

Fernie's Up

Narration

By Tim Berens

Copyright 2015, Tim Berens. All Rights Reserved.

Introduction

Violins hold note

- Fernie awoke one August morning, two weeks before the start of sixth grade, put on his glasses and looked toward his shrine to Babe Ruth.

Waltz begins

- The morning sunlight reflected off the keys of his clarinet on to his Babe Ruth baseball card, creating a halo above The Babe's head. Fernie smiled at this good omen. And then Fernie remembered the game -- today -- the neighborhood championship game between the James Hill Knights and the Judith Avenue Dragons -- on the real baseball diamond at the school -- -- and fear filled Fernie's belly with butterflies.

Butterfly sound on fermata. Waltz resumes

- Fernie loved baseball. He loved watching baseball, playing baseball, listening to baseball on the radio, collecting baseball cards. He especially loved playing on his neighborhood sandlot team, the James Hill Knights. As much as Fernie loved baseball, he couldn't hit. He had not had even one hit all summer, and the other teams teased him cruelly. Every time he came to bat the other team yelled "Fernie's up, move in."

Quiet English Horn solo.

- Fernie stood before his shrine to The Babe and whispered "Please, Babe, help me get a hit today. All I want is a single." He gently held his Babe Ruth baseball card to his chest. "Just one hit, Babe," Fernie whispered, believing as only a child can that Babe actually could help him.

Rhythmic. Starts with Tuba. Wait 2 bars

- Sandlot baseball follows the same rules as the big leagues except there are no walks or called strikes. The pitcher throws pitches until the batter hits the ball or swings three times. If he cannot get a hit within three swings, he is out. The James Hill Knights had 9 players: Fernie, Mark, PJ, Spitty, Greg, Bucky, Randy, Coconut and Meatball. They arrived at the diamond first, and paired off to play catch.

Rhythmic music stops. Swing begins. Wait 4 bars and 1 beat

- The Judith Avenue Dragons strutted on to the field, their confidence bordering on arrogance. The Dragons were led by the biggest kid on the team, whose nickname was "The Cat." The Cat was their pitcher and their clean-up batter. Stinky was their best outfielder. They planned a quick and merciless annihilation of the Knights. The Dragons scored two runs in the top of the first inning to open the game. Fernie's team responded with one run in the bottom of the inning. With his first time at bat approaching in the second inning, fear fermented in Fernie's belly.

"Fernie's up move in" Theme

- When he picked up the bat, the Dragons taunted him, yelling "Fernie's up! Move in!" and the outfielders all moved toward the infield. As he drifted to the plate, Fernie whispered "Please, Babe, help me get a hit."

Scary music starts

- Fernie stood in the batter's box and looked toward the pitcher's mound. The Cat unleashed the first pitch. Fernie swung, and whiffed. The Dragons laughed.

Instruments sound like laughter.

- Fernie's hands shook as the Cat tossed the second pitch. Fernie swung, and whiffed again. The Dragons laughed even louder, and for a fleeting moment Fernie wanted to run home as fast as he could. He could get under the covers in his bed and nobody could hurt him there.

Music stops

- But he didn't run;

Slow music begins

- he swallowed his fear and played baseball. Fernie swung on the third pitch and hit a slow grounder down the first base line that went foul. Three swings, no hit, so he was out. He sat down on the bench and pretended to be OK. The second inning ended with a score of Dragons 4, Knights 2.

Music stops. Trumpet rip to downbeat. Swing begins.

- The Dragons dominated from the first inning to the ninth, but the Knights fought hard. In the bottom of the ninth inning, the Knights were down by two runs. Fernie had gone 0 for 4 in the game.

Rhythmic. Tuba/Basses begin

- When Bucky led off the bottom of the ninth with a single, Mark jumped up and yelled, "That's how we do it. Come on Knights. Let's slay some Dragons." The Knights leapt to their feet, clapped their hands and chanted

Say in rhythm with trombones

- "We are the Knights and we slay Dragons! We are the Knights and we slay Dragons!"
- PJ hit a pop up fly ball for an easy out and Randy hit three foul balls in a row for the second out, but the Knights cheered on. When Meatball smacked a single, advancing Bucky to second base, the Knights erupted. Victory was within their grasp.

