**2, 4, 6, GREAAAT**

**Written by Kaita Mpambara**

**Produced by Devon Cody**

**Story editing by Josh Haber**

**Supervising direction by Jim Miller**

**Directed by Denny Lu, Mike Myhre**

**Transcribed by Alan Back (**[**ajback@yahoo.com**](mailto:ajback@yahoo.com)**)**

Prologue

(*Opening shot: fade in to the exterior of the School of Friendship during the day. Zoom in slowly on a bridge off to one side that spans its encircling lake as Twilight Sparkle, Fluttershy, Pinkie Pie, and Snails make their way across toward the surrounding meadows.*)

**Twilight:** I have to admit— (*Close-up of the four.*) —I was a little shocked when Princess Celestia told me she wanted to start a scholastic buckball league. But I was even more surprised that she wanted the first game to be between her school and ours! Apparently she’s a *huge* sports fan.

**Pinkie:** I always thought Celestia was kind of a jock— (*flipping her mane*) —just with *really* wavy hair.

(*Twilight throws her the briefest of odd looks before continuing.*)

**Twilight:** Anyway, we don’t have much time.

(*Cut to various spots on and around the School’s buckball field, which is being fixed up by a team of construction workers—bleachers, new pole-mounted baskets, painting, and so on.*)

**Twilight:** (*from o.s.*) The game is in two weeks. (*They stop at the edge.*) And I want all of *you* to coach the team.

(*Zoom out on this last to frame the entire area, littered with unused fresh lumber and a few spare balls. Several students have gathered at midfield, talking animatedly among themselves and trying a move or two on their own. Back to the three newly drafted coaches—Pinkie smiling brightly, Snails halfway zoned out as usual, Fluttershy going into panicked hyperventilation as she stands between them.*)

**Twilight:** (*from o.s.*) I know how you feel. (*Cut to her, excitement building.*) Young athletes ready to take the field—ooh, you can almost breathe in the excitement!

(*The freaked-out pegasus stops doing exactly that, cheeks bulging out, and collapses to the grasss.*)

**Snails:** Uh, I don’t think you should breathe it in so hard.

(*Pinkie reaches o.s., comes up with a glass of water, and dashes the contents into Fluttershy’s face to bring her around; she shakes herself dry.*)

**Fluttershy:** It’s just…two weeks doesn’t feel like a whole lot of time to train a whole team.

**Pinkie:** (*helping her up*) Mmm—maybe the School of Magic could play a few other schools first, like the Mane and Tail Styling College or the Scroll-Making Institute?

**Twilight:** Relax. You’re gonna do just fine.

**Fluttershy:** Um…what makes you so sure?

**Twilight:** Because I have faith in my friends—who also happen to be… (*hovering excitedly*) …*the best buckball players in Equestria!*

**Pinkie:** (*cockily*) Oh, yeah!

(*Rushing onto the field, she slides to a stop behind an idle ball, bounces it up, and proceeds to knock it back and forth between her front hooves at a speed almost too fast to follow with the naked eye. After a few dozen reps, she deftly flicks it upward, then flops onto her back and launches it with one hind-leg kick. The sphere homes in on Fluttershy, who lifts off just in time to avoid stopping it with her face; instead, the long pink tail snags it out of the air and whips it back down the field. The half-closed eyes of Snails follow it lazily, and his magic hefts a basket for a neat catch above the gathered students’ heads.*)

**Fluttershy:** I guess that is sort of true. (*She touches down as Pinkie rejoins the other three.*)

**Twilight:** I asked Rainbow Dash to help too, but I’m not sure when she’s—

(*She gets no farther before a familiar multicolored contrail rockets past her and describes one full circuit of the field. Rainbow Dash comes to a stop in front of the four, hauling a large, bulging bag and wearing a baseball cap; a whistle hangs on a lanyard around her neck.*)

**Rainbow:** Sorry I’m late. But when Twilight said she needed my help with the buckball team— (*dumping bag out*) —I figured I’d better grab every piece of coaching equipment I could find.

(*This proves to be a pile of balls, jump ropes, dumbbells, and miniature traffic cones. All but Pinkie regard the collection with some degree of bewilderment.*)

**Rainbow:** So, what should I focus on? (*Drop the bag; grab a ball.*) Offense? (*Throw it; pick up a cone.*) Defense? (*Balance it upside down on her head, topped by a ball.*) Trick plays?

**Twilight:** I was thinking of something even more important.

**Rainbow:** Awesome! Lay it on me. Whatever it is— (*Now she hoists the entire pile of gear on her back.*) —I’ll give it a hundred and twenty percent!

**Twilight:** I knew I could count on your enthusiasm! That’s why I want you to coach the cheer squad!

(*This last sentence causes every muscle in the blue flyer’s wings to lock solid, dumping her gracelessly to the turf. She winds up buried under the mass of equipment and takes a few seconds to get her dumbfounded face clear of it.*)

**Rainbow:** *Cheerleadiing?*

(*She deflates into an indignant pout. Fade to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: fade in to the field. The newly recruited players execute a few passing drills as the three coaches cross to them; pan to Twilight and Rainbow at the edge, the headmare turning toward the School.*)

**Rainbow:** I don’t mean to sound ungrateful. (*She extricates herself from the pile of gear and flies to catch up.*) It’s just…when you said you wanted my help with something important, I thought you meant something *important*.

