

## The Ultimate Game

Happiness comes in many forms. If I was to tell somebody that the happiest times in my life occur when I'm sweaty, dirty, and sore, they probably wouldn't understand me. If I was to continue to tell them how good the pain feels from a hard hit which knocks you off your feet, sending pain throughout your entire body from the impact of the hard ground; I believe I would confuse them even more. Well it's true. Some of the best times in my life that make me really happy are when I'm in the heat of the game. The game of soccer, that is.

Training started for the season weeks before school even started. While everybody else was swimming and enjoying their summer, we were out in the heat running up hills, doing pyrometrics, and drills. It was the first time that I did any kind of training before a soccer season. At times it seemed redundant but it would soon prove worth it.

As training went on, the games soon began. How exhilarating it was to hear my name from the loud speaker before the game, as they called forth the starting line-up. Once the whistle was blown everything else was tuned out. All I could hear was the yelling of my team and the beating of my own heart. We won some games and we lost others. Nothing spectacular happened so far in the season. That was until we reached mid point in our season.

We got off the bus into the cold autumn night. Nobody talked, but walked silently while taking in the new scenery that would soon become the playing field. Everybody was doing their warm-ups intensely, while the other team laughed and goofed off. It was true that they were the best team in our section, being undefeated for over two years. They had already beaten us once this season with a disappointing score of six to zero, but we were sure to make it an entirely different game this time.

The game started all too soon, it seemed. It was a bitter cold night and it seemed as though my anxiety froze inside of me. Those few seconds before it started seemed to take ages. As the whistle blew I threw away my fears and gave it my all. And it seemed to me that everybody was giving it their all too. Right away I was delighted to notice that it was definitely going to be a different game than before. It seemed as though any mistake could lose the game, or an extra effort could win it. There was no time to be nervous or scared. When we came off the field at halftime our whole team was so excited, you would have thought that we were winning. The score was zero to zero, which was as good as winning to us.

Everybody was optimistic and excited. Even the players who sat on the bench were positive. The coaches tried to remain serious, but were unable to contain their excitement. The next half of the game would decide the fate of the game. From as far as I could see, we were ready.

We went into the second half more determined than we ever were before. The fierce battle started up again. The other team was starting to get hostile and unsportsmanlike. The tone of the game changed from rough to almost violent. I was sitting out when the other team got a breakaway down the right side. It was hard to watch as our opponent dribbled the ball through my teammates. There was no stopping him as he shot the ball towards the net. Everything went in slow motion, as the ball soared in the air. Our keeper dived but to no avail it went right above his hands and into the net.

As the other team celebrated their goal, our team seemed to lose the confidence that we had at half time. In the some of the past games we were not able to regain our confidence back and it resulted in a defeat for us. It took a while to get in the right state of mind again, but when we did there was no stopping us. Soon we were shooting on their net left and right. Then there was a terrific kick that went right in front of the net. The keeper went for it and so did one of our guys. Right before the keeper got to it my teammate put a head on it and it went right in. That tied the game up!

It wasn't over yet. We still had a long way to go if we wanted to win it. To us a tie would have been as good as a victory. We were now even more determined than ever before. The brutal battle between the two teams went on for a while. Then with only a few minutes left in the game, they got another break away. Again they went through our defense and got another shot on net. The shot went up and so did our keeper. He reached out to hands for the ball and he caught it for the save. The next few minutes were fought out equally with no score from either team. Our team was ecstatic, whereas our opponents were in a state of disarray.

With smiles on our faces we got into a huddle of sweaty soccer players. Our fate was not sealed yet. We would go into two ten minute over times. The first team to score would claim victory. If nobody scored by the end of the second overtime, it would be declared a tie.

The coaches said a few words of encouragement, and with that we walked onto the field with our heads held high. The other team walked on after us, looking cruel and irritated. They were not at all pleased with how the game was going. If we wanted to win, or tie, this game we would have to give it our all.

The brutal battle began again with the blow of the whistle. Our opponents were even more unruly than before, but we hung tough. We controlled the ball for most of the time, but there were moments when our opponents had chances to score. It wasn't until about half the time was over when we got a break away. It was a far shot from the right corner. It soared in the air. To our disappointment it went over the net. We didn't let that ruin our spirits. It only made us try even harder, if that was possible. Before the first over time was over we had a lot more shots, it was just unlucky that none of them went in.

As we went into the second over time we were all getting anxious about the outcome of the game. It was our last chance to win it and our opponents too. These last ten minutes of the game would decide if it was a win, lose, or a tie. No matter what happened we would still consider it a victory. As you may guess though, we wanted to win. It was a chance to make history for our school.

With a few words of encouragement we went out onto the field for the last time tonight. Silence filled the stadium as everybody awaited for the game to begin. At last it began when the sound of the whistle broke the silence. The battle began once again. We fought it out with no score until only a few minutes remained in the game. The coaches decided to change our line-up in attempt to go for the win. They moved me back to the sweeper position, the last defender before the goalie, in order to move our captain up to an offensive position. I was very uneasy about the switch, but I willing did what I was supposed too. The set up lasted less then a minute because there was a score. It came from a penalty kick on our end of the field. The kick went right towards the goal. It was

soon headed right into the goal. The goalie dived, but was not able to make the save. The goal ended the game making it a win for us!

The cheering of our fans was louder than ever before. I was in a daze of happiness as my family and friends came forward crying from happiness. It was all a blur of happiness. As we got on the bus I don't think that there has ever been such a happy bus ride home.

We went on to beat two more teams. Our last game would decide if we would be going to playoffs or not. The game was even as brutal as the one I just described. It's a shame to have to say that we lost, two to three. Even though we didn't make it into the playoffs this year, it was still the best record that we had in our school. It's sad to say that it was the first and last time that we all got to play together as a team.

Even the games that we lose or the harsh training we do, I am always really happy when I'm playing soccer. In my life I will probably get the chance to play some really good games. I don't think that anything, though, could surpass the game that we played together that night when we beat the undefeated. That indeed, was the happiest soccer game I have ever played and probably ever will play.

By Alexzandra Loos