

The catcher in right field

Geoff lives in the suburbs in a nice house, not far from the beach with his mum and dad and his trusty dog Dennis.



Sometimes, Geoff feels the world is too noisy, too busy, too many people talking at once, too many instructions he's supposed to follow, while his brain's off chasing something else, like the shape of a cloud, or watching a butterfly flutter past. That's just how his mind works.

You see, Geoff has ADHD and ASD, which means he is what experts call neurodivergent. It's like a superpower that allows Geoff to see things others don't. The "other's" are what experts call neurotypical. So, for example, Geoff recognises patterns more easily, he finds 2000-piece puzzles easy and can solve a rubik's cube in under 60 seconds. But Geoff has a hard time with things that neurotypical kids find easy, like paying attention in class or knowing what to say in a group.

But when Geoff steps onto a baseball field, everything changes. Neurodivergent kids like Geoff need routine and structure as it helps them think and understand what is going on around them. Baseball does that and allows Geoff to switch on without feeling stressed out.

Geoff's team had a rocky start to their season. With over half the team, Geoff included, having never played baseball before, let alone knowing the rules, the team, with the help of a great coach started to find their groove. After 10 straight wins, Geoff's team made it into the grand final.

Geoff and the team had trained well in the lead up to the final, and while they were nervous, the team was excited and Saturday couldn't come quick enough.

Finally, Saturday morning arrived, game day! The grass was still wet with dew, and it smelled amazing, sweet and earthy. The team finished their warm up, the coach gave them their instructions, it was time to take to the field and play ball!

Geoff stood there in right field, taking it all in, the cool air filling his lungs. Everything felt calm. He was in the zone.

It was the bottom of the 9th inning and Geoff's team were up 7 to 6. The other team was batting. Two outs. One runner on second. It was theirs to win. The pressure was on!

Geoff knew they were going to try and hit it deep to him, he fumbled a grounder earlier on so why wouldn't you hit it to him and test him, that's what he would do.

The pitch came. Crack! The ball flew high, sailing towards him. Geoff's heart jumped. He realised if he was going to make the catch he had to run to his right, fast.

In that moment it was like everything was happening in slow motion, like in the movies. Just the ball. Just him. He didn't know if he could make it, but he had to try.

Geoff dived, his glove stretched out. Thud. He landed hard, rolled over in the grass and saw the ball in the middle of his mitt, he caught it.

Seconds later the silence was broken by the umpire shouting, "YOUR'E OUT" ! Then cheers. Geoff's teammates screamed "yes Geoff you did it", the coach shouted "good job Geoff".

Geoff just lay there in the cool, damp grass, taking it all in, his chest pounding, the sweet earthy smell of the grass in his nose, and the ball clutched tight in his glove.

As he lay there Geoff thought to himself he wasn't the kid who forgets homework, who talks too much, who gets things wrong. He was right where he needed to be, **the** catcher in right field

And it felt like magic.

Discursive Reflection: Finding Wonder on the Baseball Field

For someone like me, the world isn't always built to fit. School can feel like a maze. Conversations are confusing. My brain's full of thoughts all the time, but sometimes they trip over each other and I can't get the right one out. It's like a tv with bad reception all you get is static. That's what it's like living with ADHD and ASD.

But then there's baseball.

When I walk onto the field in the early morning, and the grass is wet and smells sweet and earthy, I feel different. The way the glove fits on my hand, the way the bat feels, the sounds, the soft pop of the ball in a mitt, the rhythm of cleats on the dirt, they help me focus.

In a neurotypical world, where I often feel out of place, baseball gives me a place where I **belong**. Where the rules make sense. Where there's space to move and be myself.

I've had teachers tell me I'm "too noisy and not talking things seriously" or that I need to try harder to be like everyone else. But on the field, no one says that. People just see what I can do. They see **me**.

Wonder isn't always fireworks or big crowds. Sometimes it's catching a ball in the quiet morning air. Sometimes it's standing in the outfield, watching the sky turn blue, smelling the dew on the grass, and feeling like, just for that moment you're exactly where you're supposed to be.

That's what baseball does for me. That's why it's magic.

The above story and Reflection are by a Junior 13-year-old (LA13) Eastern Suburbs Dolphins Player named Joshua.

It is a beautiful account of how special Baseball is in his life and another great reason why I have grown to hold this game in such high regard.

Henry Twaddell

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