



PLAY IT AGAIN, SAM

Playing goalie was one way Sam learned how to set goals.



When Sam (short for Samantha) Southwick started high school in Grand Blanc, Michigan, she wanted to be involved. She knew that the secret to having

a lot of fun in high school is to participate. She thought it would be either in cheerleading or playing on a sports team, but her plans didn't work out easily. "I tried out for basketball. I tried out for cheerleading. I don't know how many times I tried out for cheerleading, but finally I just stopped. Then I tried out for volleyball. It was fun, but I didn't even make the first cut."

Even in those moments of disappointment, Sam was a little bit proud of herself for following through and not quitting. But which was her sport? Where was she going to succeed? Repeatedly not making the team could have made her want to quit trying. But she kept on. Only now can she look back and see clearly what she needed to understand. "When you go into something with a positive attitude

and the will to do it, then it actually becomes a lot easier. I was going through some of this for the wrong reasons."

In Sam's junior year, some of her friends were playing lacrosse. Because she was always willing to try something new, she started learning about the game and began the conditioning. "My friends helped me, and I've loved lacrosse ever since. We joke that it's soccer in the air."

Even after making the lacrosse team, Sam still had some learning to do. At first, she wanted to play offense. "It's really fun to shoot on the goal and to make it. Everyone gets really excited. Offense is the glory place." But her team needed her on defense—in the goal in fact.

Playing goalie is a scary position. To block a shot, she would get hit hard by a small rubber ball. Sam freely admits that she wasn't

Sam had to brave hard shots from opposing offensive players. But success was sweet after learning how to deal with defeat.



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Sam's lacrosse team became some of her best friends. Mixing school friends in with her Church friends gave her a great deal of satisfaction as both sets learned to appreciate the good they found in each other. (Above right) Sam with her dad, Chris. (Below right) In the excitement of playing, Sam has come to appreciate the fun and friendship of being on a team as much as winning.



very aggressive when she started out. “And on defense you’re trying to make sure the other team does not score, so you feel worried and responsible.”

Sam can still give you a blow-by-blow account of her first game as the goalie. “I was standing there thinking, What have I gotten myself into? Then they came down, running straight at me. Our defense didn’t really know what they were doing because we were new. I just stood there gripping my stick so hard. I was saying to myself, Just move, just move. It was really nerve-racking. I don’t think I blocked the first shot, but after that it got easier. I learned that when those balls hit you during the game, it doesn’t bother you because you’re just so intense. But after the game, you really feel it. You get hit everywhere.”

The team tied that first game. But two games later, after their first loss, Sam took it hard. She appreciated her team’s being supportive because they knew she felt responsible. “Losing takes an emotional toll on the goalie,” says Sam.

How does she deal with the pressure? Sam says, “I’ve actually said prayers in my head. I’ll ask myself, ‘Why am I praying about a sport when there are other things you should be praying for?’ But when I’m in those moments, I know that God really will help me.”

Losing is not fun, but Sam has learned that the old saying “Winning isn’t everything,” is actually true. Her philosophy is that sports are for fun and for learning how to deal with other people. “You learn how to communicate better with people and how to talk with them and get along. What I have learned playing goalie has helped me at my job.” Sam works as a waitress and sometimes has to deal with difficult people.

Even when you lose, Sam says, you can still feel great. “If you lose and you played as well as you can, you feel good because you feel like you actually did something. Winning looks good on your record, but it’s all about what you learn and how to deal with it.”

For Sam, high school isn’t just about sports. She likes going to school and learning.

She confesses she actually likes chemistry, something she won't say out loud in the halls. And she loves starting her day in seminary. When her friends ask her what time she gets up and they hear her say, "Oh, 4:30 or 5:00," they're surprised. But for Sam, early-morning seminary is the best. "There are about eight different high schools in the Fenton Ward, so my Church friends are all spread out. When we get together, it's fun. We joke and laugh and have a good time. By the time I get to school, I'm wide awake.

"I'm actually trying to bring my school friends and Church friends together," she says. "At first they were hesitant about meeting, but now my school friends tell me that they like my friends. They like the wholesomeness about us. They just like the things we talk about."

During one game, Sam looked up into the stands and saw her parents sitting by her Young Women leader with two of her best friends from school and one of her friends from the ward. They were laughing, and Sam remembers being amazed and pleased. "The next day at school, that's all my friends could talk about—how nice this girl was and how she didn't use inappropriate language and didn't talk about vulgar things. I'm glad my Church friends can leave an impression like that. They'll remember that."

The hardest thing Sam had to learn in lacrosse was to cradle the ball, rocking the stick so the ball stays in the head, while running without dropping it. "The movement of your hands contradict each other, but after you get used to it, it just flows." For Sam, her experiences dealing positively with her friends, her schoolwork, and her sports have started to flow. Looking to the future, she won't drop the ball. **NE**

Find advice on self-confidence in Q&A, *New Era*, Mar. 1996, p. 17.



SAMANTHA'S PEBBLES

Sam's dad, Chris, has some precious possessions—six ordinary grey pebbles given to him by his daughter when she was little. Sam tells the story:

"I was about seven when my dad was going on a business trip for three days. He didn't travel often, and I was nervous that while he was gone he would forget us. I wanted to give him something to remind him of his wife, my two older brothers, me, and even our dog. I don't know what made me get the pebbles. I guess since I was in Primary, they taught me about the brother of Jared and his stones.

"I went outside and picked up six pebbles. I cleaned them off and put them in a paper towel. I took them upstairs and told him not to forget us while he was gone. I told him that each one was for a family member. It's a good thing I gave him six, because my youngest sister was born after that, and she took over the dog's pebble. I didn't think he would keep them forever. Now he talks about them all the time. He was excited that his little daughter understood the importance of families and how the Church is based on family. He still keeps them in his trinket box and takes them with him whenever he has to travel. I didn't know that as a seven-year-old I would have such an impact. It makes me feel kind of special as well."

