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Football Family

It was a hot fall night and you could feel the tension in the air. Sweat was dripping down my face. The football stadium’s lights were blinding me, forcing my gaze to escape from the beastly men in front of me. These hungry lion-like men stared at me as if I was a gazelle frolicking in a field. The roaring of crickets almost drove me insane. Although people packed the stadium, they seemed to be holding their breath, for no words were spoken. Everyone had their eyes on me. There was only six seconds left in the game, forty-five yards to goal, and my team was two points down. It was my time to kick this field goal and win us the game. The referee’s whistle terminated the silence which caused my heart to drop from my chest to my feet. I asked myself whether I was capable of bringing my team to victory or letting them all down. It felt so surreal. I pondered whether this was a dream or real life, but I could not tell the difference.

Soccer has been my passion since I was 4 years old. I worked very hard. I won games and I lost games. My goal was to get a scholarship and play D1 soccer at Virginia Tech with my best friends from my soccer team. Everything seemed to be going well; however, I injured my knee during the first game of the season. A player from the other team and I went to slide tackle at the same time, and the other guy ended up digging his cleat into the side of my knee. The injury kept me from getting the scholarship. The injury demotivated me and made me feel too insecure to play any sport ever again.

My family and I decided to move to Texas since I would get free College there. The move was very difficult for me. Leaving all of my friends and family really lowered my self-esteem. I would remind myself that moving was the best option so that I can go to school and have a better life with more opportunities. I was excited in the sense that I would be starting a new chapter in my life, but the feeling of leaving the people I love really depressed me. Although I moved with my sister, my mother, and my stepfather, I felt empty without the rest of my family.

I started my first day off in Coach Stone’s Political Science class. He was a 6’2 man with a bald head that you could see from the other side of the football stadium. We started the class off by giving some information about ourselves to the class. It was my turn and I told them about how I use to play soccer in Virginia. From that point on, Coach Stone asked me to join the football team as their kicker because they did not have a good kicker. I was nervous because I never played football before and my knee was injured and I may injure it again.

About a week passed and Coach Stone continued to ask me to join. Coach Stone had a way of motivating whoever he was talking to. He talked to me as if I was the greatest kicker in Texas, although he has not seen me kick a football yet. Because of his persistence, determination and motivational speeches, I decided to give it a try.

A few hours after I told Coach Stone I would join, I was invited to go to practice after school. I arrived to practice late because Coach Stone had to get me some workout clothes. After I got dressed, Coach Stone escorted me outside with the rest of the team. The team looked like a sea of uniform soldiers. Nausea started to set in and I could feel my stomach knotting up. Everyone had their eyes on me. Coach Stone made me go into one of the lines that were practicing kicking the ball from the fifty yard line directly in the center of the field. Coach Stone told me to kick the ball to the three players in the end zone about fifty yards away. I was confused since there was three players in the end zone. I asked him which one he wants me to kick the ball too. Coach Stone laughed at me as if I wouldn’t be that accurate. He told me to kick it to the player in the middle of the end zone. I waited for his whistle and started my run up. I leaped forward in one step and kicked the ball. The ball soared through the air and landed directly in the hands of the person in the middle. The whole entire team went wild. They started jumping around and screaming. A few of them even came up to me and gave me a big hug and a high five, making me feel confident in my ability to kick a football. The team’s reaction was not what I expected, but I am thankful they boosted my confidence.

The referees whistle blew, the ball went flying to the holders hands, and I immediately started running towards the ball. I kicked the ball. It went soaring in the air. Time seemed to slow down. I ended up getting pushed down by the other team falling on top of me. The three hundred pound lineman knocked the air out of me when he fell on me. I couldn’t hear anything. My ears where ringing and the lights were blinding me. I was unable to see anything. I felt a hand grab my shoulder pads. While I was being lifted off the ground, I could see my team jumping around. The ringing started to disappear. I could hear a faint roar over the crowd. I then heard over the intercom that I have just made a forty five yard field goal that won the game. I was still stunned. I could barely hear. Everything still seemed to be in slow motion. It felt surreal. I felt as if I was in a dream waiting to pinch myself to wake up at any second. My team and coaches on the field and from the side line ran to me and jumped on top of me. I had won the first game for my team in two years.

I was the hero of the school. Everyone wanted to meet the kicker. The cheer leaders even made a personal cheer for me when I would kick the ball. I was the George Clooney of Hardin High School. If it wasn’t for Coach Stones persistence, determination and motivation, I would have never joined the football team. I am so thankful for him and the entire football team for believing in me even when I did not believe in myself. I was adopted by a whole new family that day. The football family.