

Hey, Coach!
by Linda Ashman

Notes: The text reflects the voices of various kids on one soccer team. The front endpapers or title page might include a photo of the team and coach (maybe two, even—a formal one in front taken on “photo day” and a sillier one at the end of the season at the back).

The games (numbered here) might be shown via a calendar, the Coach’s clipboard, or some other way. Although scores tend to be downplayed at this age, some sort of scoreboard in the background might be used to show the team improving over time, with big losses in the beginning, gradually improving to a final victory.

Hey, Coach!

(First practice)

Guess what?

I’m on your team.

Can we be blue?

No, red.

No, green!

Let’s be the Tigers.

No, the Sharks.

The Unicorns.

The Bears.

The Sparks!

I can dribble.

I can throw.

(a soccer “throw-in”)

Watch me kick this.

THWACK!

Uh, oh.

(ball hits coach)

Don’t worry, Coach—

I’m good. *I’ll* score.

Um, Coach?

I’ve never played before.

(Game 1)

Hey, Coach—

Who's in?

What now?

Which side?

We chase the ball.

We all . . .

collide.

(kids, running in pack, fall on ball)

I *think* I'm ready.

Can I play?

Oh . . . we run the *other* way?

(runs toward other team's goal)

(Game 2)

Hey, Coach! I dribbled—then I tripped.

I tried to kick it, but I slipped.

Can't use my hands?

Oops, I forgot.

This is harder than I thought.

*(e.g., lying on ground, legs tangled
w/ other child's)*

Hey, Coach—

You dropped this on the ground.

Don't you love how whistles sound?

WHHTWEEEEEEE!!!

(Coach cringes, covers ears)

(Game 3)

Help! My shin guards won't stay on.

Coach—my jersey's *way* too long.

(past knees)

My shorts are loose.

My cleats are tight.

Did I put on my pinny right?

(all tangled up)

That was fun.

I ran a lot.

Next time, Coach,

I'll take a shot.

(Game 4)

Ouch!

My nose.

My knee.

I'm stung.

I bumped my head.

I bit my tongue.

I'm sick.

I slipped.

I stubbed my toe.

Uh, Coach—

I *really* have to go.

Hey, Coach—

See that? It hit the post!

(goal post)

I nearly scored a goal—

Almost!

(Game 5)

That was close!

We almost tied.

We shake hands with the other side.

Who brought the snacks?

Can I have two?

There's one more left, Coach—

Just for you.

(misshapen, not very appealing)

Hey, Coach—

I'm going to practice more.

I really, *really* want to score.

(Game 6)

I felt a drop.

The sky looks gray.

It's not *too* bad—

Can we still play?

(under awning as torrential rain pours down)

(Game 7)

I did it, Coach!

I passed the ball.

I kicked it hard.

I didn't fall.

I blocked the shot.

I dribbled fast.

Hey, Coach.

Guess what?

I SCORED AT LAST!

(Game 8)

Hey, Coach—

I'm sad.

Our season's done.

I *love* this game.

It's so much fun.

I'll play next year.

Can't wait till then—

Can I be on your team again?