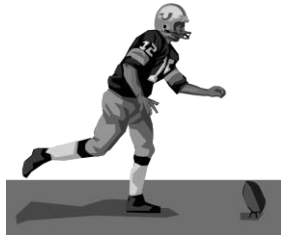


FOR THE LOVE OF THE GAME

by
Hal Ames



Jeremy was not expected to live after the accident. His car was completely destroyed when a drunk driver, who was driving too fast, did not stop at the red light. The car hit Jeremy's side of the car and pushed it into a tree.

The firefighters came and it took several hours before they were able to get Jeremy out of his car.

Many months later Jeremy still had trouble remembering his family. Many things about his past were gone. He had a noticeable limp when he walked, and his face was disfigured from the fire.

The doctors were amazed that he had survived, much less, that he would be walking out of the hospital that day. His parents had flown in from Madison to be with him during his rehabilitation at the clinic in Chicago. It had been many months since he arrived and had gone through extensive rehabilitation.

Now he was leaving the hospital. The staff of the hospital were all there to cheer him on to his life outside of the hospital. He still had a lot of work to do with his therapist, but the doctors were optimistic that he would regain most of his memory and most of his physical abilities. No one knew for sure.

Jeremy had played football at his high school. Many universities had expressed interest in having him come to play at their school, but now because of the accident, that dream was over.

When Jeremy arrived home after the long trip, he was exhausted. He just wanted to go to his room. His father helped him to the doorway. When he got there, Jeremy just stared into the room. It was familiar but felt strange.

He looked at the pictures on the wall, the trophies on his desk and the clothes in the closet. He looked at his dad and asked, "Is all this stuff mine?"

"Yes son, this is your room and those things on the wall are your memories," his father said to Jeremy, as he helped him get ready for bed.

In the middle of the night, his parents heard a loud yell. They ran to Jeremy's room and found him on the floor rocking back and forth the same way he had done when he was a toddler. He was sweating and crying. His mother cuddled with him and held him until he fell asleep on the floor.

After he was asleep, his father put a pillow under Jeremy's head and gently put a blanket over him to keep him warm.

His mother stayed with him all night stroking his hair and singing softly to him. He had always liked to hear his mother sing.

In the morning when Jeremy woke up, he looked up at his mother and asked her why he was on the floor. She told him he had fallen out of bed and he was too big for them to put him back.

He cried and leaned against his mother.

"Am I going to be OK mom? Am I going to get better? I hate being like this. I want my old life back, but I don't know what that is. Please help me mom," Jeremy sobbed in his mother's arms.

His mother held him close and tears dropped from her eyes. They held each other for a long time.

After Jeremy got dressed, he felt better.

“What’s the plan for today?” he asked with a big smile, which surprised his parents.

“What’s up with you? You’re so positive today,” his dad asked.

“Well, I’ve decided that I need to work hard and keep a smile on my face. I’m going to do whatever the doctors tell me to do. I want to get better,” Jeremy said confidently and with a big smile.

He had an appointment with his therapist. Jeremy did not like to go to the therapist because the tasks he had to do were very difficult.

On this day he went and worked harder than ever before. The therapist told his parents his attitude had changed and he was working very hard.

Every morning it was the same. Jeremy was ready for the day, and he worked harder than anyone at the rehabilitation center did. They had never seen anyone work so hard. When they asked him to do two things, he would do four. He was improving, and he was gaining more and more confidence.

One morning, before he was to leave home for the rehabilitation center, he made an announcement.

“Everyone listen. I’ve got something to say,” he spoke in a loud and clear voice. “I’m going to try out for the football team again this year. I’m going to make the team, and I’m going to be the best player the team has ever had!”

His parents looked at each other in amazement. School would be starting soon, and football practices were due to start in a week.

“We’re proud of you son. I know if you put your mind to something you can do it,” his dad said with a smile but not feeling confident that his son would be able to play football again.

“I’ll show you dad! Just watch me,” Jeremy said as he walked out the door to the car.

Jeremy’s parents told the doctor what Jeremy had said.

“I don’t think it would be wise to let him play football so soon after the accident. He’s healthy enough, so I can’t say no. But another injury could be permanent if he were to get hit too hard,” the doctor advised Jeremy’s parents.