**Twilight:** The cheer squad *is* important.

(*Rainbow wastes no time in laughing herself stupid, not noticing that Twilight has stopped walking and is aiming a mildly vexed glance after her. Once she catches on to this face, she stops short physically and vocally.*)

**Rainbow:** Oh. (*circling to face Twilight*) Well, sure, cheer squad is totally important to somepony who isn’t me, but I’m more about ponies playing *in* the game, not cheering for it.

(*She points back toward the field, drawing Twilight’s gaze to the laughter of the athletes practicing with a little demonstrative help from the coaches.*)

**Rainbow:** I mean, it’s great that some ponies only want to cheer—though I don’t know why they would.

**Twilight:** Hmmm…well, maybe this’ll be a good opportunity for you to find out.

**Rainbow:** (*disdainfully*) Of course I’ve seen cheer squads before, on the sidelines, but… (*uncertainly*)…I’m not even a hundred percent sure what they do. I’ll probably just mess it up.

**Twilight:** (*laughing*) I think you might be surprised. In fact, I’m more sure than ever that you’re the perfect choice.

(*She goes serenely on her way, leaving an unconvinced Rainbow in her wake. On the start of the next line, zoom out slightly to frame Snips standing alongside—outfitted in a long-sleeved shirt, tall floppy stovepipe hat, and streaks of face paint all in pink, violet, and pale green. He has adorned the clothing with pins and pennants, and a drawing of a ball flying toward a basket is taped over his cutie mark.*)

**Snips:** I’m actually one hundred and twenty percent sure. And it’s a good thing, too. (*dropping to haunches*) The cheer squad really needs you.

**Rainbow:** What do you mean?

**Snips:** Well, I’ve been helping out. (*standing again*) And let’s put it this way. We’ve got two weeks until the big game, and…we could use two years. (*confidently*) But that’s all gonna change— (*rising to hind legs*) —because you’re here to save the day!

**Rainbow:** (*not buying it*) Ooo-kay… (*Touch down from her hover.*) …so why are you here?

**Snips:** What? A pony can’t show school spirit?

**Rainbow:** You don’t even go to this school.

**Snips:** (*scoffing, affronted*) Okay. When I went to the Buckball Hall of Fame…

(*He darts away, the camera panning a short distance to frame him now standing by a closed trunk.*)

**Snips:** …I found out buckball souvenirs are big bits!

(*During this last, his aura opens the lid to expose assorted fan paraphernalia in the same color scheme as his outfit and dollar signs ring up briefly in his eyes as he floats out a pennant. He is referring to the events of “Common Ground.”*)

**Snips:** (*returning pennant to trunk*) If Twilight’s team does well, I could start selling ’em full-time in Ponyville! (*Cross to Rainbow.*) So *I* have a vested interest, and *you* have an assistant coach.

(*He pulls out a whistle on a lanyard around his neck, previously hidden under his shirt, and blows a blast; Rainbow responds with a disgusted groan and eye roll. Wipe to the two approaching a pair of closed doors within the School, Snips hauling his now-closed trunk. Excited chatter is heard from the other side as Snips knocks them open to reveal the darkened gym beyond, on whose floor the silhouettes of two mares are standing. Zoom in slightly as Rainbow and Snips enter; both figures speak with Valley Girl accents, the second more pronounced than the first.*)

**Mare 1:** She’s here!

**Mare 2:** Get the lights!

(*The clunk of a switch being thrown, and a spotlight is illuminating the pair—earth ponies in brown/red/white cheerleader uniforms with long sleeves. On the left is Shimmy Shake: pale brown coat; short red-brown mane/tail, the former tied back in a ponytail; darker red-brown eyes with brown shadow. The one on the right is Light Hoof: pale blue-gray coat, mane/tail in two shades of blue-green, medium blue eyes. Their cutie marks are hidden from view by their skirts. Throwing a quick nod to each other, they go into a choreographed routine that includes Shimmy tumbling across Light’s back and Light bounding over Shimmy’s.*)

**Shimmy:** Over and over and over again!

**Light:** We want to dance for each other and for all of our friends!

(*The difference in their accents picks Light out as the first speaker when the lights were down. They end with a high five, each balanced on one hind leg and pulling the other up to the vertical. The spotlight flicks off as the rest of the gym lights come on.*)

**Rainbow:** (*rolling eyes; the pair drop to all fours*) Dancing. Right. I’ve seen you two around school, haven’t I? (*Close-up of Shimmy.*)

**Shimmy:** (*laughing*) I’m Shimmy Shake. (*gesturing toward Light; zoom out to frame her*) And this is Light Hoof.

**Light:** And we are your lead dancers.

(*They strike a pose, but get only a bored shrug from the coach followed by a very puzzled look. She rises into a hover to get a clear view at what is behind them—or who, in this case: Ocellus, Smolder, and Yona.*)

**Rainbow:** I didn’t know you three would be here.

**Yona:** (*laughing*) Yona want to cheer and make pony pyramid!

(*Three hearty, four-legged stomps shake the dragon and changeling badly enough to dump them flat on the floor. Ocellus is first to stand again.*)

**Ocellus:** And I thought this could be my chance to make an impression on everypony—you know, for something other than changing shape. (*Rainbow lands in front of Smolder.*)

**Rainbow:** I didn’t realize *you* were into school spirit, Smolder.

**Smolder:** (*standing*) Eh, I just came with these two. Guess they think you can make cheer squad cool or something.

**Rainbow:** Don’t count on it. (*She paces pensively.*)

**Snips:** Okay! Now that we’re all here, why don’t you tell us the plan? How are you gonna make us into the most awesome cheer squad ever?

