

Meet Riley

Riley wasn't having a good day at school. She discovered at lunchtime that she had left her book at home that she often read while eating. Riley had very few friends in school and she often ate alone, as many students chose not to sit with her. A few students weren't comfortable around her because they didn't understand her disability. Students found it difficult to understand her when she talked. Riley didn't understand why many students ignored her.

The substitute teacher for Mrs. Anderson showed little patience for Riley's questions. Riley found seventh-grade math difficult and she appreciated the extra attention Mrs. Anderson gave her.

Charlotte and William were her best friends. Charlotte needed to make up a test during the lunch period and William ate at a different time. On this day, she sat in the far corner of the lunchroom by herself without her book that she was reading about a female Olympian gymnast.

The level of physical and mental abilities can vary with each person who has Down syndrome. Riley's parents learned as much as they could about Down syndrome upon the diagnosis at birth. They started Riley with therapies very early such as physical, occupational and speech. They read to her often as a baby and encouraged her to read when she was older.

Later in the book...

Riley in the Spotlight

Gabriella started her wind-up and threw the ball on the outside corner of the plate. It wasn't exactly a great pitch, but Blair was a good hitter and she reached out and hit the ball a mile (it appeared). Everyone stood up and watched the ball sail out to right field. Most Riley's Winning Catch 95 were sure she had hit the ball deep enough for a home run.

Riley's eyes widened as she saw the ball coming in her direction. She heard her teammate telling her to back up a few more steps and watch out

for the fence. From where the center fielder stood, she believed Riley positioned herself perfectly to catch the ball. It was all up to Riley now.

Riley moved back a few more steps, making sure not to run into the wall. She looked up to find the ball. Blair had hit the ball very high in the air, and that gave Riley an extra few seconds to get set. Looking back later, Riley thought she closed her eyes at the last minute and hoped for the best.

As the ball came closer to Riley, time seemed to stand still. She could no longer hear the fans yelling or her teammates cheering for her. She only saw the ball in the air and nothing else, and the only sound she heard was her heart beating rapidly.

The Bombers' coaches and players were watching intently from the dugout and ready to celebrate the impending home run. Their fans knew that Blair had done it again with her powerful blast.

Gabriella's heart sank as she turned and watched Blair's hit that could end the game in favor of the Bombers. Riley's teammates and coaches turned towards right field and watched Riley looking up for the ball. They hoped beyond all hope that she caught the ball. The coaches stood at the top of the dugout, eyes glued on their right fielder. Coach Armstrong had a gut feeling that everything would work out fine.

Blair started her "home run trot." She slowed her pace so she could cherish the moment while the ball sailed over the fence! The Stealers' fans weren't sure if Riley would catch the ball. Two fans were sure the ball would go over the fence for a home run, ending the game. Riley's mother didn't want to watch, but Dad stood proudly, eyes fixed on his daughter and cheering loudly...*You need to read the book and find out if Riley caught the ball or not!*