

# The Tri-County Roosters'



## **MOST AMAZING HOME RUN!**

A Draw-it-Yourself  
Short Story

**Proverbial Kids<sup>©</sup>**

Wisdom for Young Families

**By Karen Anderson Holcomb**

# The Tri-County Roosters' Most Amazing Home Run!

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The best base in the world is Home base.

It's where a batter begins his race around the diamond, and where he hopes to end, safe and sound. That's why *home runs* are so amazing.

Home runs bring home the batter and every other runner on base. Points are scored and celebrated as sweet success.

This is a story about a baseball team that needed a home run so bad they could *taste* it.

(Draw-It-Yourself: Home base)

(The Roosters)

The Tri-County Roosters was a team of 11-year-old boys who were the best baseball players their age within three counties in the upstate. The talented starting line-up featured Skinny Stanley on the mound with Benji catching; Bailey, Hunter, Paul, and Shane were infield, and Trent, Parker, and Walt were in the outfield.

These boys had been playing travel ball since they were old enough to spit, and they had grown accustomed to their weekend routine. Every Saturday morning before sunrise, their fully-loaded SUVs backed out of perfectly good driveways, leaving cozy houses and sleepy neighborhoods behind. Headlights on, these vehicles met at a donut shop on the edge of town, where they fell in behind Coach and drove to a tournament far, far away.

Weekend after weekend.

(The Uniforms)

Each tournament was festive. The teams burst on the scene with professional uniforms, hats, bats, balls, and gloves. The Tri-Co Roosters wore flaming red jerseys with black numbers, orange and red caps, yellow pants, and orange cleats.

Their bragging was as loud as their uniforms!

“We’re going to win this tournament, just like last year!” Benji forecast at the season opener.

“We’re gonna make *creamed corn* out of this bunch,” said Shane, the coach’s son.

“They’ll be sorry they ever messed with a *Rude* Island Red Rooster,” Walt laughed at his own joke.

“Cock-a-doodle Do!” the other boys threw back their heads and crowed.

Over the years, the Roosters had earned a reputation for being aggressive. Proud to be in the Rooster club, their parents had become loyal fans, egging on the competitive spirit.

“Let’s crow, boys!” Several fathers shouted.

“Feather up!” the loudest mother squawked.

(Toby)

On a bench in the dugout, second string catcher Toby Cline watched the opening game with wide-eyed wonder. A rookie Rooster, Toby played first string for his home league during the week. He had been a Rooster for only a few days. Now wearing a crisp new uniform with a strange new mascot, it all seemed unreal.

“You look like a *professional*,” his younger brother Houston had said this morning when Toby put on his uniform.

“He ought to,” their Mom said, closing her checkbook.

Now, Toby’s mother sat on a blanket in the shade past third base with his baby sister Grace. His Dad leaned against the fence, spitting sunflower seeds.

Houston made multiple trips to the concession stand for pickles, chips, sour gummies, hotdogs, and chili-cheese fries.

But Toby wasn’t hungry. He was *nervous*. Would he play today? Probably not. He had practiced only twice with the team! From the bench, he watched his new teammates take on the Stanton Starfire, a fast blue team from the coast.

Up and down, the innings passed. Skinny Stanley’s fast ball kept Stanton’s score low. And the Starfire outfield held off the Roosters. Tied at 5-5 in the bottom of the seventh, the Roosters had one more shot at victory. Toby’s mouth watered. If he were playing at home, he’d knock the ball out of the park. He just knew it.

*Crack!*

Walt found the sweet spot and hit a line drive to center field! Two Roosters came in before Walt was thrown out at second.

And that was the ballgame!

Roosters: 7. Stanton Starfire: 5.

(The Clines at the Field)

Two hours later, they played the Linville Lizards, winning 8-2. And that night, they scorched the Mitford Meteorites, winning 5-1. Oh, yes! The Roosters ruled the roost! They cackled like hens in the dugout, laughing at each other's boyish jokes and pranks. Toby enjoyed their banter.

