EVAN JACOBS

THE UNDERDOGS



GIRLS' TACKLE FOOTBALL STATS



HAS THE COUNTRY'S
FIRST TACKLE FOOTBALL TEAM
FOR 5TH & 6TH GRADE GIRLS

HOW MANY GIRLS IN THE SCHOOL WANT TO PLAY COED FOOTBALL



BOYS THINK GIRLS CAN'T PLAY BECAUSE …

THEY WILL



&

GET



THINK AGAIN, BOYS!


JASMINE LOVES MAKING CORN SOUP



CHAPTER 1

LUNCH GAME

Jasmine Le's eyes narrowed. She was watching Mark Kline play football. It was lunchtime. Mark and some other guys were playing.

A super sporty guy! Wow! she thought.

"Oh man!" Mark yelled. "You blew it."

He was looking at Mike Ramirez. Mike had missed a pass. The ball was on the ground. It had landed close to Jasmine.

Her BFFs were sitting on some bleachers behind her. Zoe Ebad and Tess Quade. Zoe was a

tall and perfect blonde. “Do you ever get pimples? I’ve never seen one on your face. Unfair!” Tess once told her.

Tess’s hair was long and brown. She had smooth dark skin.

Jasmine was a hybrid of the two. Long black hair. Olive skin.

Everyone on the field was in eighth grade. They went to Meadow Springs Middle School.

“Shouldn’t you throw the ball back?” Zoe asked.

Jasmine wasn’t a tomboy. But there were only boys on her street. She had played kickball with them. Baseball, soccer, and even tackle football too. She grabbed the football. Then she threw it back.

“Oh my gosh!” Zoe said, laughing. “You did it. I can’t believe it.”

“Did you think she wouldn’t?” Tess asked.

The ball soared through the air. The boys watched it. Mark barely moved to catch it.

"Nice throw," Mark said. "For a girl."

"Nice throw, period," Jasmine said.

Mark laughed. "All right. Let's get in our formations," he called. "We still have fifteen minutes till the bell rings."

"Are you going to eat your lunch?" Zoe asked. She held up Jasmine's sandwich. "It looks good."

"Eat it," Jasmine said. "I'm going to play football."

Tess and Zoe looked at each other. "I don't recall them asking you to play," Tess said.

"So?" Jasmine smirked. She walked out onto the field. Jasmine planted herself between the two teams. The boys started yelling. She tuned it out. Mark stared at her. She didn't even blink.

"What are you doing?" Mark asked.

"I want to play football," Jasmine said. "I'm just as good as any of you."

"But you're a girl." Mark frowned. "You can't play football!"

"Why not? I play with boys a lot. I've even played tackle football."

"You're a girl!" Mark said again. "You will get hurt."

"No, I won't!"

The other boys yelled too. They told Jasmine to get off the field. Tess and Zoe ran over.

"Jasmine," Zoe said. "Come on!"

"Ignore our friend," Tess said to Mark. "She ate lunch in the cafeteria. Bad food makes you weird."

"I'm feeling fine," Jasmine said. "If boys can play football, we can too."

"Mr. Ross," the boys called.

Mr. Ross was in charge of school security. The man was short and stocky. He always wore tracksuits. Maybe he had played high school football. But he was out of shape now.

"What's the problem here?" Mr. Ross asked.

"Jasmine thinks she can get in on this game.

Play football with us," Mark said.

"I *can* play football," Jasmine said. "They just won't let me."

Mr. Ross stared at them. "Um. Now listen, Jasmine." Mr. Ross stopped talking. He looked like he was thinking. "These boys are playing football. It's not the game for you."

"Why not?"

"Well. Um … because you're a girl."

"That's not a reason. My gender doesn't matter. I can play," Jasmine insisted.

"Get her off the field, Mr. Ross!" one player yelled.

"Look," Mr. Ross said. "You must leave—"

"No!"

Silence.

Mr. Ross was known for being nice. But he did have a temper. "Leave this field, or go see the principal. It's up to you."

Jasmine held her ground. But Zoe stepped in. "We were just leaving," she said. Zoe grabbed

Jasmine's arm. "Enjoy your game," she yelled to the boys.

Tess grabbed Jasmine's other arm.

The girls led her off the field.



The rest of lunch passed in silence. Jasmine sat on the bleachers with Tess and Zoe. She watched the game. What would it be like if she were allowed to play?

"Stop being so mad," Zoe said. "You want to play football? Since when?"

"Since those boys wouldn't let me," Jasmine said.

Jasmine fumed the rest of the day. No way would she take no for an answer. Girls could play football. They could if they wanted to play.

The friends met up after school. They always walked home together.

"Look," Tess said. "That shirt is so cute." Tess showed the girls her phone. The cool shirt was on Instagram.

"Do you like it, Jazz?" Tess asked Jasmine.

Jasmine eyed the shirt. It was white. "I'm Not Hot" was written on it. "It's cool," Jasmine said.

But Jasmine kept thinking about football. Zoe and Tess talked. Jasmine thought about justice. Then something caught her eye. They were near Wagner Park.

There was Mark. Again. It was football practice. Looked like a Pop Warner team. She could see the team name. The Marauders.

Their coach was tall. He was dressed like Mr. Ross.

Jasmine had a thought. "Wait! I've got an idea," she said. She walked over to the field.

"Here we go again," Zoe said, rolling her eyes.

THE UNDERDOGS

Football, Corn Soup, Pedicures

Artificial Turf, New England Patriots

Girls rule! That's what Jasmine Le thinks. And girls can do anything boys can do. But can they play tackle football? Heck yes! Jasmine takes on her whole town to prove that girls can run, jump, and catch a pigskin just as well as boys.

WHITE LIGHTNING BOOKS®



SADDLEBACK EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHING
www.sdlback.com

LEXILE HL210L

ISBN: 978-1-68021-144-3

90000

9 781680 211443