**Rainbow:** Uh…

(*She finishes the thought with an “I don’t know” grunt and shrug and lifts off, sparking a round of downhearted moans from the five students.*)

**Rainbow:** I mean, if you guys were an actual buckball team, I’d have plenty of ideas. (*She rises further and lands on an elevated windowsill.*) But I don’t know anything about cheerleading.

**Snips:** (*laughing*) Oh, yes! Good one, Coach! But Headmare Twilight picked you for the job, so I’m pretty sure you know what you are doing.

(*Said coach stares moodily out at the buckball field.*)

**Rainbow:** If you say so.

**Snips:** (*chuckling*) Right. (*to the others*) Okay, gang. Let’s show Rainbow Dash what we’ve been working on, and she can take it from there.

**Yona:** Cheer squad can do that! (*She begins stomping as Ocellus and Smolder fly off.*)

**Light:** Yep. All we need is a little music!

(*The camera pans quickly to follow her and Shimmy’s pointing forelegs and stops on Snips, now stationed next to a crank-operated phonograph. He drops the needle onto the record, starting an accompaniment that leans heavily on military-style drum cadences, and the two mares begin their routine—only to keep losing their balance and place thanks to Yona’s room-shaking stomps.*)

**Shimmy:** Over and over and over again!

**Light:** We want to dance for each other and for all of our friends!

(*She trails off into a yell as both pitch to the floor. Next, a worried Ocellus nudges Smolder, who is running an eye over a scroll and not looking too hyped up about it.*)

**Smolder:** (*woodenly, reading*) “Two, four, six, eight.”

(*Pass it off to Ocellus.*)

**Ocellus:** (*nearly inaudible*) Uh…“Friendship school is really great.”

(*Clawed orange fingers cup to a frilled ear in an attempt to hear better. The recitation ends with a weak grin from Ocellus and a helpless shrug from Smolder, who then exhales a thick jet of smoke that settles over Light, Shimmy, and Yona, The yak’s gallivanting ends with one final, camera-shaking crash, and the record stops as the view slowly clears.*)

**Smolder:** Well, that was a disaster. (*Close-up of Shimmy, flat on her belly.*)

**Shimmy:** It’s kind of hard to stick to our choreography when the floor is moving. (*Pan to a similarly disposed Light.*)

**Light:** (*scoffing*) Yeah, Yona. Your stomps are a little too powerful. (*Zoom out; both are pinned under Yona’s bulk.*)

**Yona:** Can we make pony pyramid instead?

**Ocellus:** Maybe we should figure out what cheers we should do first.

**Smolder:** (*sarcastically*) Pssh. Yeah, because *that’ll* fix everything.

**Snips:** (*addressing the o.s. Rainbow*) So, I mean there’s a few…uh, a lot of problems, but nothing you can’t solve, right?

(*The Wonderbolt snaps only partway out of her buckball-induced reverie. Ocellus has put the scroll aside.*)

**Rainbow:** Huh? Oh, yeah, listen. You guys don’t have anything to worry about.

**Smolder:** We don’t?

**Rainbow:** Nope. In fact, I think what you all just did is totally fine. You guys have got this. So, uh, I’m just gonna head down to the field. (*She flies down to hover just above them.*) Uh, great practice, everypony!

(*And out she goes, the camera shifting to frame five extremely confused cheer squad members and one equally flummoxed assistant coach through the doors before they swing shut. Fade to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to the School’s entrance hall. Rainbow flies calmly into view and lands in close-up to continue on hoof, but stops short with a pained grunt as her tail is jerked out straight behind her. A longer shot puts it in Snips’ grip.*)

**Rainbow:** What are you doing?

**Snips:** (*with effort*) What are *you* doing? You gotta come back and coach the squad!

(*A brief tug-of-war ends in Rainbow’s favor; she resumes her walk as Snips scuttles to catch up.*)

**Rainbow:** I watched them cheer stuff. Looked fine to me. (*He cuts her off, pushing back with a grunt.*)

**Snips:** Well, it’s not! Do you know what’ll happen if they do what they just did at the big game?

(*She disengages herself and lifts off, causing him to fall on his face and lose his hat.*)

**Rainbow:** Uh, nothing?

**Snips:** (*standing, calling after her*) Uh, wrong!

(*This time, he brings her to a stop by getting a telekinetic grip on her tail while plunking the headwear back in place.*)

**Snips:** A good cheer squad gets the fans excited, which gets the team excited. But if nopony’s excited— (*with effort, as Rainbow strains to pull free*) —then nopony buys any souvenirs!

(*She yanks loose on this last word and pivots to face him in midair.*)

**Rainbow:** I think you’re blowing this a little out of proportion.

**Snips:** Point is, if I’m going to make any bits at these games, that squad has to get better! And to do that, they need a coach!

**Rainbow:** (*gasping softly, smiling*) You know what? You’re right! Why don’t you do it? (*plucking a pennant from his hat*) I mean, you’re the one with a vested interest.