The next month was a blur for the Cline family—school, work, weekday ball, travel ball, checking in and out of hotels, home for a few days, laundry, fast-food—life on the run! Everything pivoted around the umpire's call to  
"Play ball!"

And play ball, they did! The first three tournaments, the Roosters won every single game! By the fourth tournament, the air was electric with tension. Keeping the streak alive, the Roosters fought off the Blackburn Steelers, the Richland Rattlesnakes, and the legendary Pisgah Bears.

Toby was getting in a little practice before games. He couldn't wait to make his first home run as a Rooster. Then, days before the fifth tournament, Benji fell out of a tree and broke his arm. Toby was called in to catch!

"We need you, Toby," Coach said.

"You can do it, babe," his Mom said.

"Give it your best, son," his Dad said.

And Toby did. He gave it his best. Just like he did at home. He adjusted his gear, reviewed the signals, and stepped behind the plate as the starting Rooster catcher against the Cherryville Cheetahs.

Stanley threw harder than his home league pitcher, but Toby got used to it. He was good at catching ... and even better at hitting.

"Let's crow, Toby!" his teammates yelled when Toby first stepped up to bat. (At home, they said, "Let's go!" But he was a Rooster, and roosters crowed!)

"Out of the park!" they shouted.

Now, it was the third inning, and the game was tied 0-0. Two Roosters were on base. Toby sized up the pitcher. He eyed the outfield. He tapped his bat against the home plate, then raised it into position.

The pitch came in fast, but Toby was on top of it!

*Crack!* His bat slammed the ball over left field and out of the park! A home run!

A smile broke across Toby's face as he ran the bases. His new friends celebrated in the dugout. The strangers in the stands clapped and shouted hurrahs. His parents cheered from the third base fence line. One, two, three points for the Roosters!

(Toby's Hit)

"Good hit, dude," Parker congratulated him.

"Thanks for bringing me in," Walt said.

"You're welcome," Toby grinned, taking his seat at the end of the bench.

Parker and Walt were pretty good kids, Toby thought. He liked them.

"Don't get too cocky," Bailey thumped him on the head.

"And don't use my bat again without asking," Shane wiped the dirt off the bat Toby had used.

Toby's smile dropped at the boys' words, but he thought of the home run and shook off their remarks. He couldn't wait to tell his home team about it.

The Roosters were soon back on the field, defending their points. The Cheetahs rallied with two solid hits in a row. Then, with catlike speed, one runner stole second and another stole third. Stanley walked the third batter. Things began to fall apart. Soon, the Cheetahs were on top. And the Roosters could not respond. Cherryville won the game, 8-4.

It was the Roosters' first loss.

(Toby's Teammates)

Losing is a fact of life. It takes wisdom to lose well.

But for the Tri-County Roosters, this skill had never been developed. They were stunned. Several boys said bad words. Others threw their equipment around. A couple of them wiped away tears.

Coach gathered them behind the bleachers and gave them a pep talk.

“Chin up, boys! Don’t let this ruffle your feathers!”

Nonetheless, the busy schedule of the past month caught up with many of the players. Being at the center of their family’s life became both a burden and a bargaining point.

“I’m hungry!” Stanley belted. “I want a hamburger and I want it now!”

“My feet hurt,” Walt whined. “Carry me!”

“This glove is a piece of junk,” Paul growled. “Get me a new one.”

Their parents cautioned them to stay focused on the games ahead, but Bailey stomped to his Mom’s car, turned on the radio, and started playing video games. He thought,

“I work harder than anybody in this family. I can do whatever I choose.”

It’s no surprise the Roosters played their next game half-heartedly and lost in the final inning, 7-6.

(How it looks to be tired.)

Now, the word *tireded* is not a real word. (Correctly said, it's "more tired.")

But if you were to ask the Tri-County Roosters, they would tell you they were tireded than ever.

And being tired affects a kid's attitude. It's not so bad if they are winning, but upon losing ...

They say rude things like, "Move!" and "Get out of my face!" and "Who cares?"

They steal other kids' candy bars from their duffle bags and roll their eyes behind their coach's back. They speak disrespectfully to their parents and forget to say polite words like "please" and "thank you" and "excuse me."

