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## The Worst Feeling In the World

Imagine being up 2-0 in a hockey game with about seven minutes left in the game. All you have to do is hold on for seven minutes, and you advance further into the playoffs. You lose, and your chances of advancing are slim to none. That's easy, right? It wasn't so easy for us that night.

This year playing hockey, I learned a lot about how life can deal you a bad hand sometimes. Although I didn't understand it at the time, I understand now. Not only did I break my wrist when a player checked me from behind, which is illegal, but I suffered heartbreaking losses. Even though I was dealt these unfortunate circumstances, I prevailed through them and am now stronger as a result.

I was nine years old and it was my third year of hockey. I was playing for the Grand Rapids Amateur Hockey Association (GRAHA). It is a league where everyone plays equal time, and winning isn't supposed to be everything, even though it usually is. We were in a big tournament game that would ultimately decide our fate for the rest of the tournament. We were playing a very good team, so we knew it wasn't going to be easy. However, we had won our first game, so we were very optimistic, bordering on cocky. The team got ready the same way we always got ready, with the soundtrack "D2: The Mighty Ducks" playing in the locker room. Jared, one of our better players was entertaining everyone with his crazy antics. Casey, the only girl on our team and our goalie was surrounded by a couple guys trying to flirt with her while she tried to get ready, nothing out of the ordinary. I was one of the first ones done getting dressed. I

watched everyone and waited for the game that was about to take place, and for Coach to give us our before-game talk.

When Coach finished his speech, we grabbed our sticks and headed toward the ice. The zamboni hadn't finished resurfacing the ice from the last game. Friends and family from both sides started to take their seats as game time approached. I looked to the other side of the rink and saw that the other team was there. I was hoping that they wouldn't show. It has only happened once to me, when I was on another team, so it is very unlikely, but nonetheless, I still was hoping for a miracle. In that case, it would have been an automatic win for us.

The zamboni finished resurfacing and we skated onto the ice to warm up. As I skated along the ice, I got a blast of cool air in my face. It was refreshing, which was much needed because of the battle that was going to take place. We finished our warm ups and we all met at the bench for some last minute coaching. Coach was done talking and we said the same chant we say before every game:

“1, 2, 3, Bulldogs!”

The starting lineup, which includes a center, a left wing, a right wing, two defensemen, and a goalie, headed out onto the ice for the face-off. I was in the starting lineup at right wing. I looked over at the guy next to me, he looked confident, but I hoped he was just as nervous as I was. The puck dropped and the game was on.

The game started out pretty even. Neither team took control. Both teams were still nervous due to the magnitude of the game. Both teams got quality shots on goal, and both goalies were making great saves. The first period ended in a 0-0 tie. On the one hand, I was relieved we were not being blown out of the water. On the other hand, we also didn't

do any scoring. We gathered around the bench for our between-period talk. We ended the talk with our chant:

“1, 2, 3, Bulldogs!”

The teams gathered around center ice to start the second period. The nervousness of the teams seemed to have subsided as each team started to play more aggressive. We traded great shot after great shot, but still no scoring. The goalies were making incredible saves, diving at the last second to stop the puck from entering the net. This was quite unusual for Casey as she never really made stupendous saves. Our defense was usually good enough that she wouldn't have to make too many great saves. Families were cheering as hard as they could trying to boost their team. Coaches were screaming at the top of their lungs trying to help their team. Jared, who usually got a goal every game, was so far being shut out and quite frustrated by it. The second period ended and the score was still knotted up at 0. We came to the bench and spoke with Coach again. He explained to us that this team would break down eventually. We had been wearing them down all game. All we had to do was take advantage of their mistakes. He finished, and again we said the chant:

“1, 2, 3, Bulldogs!”

Once again, the teams gathered around center ice for the start of the third period. The noise level was at an all-time high. Fans were screaming for their team louder than ever. The third period started, and we started to take control of the game. We were getting great scoring chances while they were struggling to keep us from scoring. Finally, they shot it to the other side of the rink and got fresh skaters on the ice. We started to bring the puck up, and then we shot it into their zone and also changed skaters. I went out

on the ice. I was so hungry for a goal; I had to get one on this shift. The other team collected the puck and shot it around the boards in an attempt to clear the puck out of their zone. Our defenseman got there before it left the zone. He took a shot, the goalie saved it, but he didn't catch it. The puck was sitting there right in front of me, the net was wide open. I moved to shoot the puck at the same time the goalie reached for the puck with his glove. I beat him there and the arena erupted.

