

## The Lost Lucky Boots

Heather slumped out of her seat, dragging her feet out of the car. She lowered her head and scuffed her boots in the dusty gravel, a small sandstorm whirling around her feet.

“It will be fine,” said Dad, trying to coax her round. “You’re wearing your sister’s old boots. They’re lucky too.”

“But I only play well when I’m wearing *my* lucky boots,” she grumbled.

Heather’s lucky boots were missing. They were white with red lightning stripes stretching down the sides, perfectly matching the kit she wore for rugby practice each weekend. They had rainbow laces which she always tied with a special knot— left foot first— to bring her luck. They were her try-scoring boots; she couldn’t take to the field without them.

“Good morning Heather! Are they new boots?” asked Eddie, her rugby coach.

She explained that the slimy green boots she was wearing today were not new and they certainly did not belong to her.

“Don’t worry,” said Eddie. “I’m sure you can play just as well wearing these.”

Heather tutted and rolled her eyes. She lined up with her team for the start of the game, awaiting the whistle’s ear-piercing cry.

As she had expected, the first half went disastrously. The first time she received the ball, it slipped through her buttery hands and she tumbled to the ground— splat! – into the mud. The captain of the other team offered Heather her hand. Heather, slow to take it, huffed as she took unsteadily to her feet like a new born calf.

“I can’t play well without my lucky boots,” Heather whined to Sarah, her best friend on the team. “There’s no way we will win.”

At half time, she stormed off the pitch. Her angry, red cheeks were just visible beneath the mud that caked her face. Her team was losing, thirteen points to six, and she had given away the two costly penalties.

“Never mind,” Dad said sympathetically as she walked past him, placing a hand protectively on her shoulder. “Talk to your teammates and remember to listen to Eddie.”

Ten minutes later, Heather was back on the pitch. Something was different. The slimy green boots were still stuck to Heather's feet but she now bounced to the half-way line and stood proud and tall; she was an Olympic athlete, poised on the start-line, her eyes filled with steely determination. At half time, Eddie had told her that she should forget about her boots and concentrate on helping her teammates. She respected her coach and he was right; she needed to be more of a team player.

"I believe in you!" shouted Dad from the side-lines. Heather inhaled deeply. She turned to Sarah and a broad smile stretched from cheek-to-cheek. She looked around at the other players on the team, each one smiling back. Heather nodded. "Let's do this girls!" she called, rallying her friends.

Sarah launched the ball to Heather; this time, her hands stuck to it like glue. She ran as fast as she could, first left and then right, swerving round three defenders and crashing over the goal line to score. Sarah quickly converted her best friend's try to bring the scores level. "YES!" their teammates cried, running to embrace them. Before, Heather's team scattered the pitch like a brood of chickens. Now, they moved as a pack.

Thirty seconds were left on the clock. Heather picked up the ball and charged forwards. Her eyes glanced across, spotting that her teammate Fiona was open. She had a choice: run and take on the final defender or give the ball to Fiona who had a better chance of scoring. Heather feigned right and shot the ball to her teammate. Fiona, unmarked, ran and plunged the ball over the goal line.

Heather sat in the car on the way home, her eyes wide and sparkling as they looked down at her feet. She hummed along to her favourite song, clapping her slimy green boots to the beat. As she knocked her boots left and right, her feet caught something under the seat. Bending down, Heather reached out her arm, clutching a bag which rustled between her fingers.

"It's my lucky boots!" exclaimed Heather.

"Ah fantastic. You can wear them to the next game!" replied Dad.

"Do you know what—I don't think I need them." Heather smiled.