Roosters become *RUDEsters*.

Even Toby was losing his manners. (After all, birds of a feather flock together.)

*What should we do?* Mrs. Cline wondered.

(Rude phrases)

(The parking lot)

The next week's tournament was hosted by the Roosters, in Toby's hometown.

Boosted by the fan support, Tri-County was favored to be the tournament champion ... which made the players feel famous.

"Look at all these cars," Toby said as his family pulled in the parking lot. "People know how good we are. They want to see us play."

Mrs. Cline looked at her son. "Humility is a virtue, son."

"What's that supposed to mean?" he blurted.

"It means it's good to be humble," she answered, "And don't speak to me in that tone of voice."

"And don't count your chickens before they hatch," Houston added, crunching a potato chip.

"Are you kidding me?" Toby shot his brother a glance. "Do you honestly think we are going to play bad with a home field advantage? That's dumb."

"Toby," Mr. Cline said, "Don't be rude."

"Whatever," he whispered under his breath and jumped out of their SUV before his father could stop him.

The Cline family followed Toby to the ball field, like every other family followed their athletes ... carrying stadium seats, coolers, umbrellas, diaper bags, fast-food sacks, and smart phones with over-worked calendar apps.

Mrs. Cline had an overwhelming sense that something was not right with that picture.

(Dark Clouds, Wind)

A welcome breeze met them at the bleachers. While the team warmed up, clouds accumulated in the sky overhead. Arriving teams poured out of cars and buses. Their colorful uniforms now bore the stains of past games, with athletic tape bracing injuries on more than a few players.

“This breeze is lovely,” Mrs. Cline whispered to baby Grace. “Do you see the clouds?”

“I see cwouds, Mama,” Grace said. “I see wain!”

“No, it isn’t raining, Grace. We don’t want it to rain. Bubba has to play baseball.”

“He’s going to hit a homerun today, Gracie,” Houston said. “Just watch.”

The stands filled to capacity. Mr. Cline had to stand at the farthest fencepost on the third base line. He tucked a handful of sunflower seeds in his mouth and immediately began hollering for Toby’s team.

“Let’s crow, Toby! Let’s play ball, Roosters!”

“Feather up!” Mrs. Cline hollered from her seat in the bleachers.

“Mom,” Houston glanced at her above his superhero sunglasses. “Not cool.”

They stood for the national anthem, then cheered as the Roosters took the outfield against their old rival, the Stanton Starfire. Hundreds of fans cheered.

(The Bleachers)

“Cock-a-doodle-do!” Walt’s father shouted from near the dugout.

Skinny Stanley reared back, wound his arm, and threw a lightning fast pitch—hitting the Starfire’s first batter on the left arm!

Rattled, the Rooster pitcher walked the next two batters.

With bases loaded, the Starfire’s best batter stepped to the plate and hit a fly ball over Paul’s head.

Three runs came in.

(The Stanton Starfire)

Just minutes into the game, the Roosters were struggling.

By bottom of the fifth, the score was 5-2: Starfire.

The Roosters ran off the field, exchanging their gloves for helmets and bats. Not yet 10 a.m., it was beginning to look like evening. Dark clouds gathered in the distance.

Hunter was first up to bat. He stared down the Starfire pitcher and got a walk. Shane got a single off and beat it to first base. Bailey hit a number of foul balls into the bleachers before striking out.

Paul was up next, then Toby.

From the on-deck circle, Toby peered into the left-field sky at the dark clouds.

(The Scene at the Ballfield)

(The Diamond, with Toby at Bat)

“Strike!”

The second pitch streaked past, then Paul landed a solid hit on the third one, making it to first base.

Bases were loaded when Toby stepped up to the plate.

“Out of the park, Toby!” Hunter hollered from third.

“Let’s go!” Shane shouted near second.

“Come on, Toby, you can do it!” Paul called.

“Strike!” The first pitch blazed past Toby.

“Strike!” The second pitch slammed into the Stanton catcher’s mitt.

