

last seconds. Another emotional story he told me was the feeling of overwhelming delight after winning that National Championship in 1988, the only one of his twenty-five year coaching career. By this time, he needed to get to another team meeting, so he called in his personal secretary to take our picture together, and he also signed the program I had brought. As we walked to that mirrored door, most likely that last time I will ever pass through that door again, he put his arm around me like I was his own son, and said to me the words of a true motivator, "No matter what you strive for in life, don't ever give up!"

The drive from the JACC back home was a ride in a dream. I was there, and I was driving, but my mind was elsewhere. The thoughts of what had transpired that day ran through my mind, etching every word and sight I had seen into my memory. That day will not leave me until I am old and gray, and it will not take long for my children and grandchildren to memorize the events of that day, for I will talk about it for the rest of my life. The fact that I met "the Coach" was astounding, yet that was not what made the day so unforgettable, for I have met football celebrities such as Walter Payton and Jim McMahon before. The reason that Coach Holtz impressed me so much was his sincerity. He treated me as if I was one of his own players who had come to talk to him about a problem, or an old friend who had just stopped in to say hello. The meeting was not rushed by Coach Holtz, and he did not do other things while I talked. The attention that he paid me is comparable to any teacher I have ever tried to talk with because Coach Holtz is just that, a teacher. "The Coach" is truly a hero to all who have ever met him, and I have met him.

GIRLS CAN PLAY SOCCER TOO

by

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On a cool spring weekend I was loafing around the house and the phone rang. I never would have thought it would be Mr. Brackney, my old soccer coach. And I could not believe that he was asking me to play with his boys in a soccer game. Instantly the memories of playing on his and Mr. Dickinson's soccer team came to my mind.

It all started one fall afternoon in 1985 at Dogwood Park. Actually, it began the instant that I woke up that day. I went through my normal routine for the day. I woke up, ate breakfast, took a shower, then went to school. But the day dragged on. I would look at the clock at

school and it would seem as if hours had gone by. Actually, the minute hand had moved maybe a tenth of an inch. I threw away most of my lunch because I just wasn't hungry. This was a once in a lifetime event for me; usually I was still starving after lunch. I was not being myself that day. My stomach was doing flip-flops from a combination of being nervous and excited. And the reason for this was that it was my first day of soccer practice.

Soccer practice--what's the big deal? It is not as if I had never played soccer before. I had played the previous two years on a girls' team and of course we had practices. Wait, let me back up a second. I said "girls' team" and today I was going to practice on a boys' team. It is funny how one little word can make such a difference. Growing up I had played soccer, or for that matter almost any sport, with the boys in my neighborhood. At the age of only eight, many kids are still at the point where they think children of the opposite sex have cooties. I had easily outgrown this tag; in fact, most of my friends were boys. But I did not know any of the kids on my team and was scared that they would not like me. I also was excited to make new friends.

After what seemed like an eternity, 4 o'clock finally came around and it was time for practice. I already had my favorite outfit picked out for practice: my pink sweatpants, a white and pink t-shirt, and my pink headband. I put on my brand new pair of K-mart soccer cleats and was all set to go to practice. My mom and I got into the car and drove over to the field. When we pulled in I saw a group of around ten boys kicking the soccer ball around. There were two men talking with a lady and a girl. "Good, I am not the only girl on my team," I thought. Instantly the feelings of excitement overtook my fear. But my joy did not last long. I walked up to my coach and introduced myself. The look of disgust and disappointment on my coach's face almost caused me to run away and cry. His expression made me think of some questions that were probably going through his mind: "Why did they stick me with another girl? I was hoping that I would have a good team this year," and "Where am I going to stick her?" The moans and jokes the boys told that cut down girls made it even harder for me. They made wise cracks about my pink outfit that I had spent so much time picking out. I overheard them making comments about us having our moms stick around. One boy said, "Only babies need their moms." This was just another point, in their opinion, that goes along with the idea of girls not being able to be tough and to handle playing a "man's game." Most of them had ridden their bikes to practice. The parents who had given their boys a ride to practice had just dropped them off and left. But I decided to be strong and prove the boys and my coach wrong. I was determined to show them that girls could play soccer too. I wanted to establish myself, a girl, as a good soccer player. Girls can do more than sit around the house and play with their dolls. They, too, can play sports and be successful with athletics. They can be more than a cheerleader looking pretty and cute. They can be aggressive and get dirty.

