

## **The Case of the Magical Cleats**

Author: Aaron S.

Soccer always seemed like an easy sport to me, just kick the ball and run, right? Little did I know that trying to play soccer would teach me not only that the sport was not easy, it wasn't just about how fast you can run and how good you could kick. Hello, my name is Victor Krutch and this is my story.

Since a young age, I had always been interested in soccer. I watched all of Messi's and Ronaldo's games, practiced with any ball that I could find, and imagined that I was in a jersey playing for Barcelona. When I finally became old enough to play for the local league, I begged my dad for days until he finally allowed me to join and signed me up for lessons. The evening before my first practice was when it all started.

Just like any other evening, I went outside to ride my bike and play a game with my friends in the neighborhood playground. As I rode close to the playground, I noticed some of the older boys playing soccer. Thinking that this would be a good time to start practicing my soccer skills, I laid my bike down on the ground and walked up to the group. Once I got close to them, I asked one of the boys, "Hey, can I play with you guys? I really like soccer." The boy looked at his friends and, while laughing mockingly at me, replied with, "Of course not! We don't want to play with little kids!"

When I heard his answer, I couldn't control the tears that were entering my eyes. I decided to walk around for a little while so that my friends would not see me cry. After I walked for a while, I noticed a man waving his hand at me. He had a small store in front of him and was selling shoes. When I walked over to him, he said, "These cleats have magical powers in them

that can make you a great soccer player.” After thinking for a little bit, I decided, why not? I bought the shoes and went home.

That evening, I went out to play. However, this time I wanted to see if the cleats were actually magical or not. When I started to practice dribbling and kicking, every one of my kicks reached to goal and every one of my dribbles were in control. Little did I know, the older boys were watching me from behind the bushes.

The next morning was a big day for me, it was the day of the big match for my league. After I got dressed, I went to put on my cleats only to find them missing. Panicking, I searched around the house only to find the cleats torn up and in the trash can.

At that moment, I didn't know what to do. The big match was in an hour, and I had no cleats. I decided that there was no other option, I would go back to man who sold me the original cleats. When I found him, I asked him, “Do you have any other magical cleats?” That's when I found out something that I could not believe. The store owner said that the cleats that he sold had no magic, he said that only to sell the shoes. He told me, “Kid, the only reason you played so well was because you became confident. So go out there and win that game!”

Hearing the store owner say that the shoes had no magical power really changed how I thought of myself and my soccer skills. Once I got to the big match, I was confident that I would do well, not because of the shoes, but because of my skills. The game started immediately after I arrived and I can proudly say that my team won after I kicked in the tie-breaking goal.

Through this journey, I was able to learn that the most important lesson learned from soccer was that you have to believe in yourself in order to do well. And like me, I hope that no one else would buy magical cleats to do well in soccer.