

LILY AND THE ROCK

In this brilliant extract from the book, *Lily*, the main character, remembers training to be a goalkeeper with her dad when she was young!

Dad was the reason I wanted to be a goalkeeper, of course. Every weekend when he wasn't working, we'd be out in the park. We'd make a goal between two little trees and take it in turns to be keeper. Dad always saved the ball when I kicked it, so it was more fun for me to be in goal. I think it was more fun for him too, because he loved to teach me all he knew.

"Watch the player, Lil," he used to say. "The player, remember, not the ball." And I'd try and try, but the ball would fly past. So then he'd say, "Look at my eyes. My eyes will tell you where I'm going to put the ball." Sometimes he'd just make me stand there, quite still in my goal, while he shot balls past me again and again and again. "If you're going to keep goal," he said, "you've got to learn to be still and watch." So I did. "Control yourself," he'd say. "Then, when you know what you're doing, you can move. Otherwise you're just throwing yourself about any old where."

Once I'd got that, he'd make me shout where I thought the ball was going, still not moving a muscle, just watching his eyes and his body as he struck the ball. "Left high!" I'd yell. "Right

low!" And when I'd got it right ten times in a row he'd let me try and save it. "Watch me, Lil," he'd say. "Remember. Watch me, not the ball."

It was hard at first, because he never made it easy for me. I'd concentrate, concentrate, concentrate, watching his eyes, his body, his feet in their heavy old work boots. He'd had proper football boots when he played as a professional all those years ago, but he didn't wear them any more. He kept them in a special box on top of the wardrobe and got them out every Sunday night to oil them. The leather was as soft as silk now, and the boots glowed like fresh conkers. I didn't have any proper football boots myself, of course, so I just wore my everyday ones, even though they were getting a bit tight and my feet would be rubbed raw by the time we went home.

Well, the ball would fly past me again and again and each time I'd run to get it from the middle of a bramble bush or someone's picnic, wherever it had landed, and pick it up, going "sorry, sorry, sorry", then kick it back to Dad before going back to my place in the goal. "Not tired yet?" he'd say, never waiting

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Here are three awesome facts about real-life football pioneer Lily Parr!

1. Started playing football when she was just 14 years old!
2. Scored over 1,000 goals in her career!
3. First woman inducted into the National Football Museum Hall of Fame!



ROCKETS



for a reply, and then he'd place the ball for another shot. I was tired, he knew that, but he also knew that I'd not stop until it got too dark to see and the park keeper went round ringing his bell to tell us that he was about to lock the gates for the night.

I missed and I missed and I missed, and my hands stung and my knees throbbed and my feet hurt and the ball still kept flying past me. And then, one day, just as the light was beginning to fade and dark green shadows were stretching out across the grass, it happened.

I've gone through it so many times in my mind since then that it'll be there for ever, scratched into my brain until the day I die. Dad placing the ball, walking back to take his run-up, limping slightly from his bad knee. Me, watching him. He's right-footed, my dad, though he can use his left when he wants. This time I knew he was going to use his right, I don't know how, but I knew. He ran up. His right leg went back and I saw, in that split second, his eyes flick over my left shoulder, and I knew. I knew exactly where the ball was going to go.

BOOF!

Dad's right foot struck the ball and I jumped. I threw myself up, arms outstretched, feeling like I was hanging there in the air for a second, and...

I had it. I caught it. I saved my first goal.

Dad was laughing and clapping. He came over to where I'd collapsed in a heap on top of the ball, and picked me up and put me on his shoulders, and we paraded around the park with me holding the ball on his head until the park keeper threw us out, so we went and had an ice cream in the kiosk outside the gates. I don't think I've ever felt so happy in my life.

It felt like a long time ago now, that day in the park when I saved my first goal. Before the war started, before my best friend's brother was killed.

Before I became a munitionette.

BUY THE BOOK!

Lily and the Rockets is an ace new book about football, wartime and friendship.

It was written by **Rebecca Stevens**, illustrated by **Harriet Taylor Seed** and published by **Chicken House Books**.

Pick it up in all good bookshops now!