(*Off she goes, cavalierly flicking the tiny flag down for him to catch. The bucktoothed mouth curves into a calculating smile as the view dissolves to a close-up of Snails—blindfolded, levitating himself, and sitting cross-legged just above the field with both forelegs raised as if meditating.*)

**Snails:** The trick to being a good buckball keeper is to do nothing. (*trance-like tone*) Just empty your mind. Be the ball.

(*A longer shot frames three School players, one of each tribe, standing before him and wearing jerseys that match the of Snips’ outfit—the official School colors, no doubt. A basket has been placed here.*)

**Pegasus:** Uh, balls don’t have minds.

**Snails:** Exactly!

(*Perplexed looks flick from one player to another, but they have no time to mull over his words before Fluttershy and Pinkie start slinging balls at them. All three duck and cover, but Snails expertly wraps the basket in his aura and brings it up to catch every shot. Wonderment yields to a spate of eager chatter as they get upright, and a longer shot puts Rainbow in the bleachers and enjoying both this display and a bag of popcorn as Smolder flies in to stare her down.*)

**Smolder:** Why are you watching Snails’ weird practice when you’re supposed to be practicing with us?

**Rainbow:** (*chuckling*) Snails’ practice is definitely weird. (*Her eyes pop as the words sink in.*) Uh, I thought Snips was practicing with you. (*Smolder lands.*)

**Smolder:** (*sourly*) He *was*.

(*She gestures toward the field; pan to bring the other four squad members into view. Ocellus is now wearing a jersey, scarf, sweatband on one foreleg, and a huge fluffy wig, Yona has been fitted with a stovepipe hat and a cape that drapes over the blanket on her back. Both of them have been daubed with face paint, and Light, Shimmy, and Yona have all had pennants stuck into their manes. Both these new accessories and the pins adorning all four are in School colors, and not a single one of them is happy about having had the lot forced on them by Snips.*)

**Shimmy:** (*sighing*) Do you have any idea how hard it is to dance in this stuff?

**Ocellus:** (*fidgeting; buttons rattle*) Plus, all these buttons jingle so much, you can’t hear my cheers.

**Smolder:** Speaking up might help a little.

**Rainbow:** So don’t dance and cheer.

**Yona:** Uh, then what cheer squad do?

**Rainbow:** (*shrugging*) I don’t know. (*Smolder leans hard into her face.*)

**Smolder:** Maybe you should! Or, whatever. You’re the coach! You’re supposed to come up with stuff for us to do.

**Rainbow:** (*a bit flustered*) Okay. I’ve got something for you to do.

(*This camera angle picks out the two dancers’ cutie marks for the first time, previously hidden by their skirts: horseshoe and pompoms for Light, wind gust and pompoms for Shimmy. Close-up of Snails floating in the School gym, exactly as he was on the field, and zoom out slowly.*)

**Snails:** Just do nothing. Empty your minds. Be the squad.

(*The camera motion brings Rainbow, Snips, and the five squad members—minus their new duds—on the end of this line.*)

**Smolder:** (*testily*) We *are* the squad.

**Snails:** (*laughing, pushing blindfold up*) Oh, yeah.

**Snips:** (*tossing a pennant into his trunk*) At least helping sell my souvenirs was…something.

(*His magic closes the lid and ties a band of cloth across every member’s eyes.*)

**Yona:** Yona still not understand how this make us better.

(*She pushes hers away from one eye; cut briefly to her perspective of Rainbow heading for the doors, then back to her.*)

**Yona:** Huh?

(*She breaks into a spooked gallop, the blindfold falling away. Profile close-up of the departing coach, who stops short as a cloven hoof is thrust toward her.*)

**Yona:** (*from o.s.*) Professor Dash needs to stay and coach!

**Rainbow:** (*groaning*) You guys asked me to come up with something, and I did. (*The other four uncover their eyes; Smolder pops up to a hover.*)

**Smolder:** I don’t think “nothing” counts.

**Rainbow:** (*pacing*) Then I’m out of ideas! (*Snails magically maneuvers himself over to her.*)

**Snails:** (*trance-like*) This is the School of Friendship. If you need ideas, you should ask your friends for help. (*He drifts away.*)

**Rainbow:** Ugh, fine.

(*She resumes her exit from the gym. Dissolve to a long shot of her and Pinkie on the field and zoom in slowly; she explains her situation, and Pinkie thinks hard for a second before smiling and peeling out in a cloud of dust. She wheels in her party cannon and sets it off, blasting the hapless pegasus squarely in the face with confetti and streamers, but this tactic seems to do little good. Wipe to Rainbow laying out the problem for Rarity, who stands in the doorway of her classroom. A split second after she finishes, the dressmaker is wheeling out a rack of five sparkly cheerleader uniforms in School colors, one considerably larger than the others. Sets of matching hoof-mounted pompoms hang from one end of the rack. Rarity grins over her latest burst of creativity; Rainbow looks the new threads over uneasily, but manages a humoring smile.*)

(*Wipe to her and Applejack standing outside the main barn at Sweet Apple Acres. The workhorse beams and gestures to a hay bale as Big Macintosh pushes it over to them with his head. It leaves her even more puzzled than the cheerleading outfits did, but she grins gamely. Another wipe shifts her to within Zecora’s hut, the zebra leaving the brew she has been stirring in her caldron once Rainbow finishes giving her the rundown. From here, dissolve to her hovering over the squad members in the gym.*)

