

Cali Scores a Goal

by RV Staff Writer J.C.

It was the last game of the season. Cali had been playing soccer all summer. She really enjoyed running around with the other players in her bright blue uniform, chasing the black and white ball across the grassy field. As much as she tried, though, Cali still had not scored one single goal.

“Don’t give up,” said her coach. Before each game, they had a practice session. He showed Cali and her team how to pass the ball to each other and take shots at the goal. Cali was pretty good at passing the ball, but even during practices, she couldn’t kick the ball past the goalkeeper. She wondered if she should quit soccer for good.

“Don’t give up,” said her teammates. Some had been playing soccer for a couple of years, and some were new to the game just like her. “You just need to keep trying and you will get better.” So Cali stayed on the team and did her best.

“Don’t give up,” said Uncle George and Aunt Lisa. But it was half-time, and Cali was feeling frustrated. She was trying! Every time she got a chance to kick the ball, it would go in the wrong direction or a player from the other team would take control of it. She sucked on her orange slice and pouted. Maybe she would try a different sport next summer.

The break was over and the referee blew her whistle to start the game again. The two teams walked back onto the field, both determined to win. Cali bent tied up her shoelace and heard her aunt whisper in her ear. “Look for an opportunity to get the ball. You can do it.”

Cali stood up and took a deep breath. Even if she didn’t get one goal all summer, she knew that she had tried her best. That was something to be proud of. So she smiled at her aunt and headed to her position. The whistle blew, and the game resumed.

The score was tied with one goal each. The yellow team was pretty good, but Cali’s blue team was fast. The girls’ ponytails bounced as they ran, with many feet kicking frantically at the ball when it came near them. Cali was off to the side when the ball headed her way. She ran over to it and kicked it. She watched it land right in front of a girl on the yellow team who expertly stopped it and sent it back in the other direction. Cali sighed.

The little girl watched the ball go back and forth between the players. Her heart wasn’t in the game anymore. Cali decided she’d wait until the game was over and then she was going to hang up her soccer cleats for good. Cali started daydreaming about becoming a hip-hop dancer instead.

She was woken from her daydream by some music that was definitely not hip-hop. It was the sweet, happy jingle of the ice cream truck. It was driving right beside the soccer field, playing its music loudly to attract customers. The truck stopped. The music kept playing.

The players on both teams turned to look at it. A few girls pointed to it and cheered. Some called out to their parents to buy them one. The soccer game had practically stopped. Cali looked around and saw the soccer ball close by, ignored by the nearest yellow player. Cali smiled. She looked at her aunt, who nodded at her. "Now!" her aunt yelled.

Cali didn't hesitate. She dashed over to the ball. She dribbled it between her feet, moving forward toward the net of the yellow team. By the time the other girls had noticed, Cali was positioned right in front of the net. The goalkeeper was standing to one side, also looking at the ice cream truck. She turned back quickly to guard the net as Cali kicked the ball hard.

The keeper reached out her gloved hand. The ball touched the tips of her fingers as it swooshed past, right into the top corner of the net.

The referee blew her whistle. "Goal!"

Questions

1. Why did Cali think about giving up soccer?
2. Why did everyone keep telling her not to give up?
3. What does this story teach the reader?
4. How do you think Cali feels now? Do you think she will play soccer next summer?