



# MILES & THE MONARCHS

By Carolyn Mueller | Illustrated by Philip Goudeau

## CHAPTER EIGHT

“Steeeeerrriiiiike!” the umpire yelled, as Satchel Paige’s pitch flew right past the Homestead Grays’ batter. It was the bottom of the eighth inning. The Kansas City Monarchs were winning 9-5. Miles could hardly contain his excitement.

“The Monarchs are gonna’ win, Dad!” He yelled, bouncing in his seat. “They’re gonna’ win!”

“We’ll see, son, we’ll see,” he said with a laugh, though he was grinning and could barely contain his excitement too. Miles’ dad nodded toward the Monarchs’ first baseman as he jogged his way back to the dugout to end the eighth inning. “That’s Buck O’Neil,” he told Miles. “Buck’s a great player,” he said. “And I’ve heard he’s an even better person off the field. He has great things ahead of him.” Miles studied Buck admirably and nodded.

Miles was sitting on the very edge of his seat as the ninth inning started. The Homestead Grays’ had the homefield advantage and would get to bat last. The score was still 9-5. Could the Kansas City Monarchs hold them? Satchel Paige had not allowed a hit or a run from the Grays since the moment he’d arrived at Shibe Park. Miles watched in absolute wonder as Paige continued to hold off each batter until finally it was the Grays last at bat.

“Strike three!” the umpire called as the ball once again whizzed past the batter. Paige knew just how to sneak the ball right into the strike zone. Like hitting a matchbox Miles’ dad had said. Miles saw that it was true. He’d never seen anyone pitch like that before. It was incredible.

“Monarchs win! Monarchs win!” the announcer yelled.

“They did it!” Miles’ dad yelled as he and Miles cheered. “Monarchs are the champions!” Miles hugged his dad hard, as the two continued to clap and yell along with everyone else. He looked up at the blue September sky and his smiling dad. This was a perfect day. After the game, Miles and his dad lingered at the field a little longer, not yet ready to get out their old map and journey back to Washington D.C. They watched the fans trickle out of the ballpark. They laughed and reminisced about the game as the park workers swept up the peanut shells in the aisles.

“Hey kid,” Miles suddenly heard a voice say. “That glove work?” Miles still had his worn, leather baseball glove with him, which he’d brought along on the drive to Philadelphia. He slipped it on his hand and looked up just in time to see a Monarchs player gently lob a baseball from the field toward

him. Miles stuck his glove out and caught it easily, letting the ball sink into the soft leather. He picked up the ball and noticed a name scrawled across it. Satchel Paige, it read. Miles looked up and there he was. Satchel Paige, the hero himself, standing just outside the dugout and grinning at Miles.

“Mr. Paige!” Miles stammered. “Um...thank you! ... thank you, Mr. Paige!” Satchel Paige winked at him, gave him a little wave and then jogged off to join his teammates in their celebration. Miles felt his dad’s hand touch his shoulder. He looked at the signed baseball nestled safely in his glove, and at the tall pitcher—the greatest player he’d ever seen—loping across the field. Suddenly, he couldn’t wait to get back home. He wanted to get back to the sandlot. He wanted to play baseball. He wanted to stand on top of his own pitcher’s mound. And he knew exactly who he was going to pretend to be when he threw his next pitch.

**Newspaper Connection:** Write a newspaper style story that includes the 5 W’s and 1 H about a player giving a ball to a child.

