

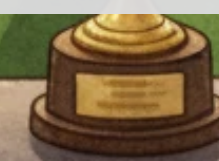
CHAMPIONS' LEGACY

The Golden Goal



The Big Game: Marcus's Winning Moment

Kent Agan





Marcus sat at the kitchen table, staring blankly at his bowl of cereal while his stomach did somersaults. The morning sun streamed through the window, but all he could think about was the big championship game ahead.

RECESS REMINSINENCE



A VICTORY SHARED, A DREAM POSTPONED.

During recess, Marcus's best friend Diego talked animatedly about their upcoming victory, gesturing wildly with his hands. Marcus tried to smile, but the thought of the undefeated Riverside Raiders made his heart race with worry.



At the soccer field, the grass was slick and shimmering with leftover rainwater from the night before. Marcus felt his cleats slide during warm-ups, making him wonder if the whole day was destined for disaster.



The game started fast and loud, with the Raiders scoring two quick goals that left the Eastside Eagles feeling defeated. Marcus chased the ball across the muddy field, feeling like his team was falling further and further behind.



Inside the huddle at halftime, Coach Rivera looked each player in the eye with a calm but firm expression. She told them to stop playing with fear and to remember why they started playing soccer in the first place.

THE SECOND HALF

A moment of friendship and resolve



Taking a deep breath, Marcus stepped back onto the pitch for the second half with a newfound sense of determination. He stopped worrying about the score and focused entirely on the movement of the ball and his teammates.

2 MINUTES LEFT



FINAL SHOWDOWN

With only two minutes left on the clock, Diego broke away from a defender and spotted Marcus sprinting toward the goal. He sent a perfect, soaring pass that landed right at Marcus's feet.

GAME WINNER



Without a moment of hesitation, Marcus pivoted and kicked the ball with every ounce of strength he had left. The ball whistled through the air, curving just past the goalkeeper's outstretched fingers and into the back of the net.



The sound of the final whistle was drowned out by the thunderous cheers of the crowd and his teammates' joyful shouts. Marcus was lifted onto his friends' shoulders, a wide, genuine smile finally breaking across his face.



On the quiet ride home, the nervous frogs in Marcus's stomach were replaced by a giant appetite as he happily devoured his victory snacks. His mom watched him through the rearview mirror, laughing as he finally enjoyed every bite of his well-earned meal.