

LEVELED BOOK • L

Jessica Loves Soccer



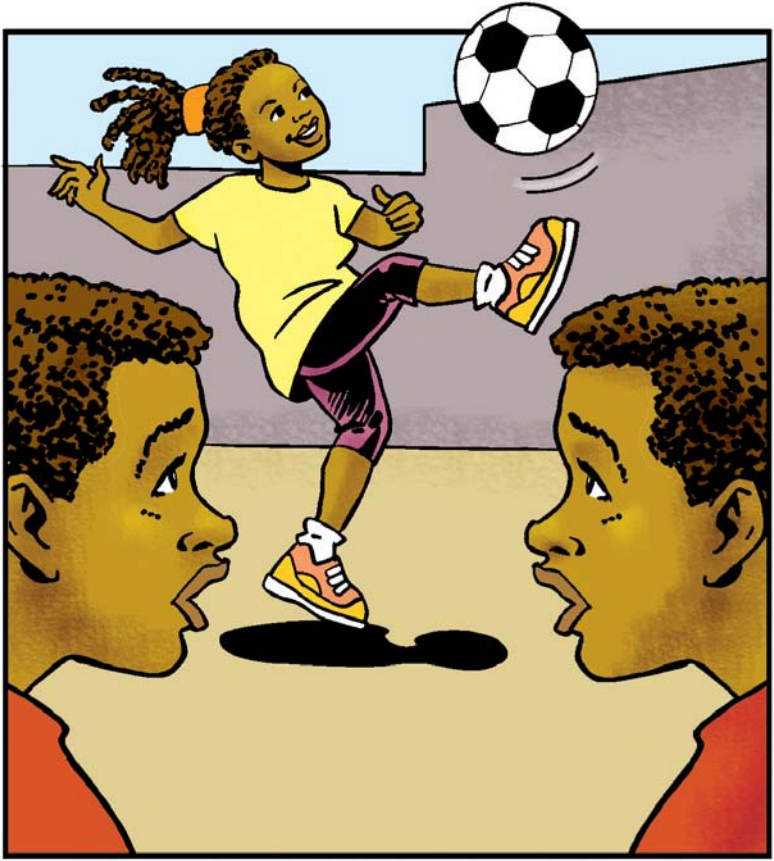
Written by Joe Slade • Illustrated by David Cockcroft

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Jessica Loves Soccer



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Jessica loved playing soccer.
She often played with her older
twin brothers, Jason and Jamal.

“Jessica is a good soccer player,”
said Jason.

“Yes, for a girl,” added Jamal.



The twins played for the under-tens neighborhood soccer team. They were called the Red Dragons.

Their team had reached the final of the City Soccer Championships. They would be playing the Sharks.



On the morning of the big game, the twins were very excited.

When they arrived at the soccer field, they knew something was wrong. Their coach, and the rest of the team, looked very miserable.

“What’s wrong?” asked Jason.



“Four of our players have chicken pox,” said Coach. “We only have ten players. The rules say we must have eleven players. If we don’t have eleven, we can’t play. The Sharks will then win the Championship.”



"We've thought of everything,"
said Mike, the team captain.

"There's nobody under ten that
can play for us."

"I'll play for you," said a little voice.



It was Jessica. Everyone laughed.

“She’s a girl,” said Mike.

“She’s so small,” said Dan.

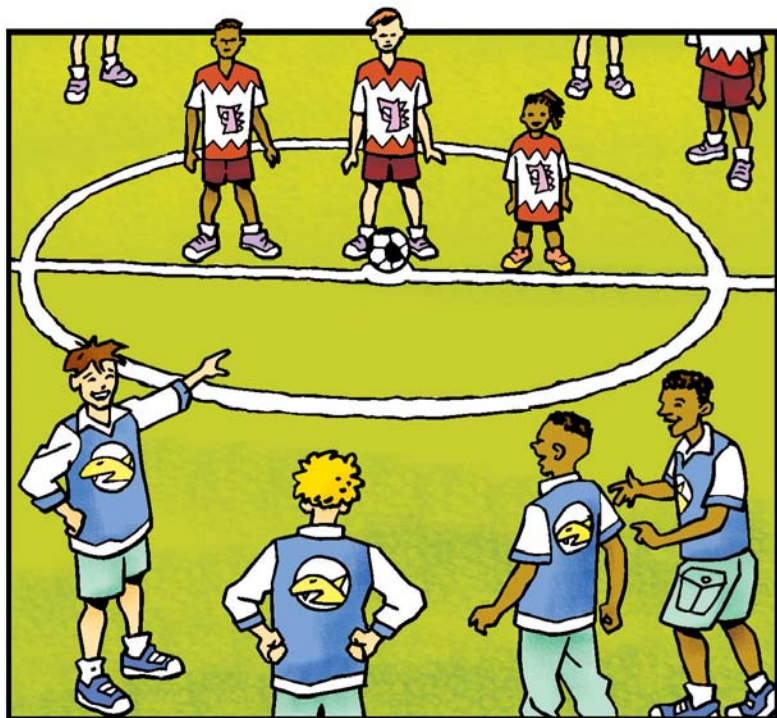
“But she’s a good player,”
said Jason.

“... for a girl,” said Jamal.



“It doesn’t matter if she doesn’t even kick the ball. With eleven players, we’ll be able to play the game. Welcome to the Red Dragons,” said Coach.

Jessica beamed a huge smile.



Coach told Jessica not to move from the center circle. She was not to kick the ball. She was there to make up the numbers. The teams lined up, ready to play. The boys on the Sharks team pointed at Jessica. They laughed at her because her shirt was so big. It reached her knees.



The Sharks were a very good team. After only five minutes of play, they scored a goal.

The Dragons were missing some of their best players. At half time, the score was Sharks: 2, Dragons: 1. Jessica had not touched the ball.



In the second half, the Dragons were determined to try harder. And since Jessica was told to just stand in the center circle, it was like the team was one player short.

With five minutes to play, Jason kicked the ball high across the Sharks' goal. Jamal jumped as high as he could. He hit the ball hard with his forehead.



The ball whizzed past the Sharks goalkeeper. Jamal scored a spectacular goal to make the score Sharks: 2, Dragons: 2.



Jessica decided it was time to help. She left the center circle. The Sharks didn't notice her moving toward the goal. Even her teammates didn't notice her.

It was as if she were invisible.



One of the Sharks kicked the ball back to his goalkeeper. Jessica ran to the ball and reached it before the goalie. Jessica kicked the ball as hard as she could. The Sharks' goalie dived to stop the ball.



Jessica's kick was too powerful.
She scored the winning goal.
The referee blew his whistle to
end the game. The Dragons were
the Champions.

"You are a great soccer player,"
said Coach.

"Yes, for a girl," added Jamal.

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