Times were tough the first few days of practice. The boys would leave me and the other girl out of the drills. If we scrimmaged they would not pass me the ball. I felt very hurt and unwanted. All I wanted to do was play soccer, and here I was standing motionless on the field watching

the boys play. "I can do what they're doing. Why won't they give me a chance?" I thought. Finally I got my chance. Joe, one of the only boys who was nice to me, passed me the ball. At first I was shocked. Then it happened. I dribbled the ball down the field around a couple of boys, shot the ball at the goal and scored. The expressions on everyone's faces were of complete shock and amazement. For the rest of the practice there was complete silence; no one said a word.

What I had done, I thought, was prove myself. It turned out everyone had just assumed my goal was luck and had forgotten about it by the next practice. At the next practice I was discouraged because all the boys treated me the same way as before. All that I wanted was to be accepted. Our first game was that weekend and I was very scared. I sat the bench in the beginning of the game, which came as no surprise to me. Since I knew that my coach had to put me in eventually, I sat there with sweaty palms, shaking knees, and a flip-flopping stomach. After what seemed like an eternity, my coach told me to go in and just do the best that I could. I knew that this was my chance. It was a game and there were many people watching. If all these people saw a girl score a goal then I would definitely prove that girls can play soccer too. The game was almost over and I was getting really discouraged; I still had not scored a goal. Then my moment came. I had a breakaway, just me and the goalie. I did a little maneuver and shot the ball right into the goal! All the boys ran up to me and hugged me; we had taken the lead.

We ended up winning that game and most of the rest of our games. I was voted one of the team captains and gladly accepted the role. I had gotten what I wanted; I was accepted by the boys and all of us became good friends. I ended up leading my team in goals and was voted the most valuable offensive player. After our last game I cried because I was really going to miss playing with the boys. But it had already been stated that we would have our girls' team again in the spring. My coach came up to me after our last game and apologized for the way that he had acted at the beginning of the season. He told me that I was "a hell of a soccer player" and wished me the best of luck in the future.

I look back at those days and just laugh. It is kind of funny because I ended up staying friends with many of those boys and am still friends with a couple of them to this day. I remember them telling me to join the boys' soccer team in high school before my school had a girls' team but I told them that I was not interested. The truth was that my mom would not let me play because she thought that I would get hurt. She, too, believed that boys and girls should not be able to play sports together. She did stray away from society's idea of what a "typical" girl should be like because I was allowed to be active and play sports. About the other girl: she had absolutely no soccer skills. She barely ever showed up for a practice or a game and when she did all of the boys moaned. This goes to prove that even though they had accepted me, they still believed that girls could not play soccer. I was just an exception.

I was quickly brought out of my daydream by Mr. Brackney asking, "Kim, are you there?" He wanted me to play in a soccer game with his team which included a group of the boys that had been on that

team many years ago. I gladly accepted. The varsity boys' soccer coach from my school was at the game. I was amazed when he came up to me and asked me to play on his team. After I turned him down, he was shocked. I knew that we were getting a girls' team in a couple years and I decided to wait. I would rather wait a few years and avoid all the problems that I would go through just to play soccer with the boys. I knew that some of the boys and even their parents and residents of my town would do all that they could to get me to quit. Besides, how would it make the other boys feel if I actually got to play and they sat the bench? I knew that it just would not be right for me to play on the boys' team. We ended up getting the girls' team my senior year and my team won sectionals, which was the first round of the tournament. Currently I am playing on the women's soccer team at Valparaiso University. I still keep in contact with Mr. Brackney and a few of the players from that team. In fact, they even came to one of my games this year. The memories that I had with that team will never be forgotten.

THE UNDERWEAR INCIDENT

by
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[Assignment: Tell the story of a particular event that seemed especially important in your life at the time it happened. As you develop the story, try to enter the emotions you felt at that time, yet realize you are necessarily reliving the event from a new and adult perspective.]

Jane was not your typical girl. She could care less about pretty dresses or dolls. Most of her time was spent playing in the mud, climbing trees, and chasing the neighbor girls around with toads. Yeah, you could say that Jane was a tomboy, from the time she was old enough to walk. She followed her older brother around and tried to imitate everything he did. Everyone just accepted it. "She's always been a tomboy," they would say.

However, when she moved and had to change schools, she was surrounded by strangers. No one knew her well enough to understand--that was just Jane. The kids at the new school made fun of her because she dressed like a boy and because her hair was short. Boys did not play sports with her as they did in her old school. They teased her because she didn't act or dress like the other girls. Boys would say, "Jane, are you a boy or a girl?" This really hurt her because she was used to being treated like one of the guys, but she knew that they would not