Wait for downbeats/stop time

- Bottom of the ninth.
- Two outs.
- Two runs down.
- Two men on base.
- Tying run on first.
- Winning run at the plate.
- "Who's up?" (*Shouted*)

Big chord. As it fades, say

- The Knights stopped cheering.

Chord stops

- "Fernie's up." (*Quietly*)

Laughing sounds by instruments

- The Dragons erupted in laughter and hoots, chanting "Fernie's up, move in. Fernie's up, we win." The outfielders all moved toward the infield as they chanted.

Seagull sounds in woodwinds

- Fernie felt a flock of seagulls flying around in his belly, squawking and pecking at his insides as he walked to the batter's box.
Fernie whiffed the first pitch. The Dragons taunted him even louder, moving in even closer. He felt tears welling up in his eyes. "Please, Babe, please," he whispered. "I just want a single. Please help me."

Music stops. Swing music begins. Wait 6 bars of swing

- Babe Ruth has his own private dugout in Heaven, and there is nothing he likes more on a summer afternoon than watching sandlot baseball.

Yes, The Babe was watching the game that day, and he heard Fernie's cry for help. After watching Fernie go 0 for 4, he realized that nobody had ever taught that boy how to swing a bat. Babe looked around behind him, said "I'm going to get in trouble for this," then stepped out of his dugout on to the field.

Music stops.

- "Hey, Kid," Babe said to Fernie.

Fernie turned, saw his hero standing behind him in his number 3 uniform, and shouted "Babe! I knew you would save me."

The catcher for the Dragons stared at Fernie quizzically and exclaimed, "Who are you talking to?"

Babe said "Shut up, kid. Nobody can see me but you. Step over here so we can talk."

Fernie stepped out of the batter's box, his eyes as large as dinner plates. "Can you hit the ball for me, Babe?" he asked.

"No, kid. I can't hit for you, but I can teach you. You have two swings to learn how to hit. Let's get to it."

Slow March begins

- "OK. Listen up, kid. Your stance is all wrong. Spread your feet apart. Bend your knees a bit. Get that bat off your shoulder. Put your hands together. Step forward with your left foot as you swing. And keep your eye on the ball. Now let's see you take a practice swing."

Fernie took a swing, and Babe corrected him. Five more swings with Babe correcting each one, and his swing was looking pretty good.

Music stops

- The Cat yelled, "Fernie, are we playing baseball or what?"
- Babe said, "OK, kid. It's time. Now, go hit that ball."

Rhythmic music begins.

- For the first time ever, Fernie felt confident as he stood in the batter's box. The Cat pitched the ball and Fernie swung, hitting a foul ball solidly down the third base line. The Dragons became wildly over-confident. Their entire team, including all the outfielders, moved into the infield chanting "Fernie's up, move in! Fernie's up, we win!"

Fernie, now eager for the next pitch, glared at The Cat. Babe looked out at the defense, smiled and said "This would be a mighty good time for that single, kid."

The Cat let loose the pitch.

Loud downbeat. Music stops

- Fernie swung.

Sound of baseball hitting bat. brief pause

- He hit a nice single, a solid line drive that flew right over the shortstop's glove, hit the ground in left field and started rolling.
And no one was there to stop it.

Loud chord. Wait for cut off

- "Run, Fernie, run!"

Fernie took off down the first base line, running faster than he had ever run before.

"Get it!" The Cat yelled. Three of the Dragons chased the ball, but they couldn't catch it.

As Fernie raced to first, Bucky rounded third base and Meatball rounded second. The Cat ran part way into left field.

Fernie rounded first base and, Bucky scored! Meatball rounded third, and the ball kept rolling. Fernie rounded second, and Meatball scored!

The ball hit the left field fence and rolled to a stop. Stinky grabbed it and hurled it toward The Cat just as Fernie rounded third base.

The Cat turned and fired a cannon shot toward home.

Music stops

- Fernie beat it by a mile.

March begins. Wait 4 bars

- The James Hill Knights raced to Fernie, picked him up and carried him around, shouting, "Fernie's up. WE win."

The Dragons, still standing in the infield as the Knights celebrated, felt their faces burn red with embarrassment and shame.

Key change

- Babe Ruth beamed. "Ya gotta love this game," he said, as he strolled back to his personal dugout. Just before leaving the field, he turned to Fernie and yelled, "That was a nice single, kid." With a smile on his face, he tipped his cap, and disappeared. Fernie's smile was as big as the backstop.