



**THE GOAL OF SOCCER**  
by [childbook.ai](https://childbook.ai)



Odecha kicked the soccer ball nervously in his backyard. Tomorrow would be his first day with the Riverside Lions, a team known for their talent and their tempers. His mom had signed him up hoping he would make friends in their new neighborhood.



Odecha arrived at practice to find teammates arguing loudly. Coach Marco blew his whistle repeatedly, trying to restore order. "This happens every time," sighed a boy standing next to Odecha.



"That was MY ball!" shouted Leo, the team captain, shoving another player. Odecha watched quietly as practice dissolved into blame and shouting. He wondered if joining this team had been a mistake.



During water break, Odecha noticed Leo sitting alone, still fuming. He walked over and offered his extra orange slices without saying a word. Leo looked surprised but accepted them with a small nod.



At the next practice, Odecha helped collect stray balls without being asked. When he missed a shot, he simply smiled and tried again. Some players noticed his calm attitude amid their usual chaos.



The Lions lost their first game badly. "It's your fault!" players yelled at each other. Odecha walked around high-fiving everyone instead, saying "Next time" with a genuine smile.



"Odecha, can I talk to you?" Coach Marco asked after practice. "I've noticed you never get angry like the others." Odecha shrugged. "My grandpa says soccer is just a game to enjoy together."



Coach introduced a new passing drill where players had to compliment the person they passed to. Many grumbled, but Odecha's enthusiasm made it hard to stay negative. Even Leo tried it eventually.



During a difficult practice, Leo missed an easy goal and kicked the ground in frustration. Odecha jogged over and demonstrated a breathing technique his teacher had taught him. Leo reluctantly tried it.



Week by week, small changes appeared in the team. Players helped each other up after falls. Fewer arguments broke out during drills. Coach Marco smiled more during practices.



The Lions didn't win the championship, but they played their best game ever. No one argued when they fell behind. Instead, they encouraged each other and played as a true team.



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"You know what, Odecha?" Leo said as they packed up their gear. "I think we won something better than a trophy today." Odecha smiled, knowing exactly what he meant.



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