Brew and Hype play catch on a hot day

The June morning was already warm and sticky at half-past ten, and the harbinger of a very hot day in the offing. I was walking along Park Avenue in New York on my way back from my eye doctor. I was pleased that my prescription hadn't changed so I wouldn't have to shell out $300 for new Coke bottle bottoms. Still I felt there was something missing from the day.

I think there's actually some chemical in the air on muggy summer days which affects aging baseball players in much the same manner as bells affect old firehorses. I was struck by the urge to pick up the leather, lie on the spikes, and chuck the old pillbox.

Accordingly, I called my friend Paul. He was in my class in high school and a pitcher on the baseball team. "Rumna-bumrah, Hype," I said when he picked up the phone. "(Hype" was his nickname in high school.) "Opa-opa," he replied. "Hey, how's it going, Brew? (That's me.)" "Having a great time," I said, concluding our time-honored exchange. "I'm about ten blocks from your house. You want to go out and play some catch?"

"Sounds dodging. Can you be over in 20 minutes?"

"No problem. See you then."

When Paul picked up for Dalton, he had one of the most devastating curve-slider combinations I had seen in our league. He had an unfortunate tendency, though, to pitch in games in which the team didn't score runs. For example he picked a two-or-three-baseman against Long Island Friends School which he lost 3-1 when the substitute right fielder missed a ball in the bottom of the sixth. (We played seven innings.)

He would also get very down on himself when either he or the team would make mistakes. One game he had a no-hitter into the fifth against Englewood, lost it, then got upset, gave up three runs, and was taken out. We won the game, though, in extra innings.

Standing on the mound, Paul appeared the complete antithesis of a baseball player. Half-way into his wind-up, however, he took on the look of a mad pitcher. The curve would come rolling high up to the plate, then break down through the strike zone. The slider would start lower and down through the strike zone.

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