**Rainbow:** Okay. Since you guys have been nagging me nonstop about this cheer stuff for, like, ever—

**Smolder:** It has literally been one day. (*Close-up of Rainbow.*)

**Rainbow:** —I went around and got everything you need.

(*Zoom out quickly. Something large, irregularly shaped, and covered with a tarp sits on the floor before the students, and she yanks the covering away to let them see: hay bales, party cannon, rack of cheerleader outfits, a few extra pompoms, a book. Light and Shimmy go straight for the rack, Yona marvels at her reflection in the artillery piece’s barrel, and Smolder pokes skeptically at the hay.*)

**Smolder:** Uh, what are we supposed to do with hay?

**Rainbow:** Beats me, but Applejack seemed pretty sure about it. Oh! I almost forgot. (*She throws the book over to Ocellus.*)

**Ocellus:** A rhyming dictionary?

**Rainbow:** Yeah, Zecora’s a lot less helpful than you’d think. That’s from the library so you can come up with cheers. (*turning toward doors*) Okay! Good practice! (*Close-up of Smolder.*)

**Smolder:** So you’re just leaving again?

(*Pan/tilt up to the daredevil, who stops short with a groan at having been foiled again and turns to face her.*)

**Rainbow:** Look. I talked to my friends, and they said this is the stuff you need. Wouldn’t a true cheer squad be able to figure out what to do with it?

**Light:** But Fluttershy and Pinkie wanted us to show ’em everything we’ve come up with tomorrow!

**Shimmy:** They want us to get the team all excited before the big game!

**Rainbow:** Well, then, it’s a good thing I got you all this stuff. You better get to work!

(*She does actually manage to make it out of the gym this time, knocking the doors open in her haste. Cut to the properly confounded squad members as their slam echoes through the space, then pan quickly to Snips sitting on top of his trunk and magically holding/shaking a small upside-down sack. A single coin falls out and lands on his hoof—slow sales day, apparently.*)

**Snips:** Don’t look at me!

(*He hunkers down and eyes the sack dejectedly. Wipe to a spot somewhere above ground level outside and tilt down to the field, where Fluttershy and Pinkie are standing in front of the bleachers. A ball bounces off the midfield line and is promptly chased by the School team’s pegasus; catching it in a wing, she spins her entire body to build momentum and lets it rip toward the earth pony. A hard buck sends it toward the unicorn, whose field brings up a basket; the ball hits the edge, bounces and rolls through most of a complete circle, then drops in. He extracts it and sets the container down afterward.*)

**Fluttershy:** Good work, everypony! Let’s take a break!

(*A shrill whistle sounds as the players clear the field; cut to Rainbow, hovering and pulling a hoof from between her teeth.*)

**Rainbow:** Yeah! (*More whistles; she drops to the ground.*) Wow! This team is really shaping up! Nice job.

**Fluttershy:** Thanks! I’m excited to see what *you’ve* been up to.

**Pinkie:** (*rising briefly to hind legs*) Yeah! I can’t wait to see the cheer squad!

(*The unlikely coach answers with a long guffaw, but lets it peter out upon realizing that neither of the others has joined in.*)

**Rainbow:** Oh. You’re serious.

(*A visibly down-in-the-mouth Light trudges past in the fore, now wearing one of Rarity’s cheerleader outfits. Pinkie is hopping with elation in an instant.*)

**Pinkie:** WOO-HOO!!

(*Cut to all five, all kitted out in the uniforms and not looking too thrilled. All wear pompoms on their hooves except for Smolder, the only biped. Shimmy is towing in a cart loaded with hay bales, and Ocellus tends to a phonograph. Yona has a small pompom tucked in above each ear.*)

**Pinkie:** Go, team! This is so exciting!

**Fluttershy:** (*to Rainbow*) Well, I’m sure you’ve put in a lot of hard work.

**Rainbow:** (*sitting on haunches*) How much work does cheer squad need?

(*A funny look from the yellow mare. Now a mass of souvenirs is held into view; on the start of the next line, cut to a longer shot that frames Snips hawking them.*)

**Snips:** Anypony want to buy an official School of Friendship cheer squad hair dec?

(*His magic lodges a pennant in Pinkie’s mane as he says this, and he then zips over to her.*)

**Snips:** Now I personally would buy them before the performance. (*Dart away.*)

**Fluttershy, Pinkie:** Huh?

(*The drum-heavy tune that Light and Shimmy used for their Act One rehearsal begins to play on the phonograph, and the camera pans to the half of the field opposite these three. The party cannon has been placed near midfield and is aimed slightly over their heads, the cart has been put away, and Yona stands between two bales at the rear of the formation. Ocellus consults the rhyming dictionary she was given, and Smolder now has a pair of pompoms covering her hands. As Light and Shimmy do their thing, Yona’s stomps leave them badly shaken up as before.*)

**Shimmy:** Over and over and over again!

**Light:** We want to dance for each other and for all of our friends!

**Smolder:** (*halfheartedly waving pompoms*)

School of Friendship, rah, rah, rah.

**Ocellus:** Let’s win this game and hit the…

(*Check the book.*) …uh…oh, what rhymes with “rah”?

…spa?

