



MILES & THE MONARCHS

By Carolyn Mueller | Illustrated by Philip Goudeau

CHAPTER FOUR

The truck bounced along as Miles and his dad made their way to Philadelphia. Miles was thirsty and washed the sunflower seeds down with a cool drink from his canteen.

“Dad,” Miles said. “What other stars did you and Grandpa see when you were traveling around to watch the Negro League?”

“Well, Miles,” his dad answered. “Have you ever heard of a player named Martin Dihigo?”

“Dihigo?” Miles questioned. “That’s sort of a funny sounding name.”

“It’s a Cuban name,” his dad said. “Dihigo is from Cuba.”

“Oh?” Miles asked. “Cuban players also play in the Negro League?”

“Sure do!” Miles’ dad answered. “The Negro League has lots of players from Cuba and Latin America. In fact, there was a team called the Cuban Stars. Dihigo played for them when he first started, but he eventually played for the Homestead Grays, Hilldale Giants and New York Cubans too. Martin Dihigo is an incredible player and he practices all of the time. They say he plays year-round—summers in the US and winters in the Caribbean!”

“I bet he’s good, with all of that practice!” Miles chimed in.

“Yeah, son, that’s the way to get better, isn’t it?” his dad said. “Practice, practice, practice. In fact, Martin Dihigo is a great example of that. He was always the best at hitting fastballs, but he struggled when pitchers threw him the curve. So, he told his practice pitchers to only throw him curveballs.”

“So, he could practice!”

“Exactly. With all of that practice, he became one of the best curveball hitters in the league.”

“So, he’s the best at hitting fastballs and the best at hitting curveballs?”

“Yes indeed,” his dad answered.

“So, he’s just the best!” Miles said.

“You could say that, for sure,” his dad chortled.

“Dad? Um, do you think we could stop in that town up there?” Miles asked, pointing to a sign that said the next town would be coming along in three miles. “I have to go to the bathroom.” Miles’ dad gripped the wheel and studied the sign, glancing down at his penciled map as he drove. Suddenly, his dad turned off the main road down a side road running through a patch of woods.

“Where are we going?” Miles asked. “Is this a shortcut?”

“No, no, just hang on,” his dad answered.

After they drove through the woods for a little while, Miles’ dad stopped the truck, pulling to the side of the road. All around them it was silent except for the occasional chatter of birds.

“Ok, Miles,” his dad said. “You can get out here.”

“Here?” Miles asked. “In the woods?”

“Yeah, son, hurry up now. Get on out and just get it done.”

Miles knew his dad knew what was best, so he didn’t hesitate. He slid out of the truck and walked to the side of the road at the edge of the woods. As he jumped back into the cab, he saw his dad look around carefully before slowly making their way back through the wooded path to the main road ahead.

Newspaper Connection: Fast and curve balls are mentioned in this chapter. Search your local newspaper for uses of the word ball and make a list of these.

