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Rounding Second ...

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ROUNDING SECOND...

MARK BRITAIN

my son stumbled on his way to third base
trying to extend a stand-up double.
Rooster tails of native clay and immigrant top soil
sprayed the opponent shortstop
as planted right foot launched him
off of second and into an arm wheeling,
tip-toeing slave to his own inertia
and his ten-year old bravura.

Flailing body overtook ambition
in a collapsing bow to the goggle-eyed
third-base coach whose arms
were still mutely raised, fingers extended,
frozen in coach-sign-speak for Stop.
Knowledgeable fathers and step-dads
screamed conflicting commands from the stands
and he levitated.

He rose to a sprinter's crouch
and sprang, arms pumping at the bag
and the unfortunate boy playing third base,
who was a soccer player with his hopeful father's
too large fielder's glove
and sudden questions about the decision
to try baseball.

And he fled.

The ball, thrown perfectly
from deep in the wet, marshy turf
of a spring baseball outfield, bulleted
into my son's back as he dropped
into cleat-footed contact with the unguarded base
and effortlessly popped up to see
the ball spinning lazily away, untended.

And he ran for home.