The Goose That Laid the Golden Eggs

Anser Gold wasn’t the most intimidating looking pitcher on the mound. Lost in her baggy uniform, it was very easy to assume that Anser would have a hard time even getting the ball over the plate. But by the end of the first week of the season, everyone in the Aesop Youth Baseball League knew who Anser Gold was and what she could do.

She was the closer for the Honking Geese and had just one pitch: the Buckler. A combination of a knuckleball and a slider, the pitch earned its name by buckling the knees of every batter it was thrown to. What’s a knuckleball and a slider? Well, a knuckleball floats through the air like a butterfly, while a slider is a fast curveball that breaks sideways. Imagine a butterfly floating right at you before darting away when you try to catch it. That’s the Buckler.

Her nickname soon became The Golden Goose because every time she stepped onto the mound, everyone knew that Anser was good for zeros in every pitching category: hits, runs and walks. Goose eggs across the board. With her dad coaching and the other Geese in formation, Anser Gold, The Golden Goose had the Honking Geese flying high into the playoffs.

Anser continued to live up to her name in the playoff opener against the Foxhounds. Three batters faced, no hits, runs or walks. More golden eggs. With only two games to go, Coach Gold could see a path to a League title for the Honking Geese. Their next game was against the only team to beat them, The Highlanders. The Highlander hitters knocked in so many runs in the first two innings that Anser never even got to warm up, let alone play. But if the Honking Geese could beat the Highlanders, their second game would be against the Vipers or Bears. And since they beat both teams easily, they were sure to win the championship.

To have a chance, Coach Gold thought, we need to keep the Highlanders from scoring early. A smile crossed his face, then he snapped his fingers. “They haven’t even seen Anser, so I’ll start her.”

And that’s exactly what Coach Gold did when Anser Gold, The Golden Goose, closer for the Honking Geese, stepped onto the mound to start versus the hard-hitting Highlanders. Once again, Anser lived up to her name. The Buckler did its job well, sending each Highlander back to the dugout shaking their heads.

But by the fourth inning, the Highlanders got a second look at the Golden Goose and took a different approach. Instead of standing in the batter’s box ready to swing, the hitter stood at the edge of the box upright, as if waiting for a bus. By standing at the edge of the box, the hitter could watch the ball without worrying about getting hit. The ball always hit the glove, so it was always a strike.

So for the first two pitches, the lead-off hitter got down two strikes. But on the third pitch, the batter squared up to bunt. The ball dropped off the bat and dribbled towards third. Anser rushed off the mound to get it but when she threw the ball, it fell way short of first base. The first baseman had to run in to scoop it up, but it was too late. The Golden Goose had given up her first hit.

The Highlanders jumped on the opportunity. With two more bunts they scored a run before the defense and The Buckler ended the inning. It didn’t matter that it was just one run.
What mattered was that it was off the unhittable Golden Goose. The Highlanders showed everyone that Anser Gold was just another pitcher.

The Honking Geese added two runs and maintained their one run lead going into the final inning. But when the Highlanders came up for their last licks, they were ready for The Buckler.

It seems that all those times Anser rushed off the mound and threw to first, her soft throwing arm only got softer and the Buckler that danced through the air like an untouchable butterfly was now just a slow curveball with not much of a curve. So the Highlanders swung. And connected. And if they didn’t connect, they walked. And if they got on base, they scored. No more goose eggs.

By the time Coach Gold had taken Anser out of the game, it was too late. The Golden Goose had lost its shine.

Those who have plenty want more and so lose all they have.

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