

Practice Makes Perfect

Janna hung her head. Soccer tryouts hadn't gone so well. She couldn't run as fast as the other girls. And when the coach had blown the whistle, she was so startled that she tripped over her own feet.

When they lined up to take shots on the goal, none of Janna's balls had gone in the net. And when they had to dribble the ball with their feet around the orange cones, she ended up at the edge of the field. She couldn't get control of the ball.

Janna was sure that she would be cut from the team. But when the coach read the list of this year's players, her name was on it!

The other girls looked at each other. Janna could see them. They were wondering why she was on the team. They were thinking that she would bring them down.

Most of them were too kind to say anything. But Layla wasn't. "Why did Janna make the team, Coach?" she asked. "She can't even run."

"I have something special in mind for Janna," said the coach. "She is going to be our goalie."

"Goalie?" Janna wasn't sure she wanted to be the goalie. Blocking goals was a lot of pressure. If she let one through, the other girls would be upset.

Sure enough, the pressure got to Janna. In practice, when the other players took shots on the goal, Janna panicked. Almost all the shots went right past her and into the goal.

After a few weeks, Janna told her mom that she wanted to quit the team.

“I’m sure you don’t want to let them down like that,” said her mom.

“I’m already letting them down,” Janna replied.

“Well,” said her mom. “There’s only one solution.”

“What’s that?” asked Janna.

“Practice,” said her mom.

Janna’s mom put on sweatpants and tied up her sneakers. She and Janna went into the back yard. Janna set up a goal between two trees. Her mom took shots on the goal, and Janna tried to block them.

Janna and her mom practiced every day. Slowly, Janna improved. Some of the shots didn’t go in! Janna kept at it.

The team’s big game was on Saturday. Janna went into the goal. She could feel her teammates’ eyes on her back. She could feel them doubting her.

The star player on the other team kicked the ball down the field. She got past the defenders. She set up a shot on goal. Janna felt the pressure.



Janna reacted just like she had practiced. She blocked the ball and made the save! The other players came running over to her with high fives and hugs.

“Way to go, Janna!” said Layla. “I’m glad you’re part of the team.”



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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. What position did Janna play?
 - a. Defender
 - b. Forward
 - c. Goalie
 - d. Midfielder

2. Who did Janna practice with?
 - a. Her mom
 - b. Layla
 - c. The coach
 - d. Her sister

3. What is the most likely reason that Janna wanted to quit the team?
 - a. She didn't want to let them down
 - b. She felt too much pressure
 - c. She didn't like playing soccer
 - d. A and B

4. Which word best describes Janna?
 - a. Athletic
 - b. Persistent
 - c. Mean
 - d. Sad

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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