(*The two dancers backflip onto the bales as Yona’s stomps shake the needle off the record and cause the cannon’s muzzle to droop just a few degrees.*)

**Light, Shimmy:** (*softly, urgently*) Yona!

(*The yak halts her hooves with a sheepish grin, but the cannon continues to swivel down until it is pointing directly at the five. The breech swells to ridiculous proportions, as if the whole thing were an overinflated balloon, and all have just enough time for one terrified cringe before it discharges and blows them flat. Amid the hail of School-colored confetti, Shimmy shakes some sense back into her head and an infuriated Smolder spits out a mouthful. Cut to Fluttershy, Pinkie, and Snips.*)

**Pinkie:** (*sitting, removing pennant from mane*) Uh, I know I said I couldn’t wait to see the cheer squad, but… (*Laugh.*) …maybe I could’ve waited just a teensy bit longer.

**Rainbow:** (*from o.s., stoked*) Oh, yeah! Nice one!

(*Pan quickly to the other end of the field. She knocks a ball into the air with her head for the School team’s unicorn to catch, but he—facing the catastrophe—is so thrown off that he forgets to move the basket.*)

**Rainbow:** Huh?

(*A half-turn tells her the whole story in exceedingly clear detail: hay bales knocked askew, confetti all over the place, two dismayed team coaches, and five cheer squad members who look ready to either flee the field or burn it to cinders.*)

**Rainbow:** (*puzzled*) What?

(*None of the students have any words for her. Fade to black.*)

Act Three

(*Opening shot: fade in to the exterior of the School and zoom in slowly.*)

**Rainbow:** (*voice over*) I don’t know what everypony’s so upset about.

(*Overhead shot of her, Snips, and the squad in the gym; she tosses a ball idly, and all have removed their hoof pompoms.*)

**Rainbow:** So it wasn’t great. Cheerleading’s never great. That’s why everypony gets up to get a snack during it.

(*If Yona’s sudden, sobbing charge out of the room is any indication, these were the least helpful words the jock could have possibly said.*)

**Rainbow:** What is the big deal?

**Shimmy:** If you don’t know, there’s no point in us trying to explain it to you!   
**Light:** Lead dancers, out!

**Light, Shimmy:** (*tossing heads disdainfully*) Huh! (*Exeunt the pair.*)

**Smolder:** (*to Rainbow*) It’s not that we were bad—it’s that you didn’t even want to try to help us get better!

**Rainbow:** (*sputtering a bit*) Didn’t try? What are you talking about? I got you a party cannon! It’s not my fault you couldn’t figure out how to use it right.

**Ocellus:** *Well, you could have showed us!* (*She copies Yona’s tearful exit.*)

**Rainbow:** Whoa. Ponies might actually care about cheer squad if she cheered like that all the time.

**Smolder:** Why would you say ponies don’t care about cheer squad?

**Rainbow:** (*dropping to haunches*) Because they don’t.

**Smolder:** (*kicking ball away*) No, *you* don’t! (*Surprised, Rainbow stands again.*) But *they* do! I bet Headmare Twilight does, and you know what? I do too! I actually got excited when I found out you were gonna be our coach! I figured, if anypony can make cheer squad awesome, it’s you!

**Rainbow:** Me? Why?

**Smolder:** Because everything’s *always* awesome with you! Or twenty percent cooler! Or…whatever! You’re the most enthusiastic pony in Equestria when it’s something *you* care about. I just wish *we* were one of those things.

(*She plods out of the gym, leaving Rainbow alone with Snips. The young unicorn exerts horn-power to open his trunk and stuff his hat in, then does the same with the whistle under his jersey during the next line.*)

**Snips:** And it looks like my assistant-cheer-coach-slash-souvenir-selling business is a bust. (*Close the lid.*) So I’m gonna take off, unless you can think of something else for me to do.

(*Rainbow mulls things over for perhaps one second before coming up to a smile of dawning comprehension.*)

**Rainbow:** Maybe I can.

(*So Snips magically flips the trunk open and gets his whistle back in place. Wipe to Ocellus, fast asleep and snoring quietly in the top bunk of a School dormitory room, and tilt down to frame Yona doing likewise on the bottom level. Both are jolted awake by a blast from the little huckster’s whistle as he leans into view. He has shed his fan trappings, and they have changed out of their cheerleading togs.*)

**Yona:** Yaks hate loud noises!

(*Ocellus falls out of bed with a scream, blanket and all, but is caught by Snips’ field just short of the floor.*)

**Snips:** Squad meeting! (*Set her down.*) Outside! ASAP!

(*He pronounces it “A-sap,” then heads for the door. Wipe to Light and Shimmy sitting side by side on mats spread on the floor of a classroom, eyes closed and heads tilted back. They have changed into their original brown/red/white outfits. Gentle music plays from a phonograph behind them as they shift into a yoga position—all four legs spread side, heads down, rumps lifted—and the camera shifts to a profile close-up. The sound of the needle being yanked off the record sends tranquility right down the drain, and Light bends her head down to look between her legs. Cut to her upside-down perspective of the culprit—Snips, who blows his whistle.*)

**Snips:** Dance ponies, buckball field! Pronto!

(*Back to the pair, Shimmy losing her balance and crashing to the floor, then wipe to said field. He ambles across the green as sonorous snores ring through the air and soon finds Smolder napping under the bleachers. She sits with her back against one of the supports, cheerleader outfit and pompoms lying in the dirt. A whistle blast wakes her up in a hurry.*)

**Snips:** Hey! Dragon! Get out here and join your squad!

(*Puzzled, she grabs her gear and follows orders. By the time she emerges from the bleachers, she has donned her outfit and found the other four members already present and wearing theirs.*)