Toby tapped home plate three times, pulled his bat over his right shoulder, and stared hard at the Starfire pitcher. The boy wound up and lurched forward releasing another perfect strike toward home plate.

Toby was ready for it.

“Boom!”

A flash of lightning split the sky, followed by a loud clap of thunder, just as Toby’s bat met the ball.

And as the small white dot traveled over the left-field fence, a hard rain began pelting the field.

Toby never looked back at the Umpire. Dropping his bat, he ran the diamond as fast as his body could take him. Rounding first base, he heard the umpire call “Game.” Rounding third, he saw the bleachers swell as hundreds of spectators stood and gathered their things. Crossing home plate, Toby was met by Coach and his parents. His teammates had disappeared!

(The Cline Family's Home Run)

Lightning ripped through the sky less than a mile away. *Ba-Boom!* Its thunder boomed overhead.

"The sky is falling!" Grace screamed and squeezed her mother's neck.

Carrying Houston, Mr. Cline grabbed Toby's bat bag.

His coach was shouting something. It sounded like "Run home run!"

"A home run!" Mrs. Cline shouted. "Toby, let's go home!" The family raced to their vehicle, threw all their bags in the rear, and climbed in out of the rain. Along with every other kid's family in the tri-county area, the Cline family "ran" home.

It was a most amazing home run!

Not only did baseball players run home that afternoon, but also softball and soccer players, swimmers, hikers, campers, and marching band members. Even the dance studios and children's choir directors called off rehearsal, so that every family could run home!

(Other Families Running Home)

The Clines enjoyed being at their house as never before!

Toby, Houston, and Grace exchanged wet clothes for dry pajamas. Mrs. Cline whipped up some hot chocolate and made grilled cheese sandwiches, served with carrots and celery sticks. Mr. Cline unloaded their stuff in the garage. Soon everyone was nestled in their favorite spots in the living room, enjoying the familiar sights, sounds, and smells of home. The usual stress of the weekend fell away. Their dog Poncho purred like a kitten.

(Toby's House)

"This is perfectly lovely," Mrs. Cline thought.

"What an amazing home run," Mr. Cline said.

"Toby's home run or ours?" Houston asked, licking sticky marshmallow from his mug.

"Both," their parents said in unison, curling next to each other on the sofa.

"I kind of like the family home run best, myself," Toby said. "By the way, I'm sorry for being rude today."

Mr. and Mrs. Cline looked at each other and smiled.

"Thank you, Toby," they replied.

He stretched out on the loveseat, warm and dry.

Grace crawled up in his lap and soon fell asleep.

(The Cline Family)

Across town, other families were also enjoying their home runs—popping corn, reading, resting, tidying up, playing instruments and games, and repairing broken things.

Even Coach enjoyed being home.

“We should do this more often,” he told his wife and kids as they spread their favorite toppings on a pizza crust and set it in the oven.

“I’ll hold you to it, Dad,” Shane said, smiling.

(Shane’s Family)

(Bedtime)

The rain poured throughout the afternoon and into the night.

Back at Toby’s house, the boys climbed into their bunk beds. Their Dad opened his Bible and read aloud a few special verses from the book of Proverbs in the Bible, about families and home. The sound of his deep voice reading such good words warmed the boys’ hearts.

“Ah,” Toby sighed as he fell asleep, “Home, sweet home.”

The End.

# Proverbs for Parenting

## E: Enjoy God's Wisdom, F: Forfeit Fortune & Fame

Listen, my son, to your father's instruction, and don't reject your mother's teaching, for they will be a garland of grace on your head and a gold chain around your neck. **1:8-9**

Great wealth is in the house of the righteous ... **15:6**

Children's children are a crown to the aged,  
and parents are the pride of their children. **17:6**

Many are the plans in a person's heart,  
but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails. **19:21**

In the LORD's hand the king's heart is a stream of water  
that he channels toward all who please him. **21:1**

Start children off on the way they should go,  
and even when they are old they will not turn from it. **22:6**

Do not wear yourself out to get rich ... **23:4**

By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established;  
through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.  
**24:3-4**

Like a bird that flees its nest is anyone who flees from home. **27:8**