A week passed, and Jeremy kept telling his parents that he was going to make the team. They just had to be patient. He did not want them coming to practice, and he did not want them to talk to his coach.

On the first day of practice, Jeremy ran out of the door.

“I’ll be back this afternoon. See ya!” he yelled out

Jeremy went to practice every day. When he came home, he was tired and usually went directly to bed after a shower. He did not complain, and he did not give up.

Two weeks passed. The first game of the season was on a Friday. Jeremy came home on Thursday with a blue jersey. He had number 2 on his shirt. He showed it to his parents.

“I told you I was going to make the team!” Jeremy smiled from ear to ear.

Jeremy wore his new jersey to school the next day. All of the team members wore their jerseys to school to build school spirit.

It seemed like the whole town came out for the game that night. They were playing the team that had beaten them by two points the year before. It was their only loss. They were ready for revenge.

Jeremy’s parents came to the game. It was a cool night so they each had a blanket to keep warm. It had been raining hard all day and the field was soft and muddy.

The game started and both teams were playing tough. It was difficult for either team to make plays in the mud.

Jeremy’s parents looked for him. They saw him in his wet uniform standing on the side with the other players. He was not in the game.

Half-time came and Jeremy had still not gone into the game. The score was tied zero to zero.

Last year, Jeremy played almost the entire game. He was a star on the team, but now he was standing on the side. His parents were so proud, because of how far he had come since the accident.

Jeremy's team had a chance to score, but the other team intercepted a pass and stopped them. As the game went on the score remained zero to zero.

The clock on the scoreboard showed the game was coming to ending and neither team had any points. Jeremy's team got the ball, but they still had twenty-five yards to go to get a touchdown. The clock said three seconds left in the game.

Suddenly, Jeremy put on his helmet and ran out onto the field. The coach was going to let him play for the last play of the game. To everyone's surprise, the team lined up for a field goal, and Jeremy was the kicker. His parents looked at each other in amazement. Jeremy was the kicker?

The ball was hiked, set onto the ground, and then Jeremy kicked the ball right down the middle of the goal. His team won three to zero, and Jeremy was the hero.

The players carried him off the field on their shoulders. Jeremy had kept his promise. He was the most important person on the team.

VOCABULARY: (*Match the word to its definition*)

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. sacrifice ____ | a. physical exercise instructor |
| 2. permanent ____ | b. hold close, embrace |
| 3. recover ____ | c. get better |
| 4. therapist ____ | d. cry quietly |
| 5. optimistic ____ | e. give up, forego |
| 6. exhausted ____ | f. worn out, tired |
| 7. cuddle ____ | g. sport's shirt, uniform |
| 8. sobbed ____ | h. everlasting |
| 9. rehabilitation ____ | i. positive |
| 10. jersey ____ | j. cure, healing |

TRUE / FALSE:

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. Jeremy was in a car accident. | T / F |
| 2. Jeremy played soccer. | T / F |
| 3. His team lost the game. | T / F |
| 4. The doctor told him not to play for the rest of his life. | T / F |
| 5. Jeremy was in the hospital. | T / F |
| 6. Jeremy died in the accident. | T / F |
| 7. Jeremy worked very hard. | T / F |
| 8. Jeremy was a hero to his team. | T / F |
| 9. It rained before the game. | T / F |
| 10. His parents were proud of him. | T / F |

MULTIPLE CHOICE:

1. What happened to Jeremy? ____
 - a) plane crash
 - b) car accident
 - c) skiing accident
 - d) fell down the stairs

2. Where did Jeremy stay until he went home? ____
 - a) hospital
 - b) school
 - c) cemetery
 - d) prison

3. What was the final score of the game? ____
 - a) zero to zero
 - b) five to three
 - c) two to zero
 - d) three to zero

4. What position did Jeremy play? ____
 - a) punter
 - b) quarterback
 - c) defender
 - d) kicker

COMPREHENSION: *(Write a complete sentence to answer the question.)*

1. What happened to Jeremy?

2. How long was he in his car before they got him out?

3. What was wrong with Jeremy when he left the hospital?

4. What did Jeremy do every day before the first game?

5. What sport did Jeremy play?

6. Who held Jeremy after he fell onto the floor?

7. What did Jeremy wear the day of the first game?

8. What was the weather like during the game?

9. Who went to see Jeremy play?

10. What did the other players do after Jeremy won the game?
