THE GREAT GAME

By Rick Preston

The very crowded bus ride to Randall's Island from 125th Street was about 20 minutes long. It was a sunny, bright, warm day on the medium-sized dirty diamond baseball field. When I got out of the bus I started walking on the crunchy gravel to the grassy outfield to practice. We started practice by throwing the baseballs to each other. Then the coaches continuously hit ground balls to me and my team. And then the game began…

Every time a batter got up for our team, our team started cheering out of control. Once two or three consecutive batters for our team got on base, rallies seemed like they would never end. The good thing is we had a lot of rallies, especially in the beginning. After the game we had our snack as usual, but it was not a regular game in my mind. For some reason it felt like a championship game win for me. The only reason I think that is probably because of the teamwork. We destroyed the other team, 19-4.

My first at-bat the only thing I was focused on in the world was the ball. I got an easy R.B.I. single. I rounded the bases but only got to third. The second time I got up, literally the same exact thing happened – an R.B.I. single and I got to third base. The third time I got up, I struck out. My hot streak for the day was over. The fourth time I got up, my team shouted,

"You can do it – come on."

The coach whispered, "A single is all we need."

I replied calmly, "I know."

Throughout my at-bat my teammates chanted, "Come on, Rick! Come on, Rick!" I did not reply but kept on saying to myself, "This is the at-bat of the game."

The ball came and then I swung…I smashed the ball deep into the outfield for a stand-up double to second base, where about two bats later, I would get a nice easy vacation to home plate! The teamwork was great. If this happened every day we would win every day. I won the game for my team. Just me outscored the other team in R.B.I.'s, 5-4. It was the best game I ever played.