

## **Miracle Field**

**By Scott Newport**

I've always heard miracles happen when you least expect them. And yesterday I experienced that for myself. It all started with a phone call from a guy named Steve. "Hey Scott," he said. "Do you remember me?"

I recalled meeting Steve earlier in the year at his brother-in-law's business. Steve had heard about my son, Evan, and his terminal heart disease and Noonan's Syndrome. Even though Steve doesn't have a child with a disability, he is a warrior for the cause. His brother-in-law had told him about the stories I write, and Steve wanted to join the list of readers. I had only met him face-to-face that one time, but since then we've stayed in contact through email.

But back to the phone call.

After I acknowledged that I remembered him, Steve asked me—knowing I was a builder/carpenter—if I would meet him at a construction site to help finish a project that was at a standstill. "Yea, I'll take a look," I said. We agreed to meet the next day.

The next day, I arrived at the job site a few minutes early. It was a sunny March morning, very welcome after another harsh and gray Michigan winter. I was early, so I climbed out of my truck and wandered around the complex. I must admit I was a bit in awe. The view

surrounding me was of a beautiful outdoor baseball stadium—one of the nicest I'd ever seen. The grass on the field was green—even in March!—and the adjacent areas were neatly kept. There were towering light poles standing around the field like soldiers guarding an encampment. I could only imagine how magical a night game played on this field would be.

Just then, Steve walked up and we shook hands. As we stood in the middle of the impressive field, he began to explain how he'd started the project a year ago and needed help to wrap it up. He told me how he'd become a part of the "Miracle League." I started to think he was talking about the movie with Kevin Costner, *Field of Dreams*. You know the famous quote: "If you build it, they will come." Yep. And here I am a builder. So I said, "But the field looks great! It looks finished. I'm curious why you think you need me."

"No, no, no. That's not what this is about," he said. He continued telling me about the Miracle League—that every player bats once each inning, all base runners are safe, and that each team and each player wins every game. I pictured in my mind what a game played by those rules would look like, and as I continued to listen in the early spring sunshine, I started to daydream about the field.

In my mind's eye, the empty bleachers began to fill with spectators cheering like they were in a pennant race. The sounds of the players chanting and calling to one another filled the air. I swear I even picked up the scent of hot dogs wafting from the concession

stand. The excitement in the air was exhilarating. And then, from behind home plate:  
“You’re safe!” The umpire rumbled his call, and the crowd stood and cheered.

I found a spot right behind the backstop—the best seat in the house. I leaned into chain-link fencing and yelled at the umpire, “What? He can’t be safe; everybody who’s gotten up to bat this inning has been safe. How can that be?”

The heavysset umpire, dressed all in black, turned around and gave me a quizzical look. He snapped back at me: “Can’t you see these kids have medical issues? Buddy, this is the Miracle League, where everybody is safe. Everyone gets at least a base hit, and there’s no such thing as a recorded error.”

Hmm, I guess I really didn’t notice the last kid to cross home plate was in a wheelchair. I started to look around and, to my surprise; I noticed a lot of wheelchairs and walkers in the dugouts.

As I continued to dream, a small boy with an oversized head approached the plate. This player—a bit small for his age—wasn’t in a wheelchair, but he needed help getting to the plate. The man who walked alongside the wobbly kid must have been his dad. It wasn’t a mystery who his mom was. She was the pretty blonde gal in the stands smiling and crying all at the same time. The closer the boy and his dad got to the batter’s box, the more she jumped up and down.

I looked back at the boy. He had a plastic tube in his neck that must have been to help him breathe. He also had a noticeable wet spot on the front of his uniform where it appeared another tube protruded from his belly, a tube a sick child is fed through. His dad, still in his worn-out work boots and dirty jeans, got down on one knee to hand the bat to his son. He communicated to his boy in sign language. I don't know a thing about the hearing impaired, but it was obvious to me what he was signing: "You can do it, son, you can do it."

The boy never swung, not even once, as more than ten balls pitched past him. To tell you the truth, I wondered if he even could. Suddenly, the umpire straightened up and yelled, "Run, run! Go to first base." The player and his dad held hands and struggled for first base. It seemed to take forever, but they made it. The umpire ran out to first base and yelled as he waved his arms in familiar fashion, "You're ... safe!"

"Wow, that was close," I thought.

But before I could wake from my dream, the first base coach yelled, "Keep going!" as he pointed to second base and started to swing his arm like a windmill.

In the stands, I saw the mother again. She stood up and her voice rose above the rest. She yelled, "C'mon, son, you can do it!"

So off the boy went. His dad continued to help him. It was almost too painful to watch as

the simple act of running the bases seemed like such a struggle for the boy. The pair eventually rounded third base and headed for home plate. I was now screaming like the rest of the fans in the stands, acting like a fool as I cheered for the little guy.

His breath was coming hard now. The air sounded raspy as it passed through his tube. He was worn out, but he had the hugest smile on his face. He was definitely having the time of his life.

The umpire was still out in the middle of the field—almost on purpose—as father and son crossed home plate. He nodded at me, letting me know it was up to me to call the play.

So I did. I yelled as loudly as I could. “You’re ... safe!”

The boy, so tired by now, turned and looked at me. I recognized the blonde curls peeking out from his helmet. I saw that familiar face. I looked into the eyes of the boy I love and know so well. He was my son. The boy everyone was cheering for was my little guy. The father who was crying and hugging him now was my own reflection.

Once again I started to wake from my dream, but before I could, the umpire—bless his soul—held up his chubby arms and called the game because of rain. Of course, you all know that the flood of drops was not coming from the sky but from me and all the spectators.

I finally awoke from my dream, still standing midfield with my friend and kindred spirit, Steve. As we shared the vision of all that was in store for this baseball field, he said to me, “Yes, Evan will play here someday, and he'll run the bases. He'll hit a home run and he will know he is safe.”

And that, my friend, is a miracle.