

# Zion Lodge Stories

## The Great Boys versus Girls Football Game

This is the kind of thing that just doesn't happen in America anymore. I'll let you be the judge of whether that's good or bad. I'm just going to tell you what happened.

It didn't take too long after I started working at Zion Lodge to start hearing about the "Boys versus Girls Football Game" that was planned for later that summer. My understanding was that it had been held before. And it had the high school and college kids working at the Lodge very excited.

Here's the deal.

Everybody said that it would be a real football game where both sides played to win! But to even up the odds, there would be a few special rules.

1 – Boys had to weigh less than some ridiculous number that I remember was 140 pounds. I knew that even if I didn't eat from that point on, I wouldn't make the limit, so I didn't even try. But some of the other boys who were only thirty or so pounds away did stop eating as soon as they heard about it.

2 – Boys would have to play with their knees tied together.

3 – No fouls would be called on girls. None. Anything was legal for the girls.

Other than that, it was to be a real tackle football game. (Not touch football, although I know the boys starving themselves did anticipate that some touching would be involved.) Looking back, the most amazing thing is that the game was planned and held with the full knowledge and participation of Lodge management. They were the referees! In today's America, where lawsuits fly like snowflakes in January, that's the part that could never happen. After all, the Lodge was run by the railroad and they are a great target of opportunity for any hungry lawyer.

In the weeks leading up to the game, a sort of a standoff started to develop. Everybody knew which boys and which girls planned to play. The boys were the ones with haggard, hungry eyes at the lunch table. The girls were the ones carefully filing their fingernails to sharp points. It became the only thing people talked about.

On the day of the big game, everybody gathered out under the big cottonwood tree in front of the Lodge. This wasn't advertised to tourists. It was an employee thing. There were tourists around, of course, but they didn't even know what was happening. I was a "cheerleader", so I wore a t-shirt stuffed with rags for boobs and a mop on my head. Wearing that stuff quickly failed to attract any attention as soon as the game started.

The game was amazingly even. The boys learned that, even with their knees tied together, they could run faster backward. Since it generally took two girls to bring one boy down, the boys made good progress on the offense. When the girls got the ball, however, the boys had a hard time catching them. But the girls couldn't pass and with heroic effort, the boys were often able to, ummm, get their hands on the girl carrying the ball.

And the pileups. Oh! The pileups! Boys emerged with wild eyes and rivers of blood flowing down their backs. Girls swore dark revenge on the next play. The ref's - our bosses - warned both sides that we were still in a civilized country, no matter what was said before the game.

As the game wore on, even from the sidelines, I could see that the level of intensity was getting higher. Both sides decided they were out to win. I guess that's why the game didn't end well. At the end of one particular play, people started rushing onto the field. The news spread like a bad smell that one of the girls had a broken leg. A car arrived from somewhere to take her away. And that was the end of the Great Boys Versus Girls Football Game.