

LAST CALL AT THE PILLOW SLID BAR

Maximum guts, minimum glory

by Spence Hall



I. Suburban Bobsled: 1985–1986

Matching beverage: Cherry Coke. Flavor profile: diabetes and Jolly Rancher Notes of lab-engineered fruit.

THE SPORT'S ORIGINS came from my sister's habit of sliding down the stairs on her ass. She would start at the top of the stairs, and then ratchet down, gaining momentum toward the end and then slamming home against the baseboards at the bottom on landing. Children have no nerves in their bodies, and even less sense. Don't ever let them make up games.

I added in the pillow as a force multiplier. The pillow allowed for bounce; with enough force, a good rider could get up enough momentum to skip entire steps. With a slick pillowcase, you could even tumble end over end. Timing was inexact, but on a straight-shot, saltbox-house staircase, the fastest times ranged somewhere around 1.5 seconds.

Progress on the project was halted when an experimental double-pillow run went awry and sent the rider headfirst into a mirror hung at the bottom of the stairs. Sorry about that, Mom. We immediately moved to Tennessee for six years, and then to Florida. Seven years bad luck for breaking a mirror is no myth.

II. Dry Jousting: March 1987

Matching beverage: Jolt Cola. Flavor profile: like Tab brewed with hydrochloric acid.

ARRANGED DURING an extremely unsupervised middle school recess. Competitors stood on railroad ties placed over a drainage ditch, and then battled to see who could knock the other off. All forms of contact were allowed, including groin shots if you had the balance. No one did, and attempts to land such blows were the cause of at least half of all defeats. (Do not ask why there were railroad ties just lying around. It's as much of a mystery as "Why do middle school boys love to punch each other in the balls?")

Progress on this promising sport was halted when I was thrown off by a 250-pound twelve-year-old and landed headfirst on a rock. I heard bells for hours and saw children who did not exist in the trees.

III. Medicine Kick Ball: April 1987

Matching beverage: Grape drink. Flavor profile: cough syrup and the plastic of the barrel-shaped container it came in.

KICKBALL, BUT PLAYED with a ten-pound medicine ball. Stopped after one at-bat and one broken toe. Actually overseen by a licensed educator from the state of Tennessee. Don't ever let your children be in Tennessee.

IV. Mumblety-Leg: June 1988

Matching beverage: Slurpee Suicide. Flavor profile: plaid.

VARIATION on the popular nineteenth-century game of dropping a knife, business end first, into the ground. The variation here is that an actual leg belonging to someone was on the ground, and the knife used was one of those gigantic, Rambo-sized survival knives advertised in the back of Boys' Life for children's consumption. The large handles of the knives usually contained fishing wire, matches, a wire handsaw—and, in one recursive case, a smaller knife kept inside your larger knife's handle. It was pure homicide you could order for \$17.99, but it worked a lot better than the bullshit hovercraft made from a vacuum cleaner.

We played this for quite a while, until a glancing blow slashed open my leg. One of the participants is now a doctor who supervises life-and-death decisions on a daily basis. I lost my wallet gambling poorly on this trip, too.

Boy Scouts is a worthy endeavor because it encourages risky behavior with knives, gambling, and homosexual experimentation. If you can't take your child to New Orleans and leave him alone for days on end legally, remember: You can always enroll him in the Boy Scouts of America.

V. Car Luge: February–June 1990

Matching beverage: Milwaukee's Best. Flavor profile: tin, wilted flowers, with notes of regret.

I HAD A FRIEND who insisted on being called "Dart." His real name was Lon, so this was a push. "Dart" was the foremost practitioner of car luge, the safer, more sensible option to "car surfing." Hell, if you had

a car with a sunroof, the grip of a passenger lowered the risk of serious injury to something close to "only partially definite." I slid off a car hood going fifteen miles per hour or so and broke a finger. I never told anyone about. It still locks up and refuses to bend for minutes at a time. Being my middle finger, this makes for some great fun in conversations.

Dart flew off in my cul-de-sac on one ill-fated turn and had to be taken to a friend's mother, an ER nurse, to be sewn up. She was like a mafia doctor in that when you really didn't want to go to anyone else, you could go to her. When Dart came to school the next day, half his face gone like Harvey Dent in a Cure t-shirt, we all remembered she was a nurse, and not a plastic surgeon.

VI. Multi-platform Backyard Gymnastics: Spring 1991

Matching beverage: wine coolers stolen from a parent's refrigerator. Flavor profile: a bum rolled in a gutter full of car air fresheners.

PLAYERS ENGAGED in various combinations of gymnastic maneuvers between elements present in especially cool backyards: trampoline, roof, and—in special situations—a swimming pool. You didn't have to try to do it, girl whose name will be protected for the good of "those people who do not want their children to have easy ammunition." Off the roof, flip off the trampoline, and then into the pool was a lot to ask of anyone, especially someone with no previous professional gymnastic experience.

The full-leg cast made your ass look like a levitating sphere of a perfect world the gods only allow us to catch glimpses of. You should know that, even if it's twenty years too late and just a distant aching memory in your long-healed femur. You were the most beautiful temporary cripple I will and have ever seen. 🍷

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