**Smolder:** So what? Is there some new button you want to sell?

**Snips:** Not a button…

(*Rainbow’s contrail slashes a wide arc through the air, and she pulls into a hover—but the squad members just mumble disapprovingly and start off the field. They now have their pompoms on.*)

**Smolder:** Not this again.

**Light:** Sorry, we’re not buying.

**Rainbow:** Wait! (*She zooms ahead to stop them.*) Look. I know I haven’t been a great coach because I don’t care about cheerleading. *Buuut* all of you do, and I care about you. So I guess maybe I care about cheer *squad*. (*descending to face a smug Smolder, sitting*) And a good friend reminded me that I can make anything I care about totally awesome. (*The collective mood begins to rise.*) So— (*Stand.*) —from now on, I’m gonna give this thing a hundred and twenty percent. And I expect the same from you. (*Point to Light/Shimmy.*) We are gonna dance. (*To Ocellus.*) We are gonna cheer. (*The changeling grins.*) We’re gonna make the biggest pony pyramid Equestria’s ever seen!

(*She rockets into the sky; cut to Smolder and Yona.*)

**Rainbow:** (*from o.s.*) And when we’re done… (*Cut to her, hovering.*) …we’re gonna make sure everypony on that field is so pumped up, they’ll forget they even came to see a game!

(*An interruptive noise from Snips.*)

**Snips:** (*floating items into view as he names them*) But not so pumped up that they forget to buy a pennant, or a button, or a quality souvenir T-shirt.

(*Long pause and funny looks from all others present.*)

**Snips:** What?

(*Dissolve to a close-up of the phonograph with needle set back on the spinning record, then cut to the field. Yona begins to stomp, shaking Light and Shimmy off their hooves even despite the pair’s attempts to synchronize their moves with hers, and Rainbow claps a frustrated hoof to her forehead. She gets an idea upon spotting the whistle that hangs around her neck; wipe to an extreme close-up of it being raised to her lips and blown in a steady sequence of short blasts. A longer shot puts her facing Yona, who quickly gets her hooves moving in time with the signals. The screen split vertically, with the yak in the left half and Light/Shimmy now successfully doing their choreography without ending up on the grass. In fullscreen, Rainbow lets her whistle drop and offers a broad grin.*)

(*Wipe to her blowing it in Ocellus’s face as the latter shudders and stammers her way through a cheer with the help of her rhyming dictionary. The blue mare leans close and cups a hoof to her ear, but can barely hear any words—and the other four, several feet away, are faring no better. Rainbow looks around herself, the camera panning to follow one glance and stopping on a discarded megaphone. Wipe to Ocellus, who raise the item to her mouth and tries again; now her voice is so greatly magnified that she nearly drops it out of alarm. Nevertheless, she smiles at its efficacy and begins putting both it and the dictionary to use, easily making herself heard by the others.*)

(*Wipe to Smolder in flight, scattering confetti and blowing a jet of smoke that sends all those on the field into a violent coughing fit. Once the air has cleared, Rainbow has a new brainstorm and starts digging through the pile of sports equipment she brought out in the prologue. She comes up with a pair of red/yellow signal flags, the kind that might be used to send messages by semaphore, and Smolder smiles and nods. Wipe to a close-up of the flags being aloft into view and waved gently back and forth; the dragon soars overhead and blows smoke that settles into a giant ring as she circles the field. Rainbow triumphantly waves the flags in a new signal, prompting Snips to move the party cannon into position. It tilts down to the horizontal, now aimed directly at his face, and he peers quizzically down the barrel an instant before it goes off and blasts him onto his back, sending his whistle off to who knows where. Sitting up with a faceful of confetti, he sees the squad and their coach laughing over the mishap and smiles along with them.*)

(*Dissolve to the field. The training equipment and construction debris have been cleared away, and the stands are filled with fans cheering for either the School team or their opponents in a spirited game. Two facts are readily apparent. One, Princess Celestia has come to see this game and is seated next to Twilight—this can only be the game between their two schools. Two, all three members of Celestia’s team are unicorns, the “earth pony” player wearing an engraved ring around the base of her horn and the “pegasus” sporting a pair of translucent butterfly wings. They are in light blue-green jerseys with edging in white and pale green. Celestia’s team has the ball, the pegasus heading it down to the earth pony for a shot on goal, only for the School pegasus to bang it away with her own noggin. Her unicorn teammate shifts his basket for a clean catch and basks in a round of cheers. On the sidelines, a unicorn referee stallion uses his magic to flip a score placard and change the tally to 1-1.*)

**Twilight:** YAHOO!!

**Celestia:** I realize the game of buckball traditionally requires an earth pony, a pegasus, and a unicorn, but I appreciate you allowing my students to compete.