GOAL!

The crowd was going crazy. My teammates rushed over to celebrate with me. Finally, after two periods of no scoring, the first goal was scored. I went to the bench where I was congratulated by the rest of my team and coaches. Momentum was on our side now. The other team looked devastated. After being even for so long, they were behind by a goal with very little time left. I sat on the bench and the next line took the ice for the face-off. We were playing at the top of our game. We kept getting great shots on goal, and their goalie had to make stupendous saves to keep his team in the game.

It was my next shift after the goal and I was looking for another goal. We were putting intense pressure on them. Shot after shot followed by save after save. One shot was saved by the goalie and the puck bounced in front of him onto my stick. He was lying on the ice, so I just had to lift the puck. I pulled the puck back, and took a backhanded shot. He reached up to stop the puck, but by the time his hand was up, the puck hit the net and fell to the ice with a "thud".

GOAL!

The arena erupted for a second time as we had a two-goal lead and I had just scored my second goal. The other team was crestfallen. They must be thinking how are

we going to overcome this? After the celebrating, the other team took a timeout to talk strategy. We also took advantage of the time to talk about strategy. Coach told us to play cautiously, but not too cautiously. We didn't need any more goals; we just needed to run the clock down. For the fourth and final time for the game, we said the chant:

“1, 2, 3, Bulldogs!”

The teams took the ice for the face-off after the goal. I was positive we were going to win the game. There was about seven minutes left and we were up by two goals. It was a very difficult feat for the other team to overcome. No one on our team was about to think that we were going to let this game slip away. The puck dropped, and our team collapsed. We made bad passes, took stupid penalties, and didn't think. Soon after I scored, they scored their first goal and made it a 2-1 game. I was still optimistic that we were going to win. I thought it was just a fluke. I went onto the ice, and I couldn't get the puck out of our zone. We were struggling to keep them from scoring. Soon after they scored their first goal, they scored their second goal to tie the game at 2. We had lost all of our momentum. The other teams' fans were going crazy and we couldn't believe what was going on. There was no way we are losing this game I said to myself. This is ridiculous.

The puck dropped for the face-off after the goal, and we continued our sloppy play. I didn't want to think about it, but in the back of my mind, I had a feeling we were going to lose this game. Sure enough, they scored a go-ahead goal to make the score 3-2. We were devastated. Just a couple of minutes ago, we were on our way to winning, now we were losing with about a minute to go.

After this goal was scored, I thought why would God allow something like this to happen? We outplayed them for the entire game, except the last seven minutes. Why are we the ones who are on the losing end of this game? However, now I realize that God has a plan for us. Certain things happen for a reason, and it all fits into God's plan. We may not understand it now, but in due time, we shall understand why God has these things happen to us.

We pulled our goalie in order to get an extra skater, but to no avail, time ran out and we lost the game. After we shook hands with the other team, we went into the locker room where it was dead silent. Jared was very upset throwing his equipment violently into his bag. Casey looked like she could cry. I just sat there stunned. This game was one of the best games of my life, but we lost. It was the worst feeling in the world. I quickly got undressed and got out of the locker room. I just wanted to get home and forget any of this had happened. I came upstairs to a crowd of parents from my team congratulating me despite the loss. I found my parents and my mom grabbed me and said the same thing she says after every loss:

“Tough loss, kiddo.”

“Yeah,” I said dully. I just wanted to get home. The car ride home was quiet. I looked out the window disbelieving that we let that game go. We had every reason to win, but we didn't. Our chances of advancing in the tournament were gone. Any time my team loses a game I think to myself, the other team was better and we didn't want it as bad as they did. On the way home so many years ago, I wrote off our loss as some fault of our own, that we just weren't good enough. Only now do I realize that sometimes things aren't meant to go your way, and sometimes a person can be better off when they

lose. Losing was important to my character development. People should also learn to focus on the good things that have gone right in their lives instead of dwelling on the bad. Despite this loss there was still something to look forward to; there was another tournament in about a month.