

Name: Morgan

The Next Pitch

Hi, my name is Caleb Johansen, and I am a baseball player on the Rockets, in Trenton, New Jersey. I have been playing baseball since I was five, but even before that I was throwing a ball around with my dad. My mom keeps telling me that if I put half as much effort into school as I do baseball, I'd be at the top of the class, but in return to this, I tell her that I'm already at the top of the class, and I barely put any effort in. School's pretty easy for me, so there's really no reason for me to put effort in. I mostly sit at the back of the class and read during class, but my teachers can't complain because I ace every test and worksheet they throw at me.

The one thing I really focus on is baseball. I'm naturally good at it, but when I focused on it, I got really good at it, so I kept working on it. My dream job is to be a major league baseball player when I'm older, but everybody says that it's never going to happen. Either way, I still want to get really good at baseball.

Speaking of which, my team has a big game coming up, we're playing in the championship! We've been practicing for months, and it's all led up to this. My team has practice two days a week, games three days a week, and batting practice on Saturdays. It sounds like a lot, but it isn't, because I'm doing something I enjoy doing.

My best friend Miles Jones is also on the team, and we have a lot of fun. Most of the time we stay serious, but when we're having fun with our teammates we sometimes like to play pranks. One time, at practice, we filled Jack's batting gloves with toothpaste. His mom was really mad, but we made sure that the gloves could go into the wash before we put the toothpaste in. We also like to get together on our rest day, which is Sunday, and throw a ball around. He's a pitcher, so sometimes he pitches to me so I can practice my batting.

The championship game is next week, and Coach has been running practices for as long as two hours more than our regular one and a half hour practices. Some of the people on the team are grumbling about it, but I think that it's turning out great. I can tell that we're really improving as a team. I'm really excited for the game, unfortunately, my mom isn't quite as excited. Okay, so I've missed a couple homework assignments here and there for late practices, but the game is really important to me. Besides, I can finish the assignments for the next night, and the one I missed from the night before in one sitting, so it isn't that big of a deal. But my mom says that she might not let me play in the game if I don't finish all of my assignments well and on time in the future.



The game is tomorrow, and we had practice tonight, because it's a Thursday. I didn't do so well with my hitting tonight, but I hope it turns around for tomorrow. Everybody had at least one spot they didn't do well in, but I think it's just nerves. I could feel the energy in the dugout last night, so I know everyone's excited.

There is one more problem though, and that's the other team. We're going to be playing The Tornadoes, and they're the best team in the league. When we played them the first time, they crushed us, 15-2. That's probably part of the reason why everyone's so nervous, it's bad

enough if we lose, but if we get crushed like that again we'd be the laughingstock of the league! Of course, the coaches are just as nervous. Their coach, Coach Thomas, is really aggressive. It's been said that once he even got into a fighting stance towards the umpire, just over whether the pitch was a strike or not! Nobody wants to get on his bad side either, because he has really close ties with everybody, and can make sure that you hate it here. Despite all that, I still have to worry about not even going to the game because of my assignments!

Every night when I go to bed, my dad helps me calm my nerves by making me visualize myself stepping up to the plate, swinging in proper form, and hitting a home run. I doubt this is ever going to happen, but it does calm me down enough that I can fall asleep easily at night. Tomorrow in school I have one last assignment before I can be certain that I can go to the game, but if I miss it, or my mom doesn't think I did a good enough job, I might not be able to go to the game.



Tonight's the night. Game time. I completed my assignment on time, and I even did it in cursive, so that my mom knew I was really trying. She said it was fine for me to go, and I rushed upstairs to get into my uniform. Now we're on our way to the park, where we'll be playing under the lights.

When we arrive, most of the team is already there, warming up. Miles gets there at about the same time as me though, so we warm up together. Then, finally, it's game time.

The Tornadoes are in the field first, and we're up to bat. I bat sixth in the order tonight, right behind Kenny. First up is Anthony, and he goes down swinging, then Charlie is up, and he gets walked. Then comes Miles, and he gets a base hit, sending Charlie to second. Then comes Scott, and he strikes out, just before Kenny goes up and hits one to center field, advancing everybody one base. Now it's my turn. I walk up to the plate, take a deep breath, and do what I always do. *How many outs, who's the pitcher, how many people on base*, and I know what I have to do. If I don't hit the ball or walk, then the inning's over.

I take another deep breath and step into the box. The pitch comes in. It's a little high for my taste, so I let it go. "Strike!" I step back, take a practice swing, and step back in. Another high one, this time, I swing. "Strike!" Now I really need a hit. The next one is perfect, right down the middles, first my hips turn, then my shoulders, and finally, my hands, and then.....

"CRACK!"