

The Match That Changed Everything

Abril was nine years old, and there was something she loved more than almost anything: playing soccer.

Every Tuesday and Thursday, she went to practice with a big smile. She loved passing the ball, learning new dribbling moves, shooting at the goal, and laughing with her teammates. When she trained, she felt free and happy.

But there was something she really didn’t like.

The weekend matches.

Every Friday, when the coach announced the team roster, Abril always made up an excuse.

“I can’t this weekend…”

“I have a birthday party…”

“My leg hurts a little…”

The truth was something else.

She was afraid.

Afraid that the other girls would play better than her.

Afraid of making mistakes.

Afraid of missing a goal.

Afraid that everyone would stare at her.

And, above all, the fear of not being the best.

The coach had noticed this a while ago. One day, after training, he asked her very calmly:

“Abril, do you enjoy training?”

“Yes! I love it!” she replied without hesitation.

“And if you enjoy training so much… why don’t you want to play in the matches?”

Abril lowered her head.

“Because I’m afraid of messing up.”

The coach smiled.

“You know what? The best players in the world make mistakes too. They miss passes, shots, and matches. What makes them special isn’t that they never make mistakes. It’s that they keep playing.”

That afternoon, her parents also spoke with her.

“Abril,” her mother said, “we don’t come here to see you score three goals.”

“Or to count your mistakes,” her father added. “We come because we love seeing you enjoy what you love most.”

Those words kept echoing in her mind.

Finally, that Saturday, she decided to be brave.

She put on her boots, took a deep breath, and went out onto the field.

At first, she was very nervous. Her legs were a little shaky.

She missed a pass.

Then another.

For a moment, she thought it had been a mistake to go.

But a teammate told her:

“It’s okay! Let’s keep going!”

So Abril asked for the ball again.

She made a good pass.

She won back possession.

She helped a teammate score a goal.

And, without realizing it, she started to laugh.

She ran, celebrated, cheered on the team… and she stopped thinking about whether she was the best or if someone was watching her.

She only thought about playing.

When the game ended, she ran to her parents with red cheeks and a huge smile.

“It was so much fun!”

The coach winked at her.

“See? The important thing wasn’t winning or being the best.”

Abril nodded.

That day she discovered something she would always remember.

That fear shrinks when you dare to try.

That making mistakes is part of learning.

And that the best trophy of all is finishing a game with a big smile and a heart full of joy.

From that day on, Abril continued training as always.

There were games where she played very well.

Others, not so much.

But she no longer stayed home.

Because she had discovered that the important thing wasn’t being the best.

The most valuable thing was enjoying doing what she loved so much: playing soccer with her team.