

Dominic just sat there on the bench and stared. He was angry with himself. Five runs down, this late in the game was a lot to overcome.

“Shake it off, Dominic,” an assistant coach insisted. “We all have bad days and as Coach says, we win together, we lose together. I want you on your feet cheering for your team.”

Dominic rose reluctantly and half-heartedly joined his teammates in chorus. Coach Perez, standing at third base, noticed his son’s lack of enthusiasm. Tonight he would have to take off his coaching hat, put on his dad’s hat and talk with Dominic.

Coach called out to the bench, trying to rally his team. “This game isn’t over yet.”

The Firebirds’ bats finally came alive in the next inning. Aaron led off with a crushing hit between the left and center fielders and wound up on second base. “Yes, way to go, Firebirds,” Coach shouted.

Dominic perked up at that, hoping maybe his teammates could save him from this disaster that he had caused. And what was this? Jason hit a screaming liner over the third baseman’s outstretched glove, and it rolled all the way to the fence. Wow!

Aaron scored easily and when the left fielder bobbled the ball, speedy Jason, slid into third base. Now four runs down with no outs, and back to back hits, could the Firebirds keep the momentum alive?

The third baseman for the Blue Devils threw his glove down in disgust and yelled at his left fielder for his dumb mistake that resulted in a run.

“How could you miss that ball,” he yelled? “Are you trying to lose the game for us?”

Everyone knew that Jordan, son of The Blue Devils Coach, was their best player, but he was a hot head. He continued to mutter about the error and kicked at the dirt. Neither Jordan’s dad nor any of the other coaches said anything. Dominic thought, wow, our coaches wouldn’t let that kind of hurtful talk happen.

The Firebirds were now on fire! The pitcher walked the next two players and then Brian scored all of them with an opposite field double. Suddenly, they were only one run back. The Blue Devils’ coach made a pitching change, hoping to stop this rally.

But it wasn’t to happen that way. Two outs did occur quickly with Brian advancing to third base on one of those outs. The next batter singled Brian home to tie the game! The base runner stole second and third bases and then scored on a wild squeeze bunt that the Blue Devils never figured would happen with two outs. The Firebirds were winning by one run! Dominic hoped that he was “off the hook” and his teammates would forget about his lousy pitching.

The Blue Devils were at bat for the final inning. Andrew seemed to be throwing harder and faster than ever. He looked awesome today. Jordan came up to bat after the first batter struck out and the next one reached second base on an error. Jordan was a great hitter, so it was wise if Andrew didn’t give him anything good to swing at.

Andrew threw a ball, and then a low called strike, and next came a foul ball. The count was one and two with only one out. Jordan pounded

the dirt with his bat, swiveled his hips and spikes in a grinding fashion and wore one glaring sneer on his face. He was going to send the next pitch into outer space!

Andrew never lost his cool. He shook off a couple of signs, went into his pitching motion and unleashed a fast ball that admittedly was sailing a bit too high. Jordan in a desperate bid to be the hero reached out and *WHIFFED* at the blazing ball that was out of the strike zone. “Strike three, you’re out!” barked the umpire.

Jordan threw his bat in disgust, slammed his helmet to the ground and muttered something under his breath as he stomped off. The umpire was on top of the situation immediately. He glared at the Blue Devils coach and said, “This is a warning to that young man. If there is another such incident, he will be ejected from the game as well as you. You know the rules.”

“Yes, sir,” the coach answered, but without genuine feeling. He was infuriated at Jordan and boy, was he going to get an earful. “Hey,” he shouted as Jordan entered the dugout. “What the heck is wrong with you, swinging at that pitch? Isn’t it obvious that it was out of the strike zone? You had two strikes on you already, and you chased that ridiculous pitch?”

*You need to read more to find out!*