

## **Marathon Men: *All-Stars* Outlast *Cloudbusters* in 15 Innings, 8 to 6**

**Sept. 7, Rock Ledge Ranch, Colorado City**

In the longest match ever in Association history, the Colorado Territorial *All-Stars* rallied from near defeat in regulation to best the determined (and a bit testy) Camp Creek *Cloudbusters* before a large and sometimes overly-enthusiastic gathering of cranks.

In recent years, the Colorado City boys had become used to having their way when the *Territorials* came to town, as indicated by last season's embarrassment when the visitors only batted five men above the minimum in its 1-9 loss. Some felt a contributing factor could have been the oversubscription of ballists in that contest (24) making it difficult for any one player to get into a groove. Perhaps it was this season's limitation on participants or maybe a thirst for redemption, but for whatever reason this match started much differently.

It was the *All-Stars* that drew first blood in the second frame, with *Old Hoss* Foster singling and eventually coming home on hits by *Mad Dog* Mason and *Crush* Sumner. Although the *Cloudbusters* countered with one of their own, they could not keep pace.

In the third, *Fast Eddie* Plelan's lead-off single was followed by *Just-in-case* Breese's double to right that was ultimately misplayed into a four-bagger. In the fourth, *Wheels* Harris, *Old Hoss*, and Captain *Bike Mike* Roberts combined for another two tallies. Meanwhile, starting hurler *Mad Dog* and first reliever *Breadbasket* Becker held the home club scoreless.

However, that was all for the *All-Stars* for quite a while, as they were "Chicagoed" themselves from the fifth to the eighth while only getting one man on base. To the contrary, the Camp Creek bats finally came alive, ringing the bell five times during the same period, including a four-bagger of their own, to take a six to five lead. With the *All-Stars* going nine-and-out preceding the ninth inning, the situation was bleak. When the first two strikers also were killed, it appeared a third loss in a row was inevitable.

But, with two dead and the match on the line, *Fast Eddie* came through with a single which pinch-runner *Iceberg* Billings stretched into two with an errant throw to first. *Just-in-case* delivered (again) with another single, which sent *Iceberg* home. *Breadbasket's* single sent Justin to third, threatening a total reversal of fortunes, put a pop-out ended the rally. However, the most important tally was recorded. Captain Roberts sent his third reliever, and most experienced hurler *Old Hoss* to toss the ball, and when the *Busters* couldn't get their lone runner to home plate, the captains agreed to forego the tie and play it out.

What followed were ten of the finest defensive half-innings ever in these parts. Only one tally could end it all, but neither club would break. The *All-Stars* could only muster four base-runners, and three of those were erased by base-running-error double plays. The *Cloudbusters* went three and out three times, but in the twelfth they almost ended it. After one out, two singles had a man in scoring position, but the *All-Stars* turned the next swing of the bat into a game-saving double-play. They threatened again in the thirteenth with a one-out double. But on the following single the lead runner was called out at third in a very close call by Umpire *Deacon* Massengill -- a call strongly disputed by the Camp Creek captain and many nearby cranks -- but stood none-the-less mainly due to the sheepishness on the runner's face.

After an uneventful fourteenth, it appeared that there would be just one more go at it, as fatigue and a scheduled concern were near at hand. The *All-Stars* took quick advantage. A lead-off double by *Wheels* paid dividends when *Old Hoss* followed with a single. *Bicycle's* groundout moved *Hoss* to second and *Mad Dog's* single brought him home. *Digger* Hadix also reached base, but the rally ended there.

It was then do or die for the home team, and it looked like they just might have it in them. A foul out by their distaff member -- *Bloomer Girl* -- was followed by a single. A bound-out almost turned into a double play, but the runner was safe at second on another close call. However, the Camp Creek bench got caught up in the

excitement and failed to notice the ball NOT being returned to the hurler. When the runner took his leadoff, *Crush* leapt forward to complete the hidden-ball trick (the second of the match) and end the marathon contest after some two hours and forty minutes.

*Old Hoss* had perhaps his best performance of the season, leading all scorers with three tallies in five at-bats, plus hurling the final six scoreless innings. *Wheels* and *Fast Eddie* each added two aces, while *Just-in-case* rang the bell on his four-bagger, but also had the game-tying hit in the ninth. In recording 45 outs, there was plenty of support in the field supplied by *Hands Phelan*, *Cannibal Tinney*, *Bike*, *Mad Dog*, *Crush* (who also hurled one scoreless inning), *Digger*, *Iceberg*, *Breadbasket*, *Yo-Yo* Reedy, and rookie *Willie Pacer*. Miss Sharon had to be very creative in keeping the tally on one scorecard, while a number of friendly cranks made the journey, including the Mason clan, *Swede* Peterson and wife (and dog), *Hustler* Nunez, and Messrs Foster and Massengill.

Finally, yours truly was just happy to finally take a seat after nearly three hours of standing in the unseasonably warm September sun.