Today was the day that the great Satchel Paige was coming to play baseball in Nicodemus. The hometown team, the Nicodemus Blues, would get a chance to bat against the greatest pitcher the world had ever seen. Even if Satchel hadn’t been officially designated that, everyone knew it was true.

At last, the players started drifting out onto the field. When Satchel himself showed up, he walked slowly as usual. He had once said that to keep himself young, he would “keep the juices flowing by jangling around gently” as he moved, and Satchel certainly never seemed to be in a hurry.

Satchel’s team, the Kansas City Monarchs, was up first. In a way, everyone wanted it to be the other way around. They wanted to see Satchel pitch! It was the reason they had come.

When Satchel prepared for his first pitch, a hush fell over the crowd. He spun his arm forward and backward half a dozen times and then he leaned way back and stuck his size-fourteen foot in the air. At last his arm came forward and the ball flew by the batter. “Strike one!” yelled the umpire.

The batter and umpire both watched as the second pitch shot over the plate. “Strike two!” yelled the umpire. Satchel wound up for pitch number three and threw a curve ball. “Strike three!” yelled the umpire.

The first two batters were out, and neither had come close to hitting the ball. As the third batter came up to the plate, Satchel gestured to everyone on his team to sit down on the field. The outfielders sat down on the grass. The infielders sat down on the dirt. The only player on his feet was Satchel Paige. He was sure that he’d strike out the next batter.

Three pitches later, the umpire yelled, “Strike three!” It looked like it was going to be a fast game!