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**KICKING
GOALS**

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SPORTS DAY



**SIMON &
SCHUSTER**

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CHAPTER ONE

EAST FREMANTLE PRIMARY SCHOOL

MONDAY

9.05 am

‘Did you go to the MCG?’

‘Yeah!’ Dylan says. ‘We saw the
Carlton–Melbourne game.’

‘No way!’ I squeal.

I stare at my best friend in amazement.
I’m so jealous I can hardly *breathe*! I mean,
it’s only one of my biggest dreams in the

WORLD to go to Melbourne one day and watch a game at the *actual* Melbourne Cricket Ground, the place where AFL football began!

Dylan grins. ‘Yeah, it was awesome.’

It’s day one of term two and the whole school has gathered in the hall for our first assembly. Three hundred students are all sitting cross-legged on the cold hardwood floor waiting for it to begin, and the noise echoes around the hall and bounces off the walls. It sounds like Subiaco Oval on game day in here! The preps are definitely the loudest. I can hear them all the way from the back of the hall where us Grade Sixers always sit.

I'm wedged in between my two best friends, Dylan and Indi, and Dylan has just been telling us about his trip to Melbourne over the Easter holidays.

'Aaaaghhh!' I groan, grabbing my ankles and rocking backwards on the floor. 'I'm SO jealous!'

'Careful!'

I glance behind me and see that I've almost fallen straight into Chelsea's lap.

'Sorry,' I giggle.

A couple of months ago I would never have dared giggle at the school's bully, Chelsea Flint. But I'm not as scared of her as I used to be now that we're on the same soccer team. Chelsea glares at me for a moment, then goes back



to whispering with her best friend,
Nikita.

‘I brought you a record from the game,’
Dylan tells me. ‘I’ll give it to you at
recess.’

‘Thanks,’ I say. ‘I guess it’s the next best
thing to being there ... kind of.’

Indi whacks me on the leg. ‘What are
you whinging about?’ she cries. ‘You
caught the biggest fish anyone at the
caravan park has seen in twenty years!’

The Pappas family has a caravan at
the Myalup Beach Caravan Park and this
time I tagged along on their Easter break.
Indi’s dad and two of her brothers, George
and Ari, took me fishing and I caught a
whopping big Samson fish, which was

super exciting. Indi hates fishing so she stayed back with her mum and her big sister, Rena, at the caravan and read her Harry Potter book instead.

I beam. ‘Yeah, I did.’

‘My dad spent the whole holiday teasing George and Ari because Sam’s fish was bigger than theirs,’ Indi tells Dylan.

‘They were gutted.’ She pauses and grins.

‘Get it? Gutted?’

Dylan and I roll our eyes. ‘Yeah, we get it,’ I say.

‘I know you didn’t see a game at the MTG, but we still had a great holiday, didn’t we?’ Indi says, pretending to be hurt.

‘It’s the MCG, not MTG,’ I say, laughing, ‘and yes, I had the BEST holiday with you!’

I had the best time back at home, too. Dad surprised me by taking me to watch my first professional soccer game in Perth. It was amazing! They were SO fast, and their passing was sensational! I spent a lot of time watching the players' feet and picked up a few tips and tricks to use myself when I'm back playing with my team, the Knights.

I sigh as I watch our Principal, Mrs Godfrey, walk to the microphone at the front of the hall and hold up her hand, the signal for us all to stop talking so she can start the boring assembly.

'Good morning, everyone,' Mrs Godfrey says. 'I hope you all had a lovely break and are looking forward to an exciting term two!'

As Mrs Godfrey starts talking about dates for maths competitions and renovations on the school playground, my mind wanders and I start to wriggle around on the hard, cold floor. After two weeks of being free to run around and kick a ball as much as I wanted, it's not easy having to sit still for so long.

I look over to the side of the hall where all the teachers are standing along the windows and see Mr Morton frowning at me. I instantly stop my wriggling.

Indi suddenly gasps beside me and I turn to look at her. 'What?'

'Did you hear what Mrs Godfrey just said?' Indi whispers, her eyes wide.

'No, what?'

‘Auditions for the school play are next week!’ Indi says in a high-pitched whispery voice. ‘*Peter Pan!*’

‘You have to audition!’ I whisper.

‘I know! I’d LOVE to play the role of Peter Pan!’ Indi says, her high-pitched whispery voice getting louder by the second.

A girl in our class, Yvie, turns around and frowns at us. ‘SSSSHHHHH!’

I turn back to Mrs Godfrey and notice that she’s saying something involving the word ‘sport’.

‘What’s she saying?’ I whisper to Dylan.

He turns to me and frowns. ‘Listen and you’ll hear!’

‘... and I know Sports Day is one of the biggest events in the school year,’

Mrs Godfrey continues, ‘so I’m sure you’ll all want to sign up for your favourite activity on the day.’

Sports Day! Awesome!

‘I’m going to invite our new sports teacher, Miss McLeish, to come up here now to talk some more about it,’ Mrs Godfrey says.

She hands the microphone to someone behind her and every student in the hall cranes their neck to check out our school’s new sports teacher. We all loved Mr Scott, but he and his wife moved to Sydney at the end of last term so we’ve been wondering who his replacement will be.

A small, fit-looking woman in leggings and a red T-shirt steps forward. She has a

high black ponytail, sunglasses on top of her head and a big smile on her face.

‘Hello students,’ she says. ‘I’m looking forward to getting to know you all in sports class, but right now I’m going to read through the list of events for Sports Day.’

Dylan and I exchange excited looks.

‘On offer this year is netball, athletics, football, cricket and volleyball,’ Miss McLeish says. ‘Quite a few options there, so I’m sure each of you will find something you enjoy.’

