

Champions for the Sabbath

By Samantha McFadyen

When my rugby coach told our team that our quarter-final game in the national championship tournament was scheduled for a Sunday, all I could think was, “Why now?”

My team, the 2010 Brigham Young University women’s rugby team, had been preparing for the championship all season. We were looking forward to playing the team that had defeated us in the tournament the year before. I was confident we could win—we had some of the best players in the nation. We wanted to prove ourselves to the rugby world by winning a national championship, but it turned out that Heavenly Father had a different path for us.

Sticking to Our Standards

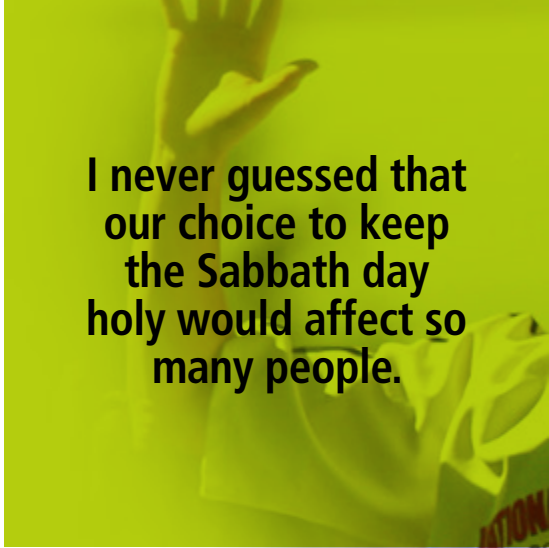
Tournament officials had assured us that our games would be scheduled on Friday and Saturday, but because of a mistake, the games were instead set for Saturday and Sunday.

We did not find out about the mistake until five days before the tournament, which was being held in Sanford, Florida, USA. Since women’s rugby was not an official BYU team at the time, the decision of whether to play or not was ours to make. We chose not to. It was a unanimous decision, and no one complained.

Playing on Sunday was not even an option. For me, it never had been. My parents taught me to keep the Sabbath day holy, and I honored that commandment my whole life. Obeying Heavenly Father’s commandments was more important than a rugby game.

But knowing that we were doing the right thing did not make it any easier. We were disheartened as we flew to Florida knowing that whether we won or lost, Saturday would be our last game.

After arriving in Florida, we received a call from a *New York Times* reporter who wanted to cover our story. We were stunned. We never



I never guessed that our choice to keep the Sabbath day holy would affect so many people.

expected anyone to care about our choice to honor the Sabbath, much less a national newspaper.

On Friday, at the time we would have been playing if the scheduling mistake hadn’t happened, we went to the Orlando Florida Temple to do baptisms for the dead. After we performed the ordinances, the temple president spoke to us. He pulled out an article that had been written about us and read some of the comments readers had posted online supporting our decision.

Later our coach read us more comments he had received. Latter-day Saints



and others thanked us for our example and told us that it was refreshing to see people sticking to their standards. Their words lifted our spirits. That is when we began to realize the impact that we could have even without becoming national champions.

I knew that Heavenly Father was aware of us, but I never thought anyone else was watching. The response to our decision gave us a new purpose for being in Florida: we weren't there to win, but to stick up for our standards.

A Better Path

Saturday came, and we won our game 46 to 7. Afterward we walked up to the officials and told them we forfeited the game we were scheduled to play on Sunday—which happened to be against the team that defeated us the year before. I was disappointed that our season ended this way. I wish we could have played this team, but I don't wish we played them, or anyone, on the Sabbath.



HONORING THE SABBATH DAY

"The Savior identified Himself as Lord of the Sabbath. It is His day! Repeatedly, He has asked us to

keep the Sabbath or to *hallow* the Sabbath day. We are under covenant to do so.

" . . . [We] simply ask [ourselves], 'What *sign* do I want to give to God?' That question [makes our] choices about the Sabbath day crystal clear. . . .

" . . . We know that wherever we live we are to be examples of the believers among our families, neighbors, and friends. True believers keep the Sabbath day holy."

President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Sabbath Is a Delight," *Ensign*, May 2015, 129–30, 132.

Dozens of articles were written about us, and we continued to get supportive letters and emails. By sticking up for our standards, we reached more people than we ever could have if we had won the championship.

I have learned to trust Heavenly Father to lead me to a better path than I have in mind for myself. My team wanted to prove ourselves by becoming champions, but now I realize that Heavenly Father wanted us to make a different point entirely. He led us to the opportunity to be examples when we thought no one was watching, and He was able to use us for good because we chose to obey. ■

The author lives in Washington, USA.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF WOMEN'S COUGAR RUGBY (BYU) AND PAUL MEYERS