

Top Tractor in the Pull

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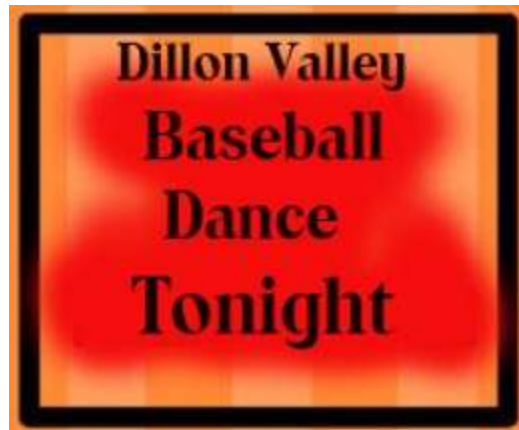
What follows is the story of an opposing pair of youths who become that great tandem duo of baseball: A Battery: a pitcher and a catcher.....



Inside the Gym

Orange & black, the school colors, sprang out from banners and streamers draped on every possible perch of the walls and the rafters. Seventeen buckets of sawdust were flung down to smooth out the dance floor. Three guitar players, two fiddlers, one drummer, and an old

boy playing the jug; were cranking out hot country tunes like "The Devil Went Down to Georgia" and "There Stands the Glass".



The old gymnasium never looked so good as it did for that Friday night dance. Every door and window was spread open as far wide as it would go in the unlikely case that a breeze should happen to come up to relieve the summer stifle. All the boys and most of the girls were sweating like sumo wrestlers in a sauna - all except Amaleen Kenwright. She looked as cool as December, in a shimmering, tight white blouse with a black skirt that must have drank a pint and a half of sloe gin to get that high.

Some of the teachers, the female ones, wanted to make Amaleen go home and get a respectable garment. But the other teachers, the men ones, sided with Principal Cleavon Baxter who said, "Amaleen looks just right and it's too dang sweltery anyways to make a body go home and change into something that would probably be too hot for July."

"And theys here for a good time," added Cleavon as he stole another look at Amaleen while she glided by on her way to the refreshment table. "Besides, we are here for the annual summer dance to raise money for the Dillon Valley High School baseball team. Next year's team is going to be the best in the whole history of Dillon Valley."

"That's cause we got Bubber Dixon, the best pitcher in the whole state," exclaimed Cletus Maggs. "And now that Beaudine Carver has transferred to our school from Apple Valley, we also got the best catcher in 27 counties."

"Well that's if they don't kill each other off," contested Cleavon.

"They ain't going to tussle," Cletus responded. "I know theys hard feelings tween the pair cause they both is used to being the top tractor in the pull, but they'll work it out and make us the best baseball battery theys ever been."

"Well Cletus, I shore do hope your more right on that than you were on that filly you gave me to bet on last week down at the county fair. She'd still be running for the finish line, except that she never got above a walk in the whole race."

They both laughed at the memory of the brokety nag that Cletus had gotten a bum tip on, and walked outside together to filter a few sips of gin between some fumes from their Backwoods Cigars.

Amaleen's Hypnotic Presence

"I'd care to have a Coke please," Amaleen Kenwright requested from the volunteer Mom who was working at the food stand.

"What kind of a Coke would you like honey?", she asked.

"A root beer please," Amaleen answered in a smooth, silky voice that sounded almost as good as New York talk, or even Boston.

"You want any Moon Pies or Pork Rinds? All the proceeds go to the baseball team honey."

"I know that m'am but I am just going to have this Coke and go sit down in that row of chairs over there by the wall."

"Okay honey, well you all just enjoy youself kay?"

"Yesum," she nodded, as her long, soft black hair rolled around her shoulders like an ocean wave; following her as she turned and walked like a runway model to the nearest seat.

As if by the flick of a wand, within seconds of Amaleen sitting down, the entire row of folding chairs which had been empty, filled up with teenage boys.

The boys looked. They liked being near her. But they didn't say a word to Amaleen - not even a sound. They knew that she was as far above them as that big old moon

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