There’s no mention of soccer and I feel disappointed, even though I know I shouldn’t be surprised. Soccer has never been part of our school’s Sports Day.

Up until a couple of months ago I wouldn't have cared at all, but now I can't imagine a Sports Day without it. I slump over and start picking at my shoelaces. With no soccer on the agenda, Sports Day will be okay, but not as good as it could be.

Suddenly, a thought pops into my brain and I sit bolt upright. *Why shouldn't soccer be on the list?* It's a sport too – a REALLY awesome sport that millions of people all over the world play. So, why can't we play it at our school, too? Maybe it's time to shake things up on Sports Day this year!

I'm going to talk to Miss McLeish and convince her to put soccer on her list. The big question now is: how exactly do I do that?

CHAPTER TWO

MY SCHOOL

TUESDAY

10.30 am

After assembly yesterday I spent the rest of the day zoning out as Mr Morton droned on about decimals and negative numbers, trying to think up a good argument for why Miss McLeish absolutely HAD to include soccer on the Sports Day line-up. But by the time I climbed into bed that

night, I was no closer to coming up with a convincing reason for why she should add it to the many other sports that were already in the line-up. Apart from the fact that it's awesome and I REALLY want to play it.

At recess on Tuesday morning, I tell Dylan and Indi my idea to see if they can help.

'Nah, she'll never go for it,' Dylan says, shaking his head at me.

'Why not?' I frown.

'Because no one here cares about soccer, that's why.' Dylan points his muesli bar at me. '*You* didn't care about it until a few months ago.'

'Yeah,' I say, pushing Dylan's nutritious snack away, 'but now I know how good

soccer is and I want everyone else to know, too.'

Dylan shrugs. 'Good luck with that.'

'He's right,' Indi adds. 'Footy is the only sport anyone here cares about.'

'Well, thanks for the support, guys,' I say, sarcastically.

'We're just being realistic,' Dylan says. 'No one in Grade Six will want to play soccer on Sports Day.'

I feel like a balloon that's just been pricked with a big fat sharp pin.

'You're probably right,' I sigh. 'I just thought it might be a cool idea, that's all.'

I can see from the looks on their faces that my friends feel bad about bursting my big balloon of joy. They were only

being honest with me, like good mates should.

‘So, when are the *Peter Pan* auditions?’ I ask, nudging Indi with my foot.

‘On Friday,’ she says, her face lighting up. ‘Mr Pinto says I have to learn two scenes if I want to go for Peter.’

‘I can help you learn your lines if you want?’ I say.

‘Cool!’ Indi grins. ‘Thanks, Sam!’

‘I reckon your audition will be *exceptional*, Indi,’ Dylan says.

Dylan’s dad gave him a book called *Storyteller’s Word a Day* last year and every now and then Dylan throws a big fancy word like ‘exceptional’ into the conversation. It’s weird but we’re used to it now.

‘Hope you’re right!’ Indi says. ‘But it depends on how many other kids are going for the same role.’ She laughs. ‘I should do a sneaky petition to find out who my competition is!’

My eyes light up, my head whips around and I stare at Indi in delight.

‘What?’ She frowns. ‘Have I got Vegemite on my nose again?’

‘A petition!’ I cry, jumping up off the grass and slapping my thighs. ‘That’s it!’

‘What’s it?’ Dylan says, looking confused.

They are both staring at me like I’ve lost my mind, but I just point over to the bike shed where Miss McLeish is chatting to a bunch of prep girls.

I turn back to my bewildered friends.
'Come with me.'
They shrug and stand up.
'Miss McLeish?' I say, once the giggling
gaggle of preps have moved away.
'Hi there!' she says, turning to us with
a friendly smile.
'I'm Sam, and this is Dylan and Indi.'
'Nice to meet you all,' Miss McLeish
says.
'Um, we just wanted to ask you
something about Sports Day.' I feel a tiny
bit nervous all of a sudden. 'Um ... we
were just ... uh ... wondering if maybe
we could have a soccer game on the day,
too? It's a really cool sport and we think
everyone would love it.'

Miss McLeish frowns and fidgets with the whistle around her neck. ‘I don’t think that’s possible, Sam,’ she says gently. ‘We already have a lot of sports on the running sheet and I’m not sure we can fit anymore in. Also, there probably wouldn’t be enough interest in soccer to justify adding it.’

Ah-ha! I think. This is where my brilliant idea comes into play!

‘But what if we could find kids who want to play?’ I ask, hoping I don’t sound as desperate as I feel. ‘Like, if they sign a petition?’

Miss McLeish looks thoughtful and my heart leaps.

‘Hmmm ... possibly,’ she says. ‘But I don’t know if we have enough time to get it organised and —’

‘Please, Miss McLeish!’ I definitely sound desperate now, but I don’t care anymore. ‘Just let us try?’

‘If we can garner more interest in it, then it could be a great thing for the school to support a new sport,’ Dylan adds.

‘Yeah,’ I say, assuming that ‘garner’ is a good thing. ‘There might be heaps of kids who’ve been wanting to play for years!’

‘I know I have!’ Indi says, stepping forward and placing her hand over her heart. ‘I LOVE soccer!’

It takes every bit of willpower in me not to burst out laughing at Indi’s performance.

Miss McLeish thinks for a moment, then sighs. ‘Okay, I tell you what,’ she says.

‘If you can get twenty-two signatures on that petition, then we’ll do it.’

‘Oh, thank you!’ I squeal.

‘But,’ she says, holding a finger up, ‘you have to get it to me by Thursday next week or I can’t accept it. There’s too much planning involved to leave it longer than that. I’ll have to amend the Sports Day schedule, organise the umpire and bibs, check with the other teachers ...’

‘That’s fine!’ I say quickly. ‘I’ll get it to you by then, I promise!’