

Saturday Games
by James M. Maskell

As the rising sun dries the morning dew, I ride my
bike to the field for warm-ups, hat spun backwards to
evade the wind, well-oiled glove dangling from

my handlebars, announcing my destination to the world.
I toss my bike in the deep green of the uncut
grass by the equipment shed and join the banter

in the dugout. Bobby scratches his initials in the newly
painted bench while Tommy passes around his pouch
of Big League Chew, and we tuck pink wads into our cheeks

to emulate our big-league heroes.

When coach arrives, we take the field and follow
his commands. "Turn two!" he yells, then drives

a grounder toward the gap. Browned and scarred practice
balls vanish before us as the topspin launches
them off the infield grass, while our starter, Mikey,

warms up with the game ball, white and brilliant,
straight from the box, red-threaded seams curving across
the surface, ready to pull the ball down and away.

At noon, the first pitch snaps into the mitt for a strike
while parents cheer from their folding lawn chairs
scattered along the fence. As the pitch count rises

with the heat of the unrelenting sun, Kevin's mom
drags out a cooler of iced Coca Colas, passing out
can after can to sweaty players on the bench.

We bolt down giant gulps, the bubbles like mini razor
blades shredding our throats. The sugary nectar churns
in our bellies and the belching contest begins, as coach
shakes his head and lets out his exasperated sigh.