**Twilight:** Of course! And the wings and magical dampening ring you made seem to be working really well.

**Celestia:** Indeed, though not as well as your team.

(*With not a speck of warning, she jumps straight up to the thundering Royal Canterlot Voice.*)

**Celestia:** *COME ON, SCHOOL OF MAGIC!!*

(*Pan quickly to Fluttershy/Pinkie/Rainbow at the sidelines, the first mar dropping into a terrified huddle.*)

**Fluttershy:** Ohhhh, the suspense is horrible! I’m the most nervous I’ve ever been—and that’s saying something.

**Rainbow:** I know how you feel!

**Pinkie:** Don’t worry. Celestia’s team might be tough, but we can still win this thing!

**Rainbow:** What? Oh, yeah, totally. But I wasn’t talking about the game. (*jittering in place*) Come on, come on, come on, come on, come on…

(*A stallion announcer’s voice is heard over the loudspeakers.*)

**Announcer:** And that’s the end of the first half! (*Rainbow pops into a hover with a panicked cry.*)

**Rainbow:** Sorry! Can’t talk right now. (*She zips away.*)

**Fluttershy:** (*to Pinkie*) I sure hope Dash being nervous is a good sign.

(*Murmurs course through the bleachers as the squad’s musical accompaniment record starts to play. Yona stands between two hay bales, stomping on the first and third beats of each bar. Shimmy and Light raise their heads in turn and flick each other a confident glance before starting their routine.*)

**Shimmy:** Over and over and over again!

**Light:** We’ll cheer for our team ’til the very end!

(*The grinning yak continues her ponderous rhythm, which is answered by bleacher bums pounding the seats with their hooves on every beat. The music shifts keys at this point, from C major to E flat major. Cheers erupt from every row as Smolder makes an aerial pass to scatter confetti, and Rainbow waves the signal flags as a cue to follow it up with a field-circling blast of smoke. The unlikely coach smiles proudly as the whole place shakes with the combined stomping of Yona and the crowd, and Ocellus strides through the slowly clearing haze and flips to midfield with megaphone in hoof. She has no trouble making herself heard with lung-power alone, and only deploys the device to boost her voice for all her words starting with “hip” below.*)

**Ocellus:** Everypony in the crowd, if you’re feeling hip,

When I say “friend,” you say “ship”!

(*The music shifts back to C major.*)

Friend!

**Crowd:** Ship!

**Ocellus:**  Friend!

**Crowd:** Ship!

**Ocellus:** Welcome, everypony, to the halftime show!

(*Light and Shimmy jump onto the bales.*)

We’re the Friendship Squad, and we’re ready to go!

(*E flat major.*)

We’re here to cheer and get you all excited!

(*The dancers shift their positions to put two hooves each on Yona’s back.*)

If you’d like to join in, then you’re all invited!

(*She flies across the field and pulls up to hover in front of one section, the key shifting to F major.*)

It’s a simple cheer, so don’t chime in late!

(*Somersault back to balance atop Light/Shimmy; Smolder perches on her in turn, and the party cannon’s muzzle peeks out through the formation.*)

**Squad:**  It goes, “Two! Four! Six! Great!”

(*The music stops on a G major chord, in time with a mighty confetti/streamer-filled detonation, and Smolder adds the finishing touch with a massive, fiery exhalation to draw a tidal wave of cheers and whoops from the spectators. Rainbow claps and laughs to herself, then whisks back to where Fluttershy and Pinkie have been watching with jaws ready to hit the ground.*)

**Rainbow:** Not bad, right?

**Fluttershy, Pinkie:** They…were…*awesome!* (*The squad revels in its collective success.*)

**Rainbow:** Well, they have a pretty decent coach.

(*She gets a round of laughs and appreciative nods from the five as they head off the field. A basket floats across the screen in close-up and is pulled back, shifting the view to the second half of the game, and the ball plunks neatly in for a goal. Cheers erupt as the camera zooms out to frame it under the control of the unicorn on Celestia’s team.*)

**Announcer:** And that’s the game! (*The pegasus and earth pony embrace joyfully.*) Final score—School of Magic, five; School of Friendship, four.

(*The referee uses his field to flip the score placards on the end of this line, after which Fluttershy addresses the School team.*)

**Fluttershy:** Nice work, everyone. You can’t win them all.

**Pinkie:** Sometimes that’s just how the cupcake crumbles. (*The crowd slowly clears out.*)

**Rainbow:** (*trotting past*) You guys were amazing!

(*She does not even slow down to acknowledge the deflated sighs from team and coaches, but instead stops to face the squad at the sidelines. Ocellus has put away her megaphone.*)

**Rainbow:** It was flawless. I can’t think of any way that could’ve been better!

**Smolder:** (*sourly, rolling eyes*) We coulda won the game.

**Rainbow:** (*laughing dismissively*) The game was just a sideshow. (*sitting on haunches; pan away from her to them*) You guys were the main event!

(*Their outlook brightens a bit at this, and Rainbow gets upright as Twilight and Celestia cross to them.*)

**Celestia:** I’m glad to see such good sports-ponyship on display. Your cheer squad was an inspiration, Rainbow Dash. I’ll have to start one at my school as well.

**Twilight:** (*slyly*) Wow, Rainbow Dash! It’s almost like you were the perfect pony to coach cheer squad after all.

**Rainbow:** Wait a second. Was this one of those things where you knew the lesson I needed to learn before I learned it?

**Twilight:** You mean like how you don’t have to care about a thing other ponies like as long as you care about the ponies who like it? (*innocently*) Nope. Don’t know what you’re talking about.

(*Her big dopey grin earns a groan from Rainbow, but this vexation lasts for only a moment until she smiles over her shoulder toward the squad. Cut to a long shot of the gathering and zoom out slowly.*)

**Celestia:** (*to Twilight*) Nicely done.

(*The two trade a high five, and all laugh as the view fades to black.*)