponsor this year and they sported bright optic orange jerseys that made many in the stands and the field wishing they had brought their "solar eclipse" glasses to the game. Led by rookie manager Mike Lorenc, they came to bat first against Farmers Insurance led by Mike Braam.

Farmers pitcher Sharon Deputy takes the mound and the Safe Lifts hitters put the pressure on early. Kelly Wissink draws a walk and hubby Jay hits into a fielder's choice. Tim Jeske bangs out a single and manager Mike draws a walk to load the bases. Tournament star Ken Ford singles in two runs. Dan Shanahan gets an RBI with a single and Tom Gunther also singles home a run. Bryan Bravard coaxes a walk to load the bases and Mindy Shanahan singles to drive in the 5th run. Farmers grabs their bats to face veteran pitcher Sean Curry. Becky Milby leads off with a single and Jerry Bidindo adds another single. Andy Bradshaw goes to the fence for a 2 RBI double. Greg McElyea singles to put runners at the corners. Bill Maynard hits into a fielders choice but gets a run in. Mike Braam doubles but Safe Lifts gets the third out to end the threat. It's 5 to 3 in favor of Safe Lifts as the inning ends.

Safe Lifts starts the second inning with three consecutive singles by Jim Burke, Joe Boudreau and Kelly W to load the bases. Jay W singles to bring home a run and the bases remain loaded. Tim Jeske draws a walk to bring in a run and manager Mike L brings in another run with a single. Safe Lifts tried to sneak another run in on the same play but Farmers gets an out with a close play at the plate. Sean C doubles to bring home another run and Safe Lifts ends up with four runs. Farmers comes to the plate and they were only able to get a hard hit single by David Ferneding as the Safe Lifts defense get three quick outs. Safe Lifts is cruising as the score is 9-3 in their favor.

Farmers rookie pitcher David Ferneding takes the mound and Tom Gunther greets him with a single. Bryan B singles and Tom Gunther gets aggressive on the bases and scores on a close play at the plate. Mindy S gets another single and after a pair of fielder's choices for outs, Kelly W walks to load the bases. Jay W also walks in a run and the bases remain full. Tim J drives in two runs with a nice single and Mike L singles in the fifth run. In the bottom of the third, the Farmers bats wake up and they put up a five spot. Becky M raps a sharp single, Jerry B gets a Texas leaguer single and Mick Calverley singles to load the bases for cleanup hitter Andy B who drives in two runs. Greg M gets an rbi double and Bill M bangs out an rbi single. Manager Mike drives in the fifth run and it's 14-8 after three in favor of Safe Lifts.

As we start the fourth inning, Lora Maynard arrives in the stands to cheer on husband Bill. Seated close to her is Louis Berthold and the two of them start to ratchet up the noise levels in the stands to the delight of the fans and the players. It's Robson softball folks!!

Ken Ford leads off the top of the 4th with a very close play at first and is called safe after a brief pow wow with the umpire crew. Dan Shanahan doubles and Tom G brings home a run with a single. Bryan B whacks a two rbi single but then the Farmers defense digs in and holds Safe Lifts to three runs. Farmers starts with a quick ground out but David F singles, Richard M doubles and Sharon D hits a sharp line drive single to drive home a run. Steve M singles in a run and Stan Isbell singles. Becky M gets an rbi single and Jerry B brings in a run with a ground rule double. The left field area near the fence was a bit muddy and balls hit to that area were called ground rule doubles. It came into play several times during the game and the base runners could only advance two bases, who knows if the game outcome would have changed with a dry field? Mick C drives home the 5th run and the game tightens up a bit with Safe Lifts ahead 17-13.

Mick C comes on to pitch for Farmers in the fifth inning and gets two quick outs on a pop up and a ground ball. The Wissink duo gets two back to back singles but then another ground out shuts out Safe Lifts. The game can really tighten up if the Farmer bats heats up. Andy B doubles and Greg M doubles him in. Mike B legs out an infield single and Joe Dougherty brings Greg home on a fielders choice. David F triples in a run and Richard M hits a towering fly ball to the right field fence for a triple. He could have had a home run but tweaked a hamstring approaching third base and had to hold up there. Safe Lifts gets the third out but the damage is done, the game is tied 17 all as we head into the buffet inning.

Mike L starts off with a single and Ken F grounds into a force at second for the first out. Sean C singles and another ground ball brings it to two outs. Tom G singles to load the bases with bright orange and Bryan B brings home 2 runs. Tom G was thrown out at home plate in a close play for the third out and Safe Lifts grabs two runs to take the lead 19-17. Farmers comes to the plate needing three runs for the win. Steve M and Stan I lead off with singles and Beck M doubles in a run. Jerry B singles home a run and the score is tied. Mick C singles to load the bases and Andy B plays the hero by bringing Becky home and the Farmers win 20-19. What an ending to the first week of Robson softball!