

NO BASKETBALL ON SUNDAYS

BY BRAD GREEN

I eagerly glanced down at the basketball summer league schedule, and saw to my dismay that 8 of the 12 games were on Sunday. What was I going to do? I don't play on Sunday.

I looked across the room at my talented teammate. I had worked so hard to win the starting forward position, and if I didn't play, I was going to lose the job to him. But I had decided a long time ago to never play on Sunday, and that wasn't about to change now.

The coach finished up his speech by saying, "Congratulations on making the team. The first practice is tomorrow at five. See you then."

The team slowly filed out the door as I sat nervously in my seat. I knew my course of action, but that wasn't going to make this any easier. I hesitantly walked up to the front of the room and said, "Hey coach, I have a little problem."

"What's that Brad?" he asked.

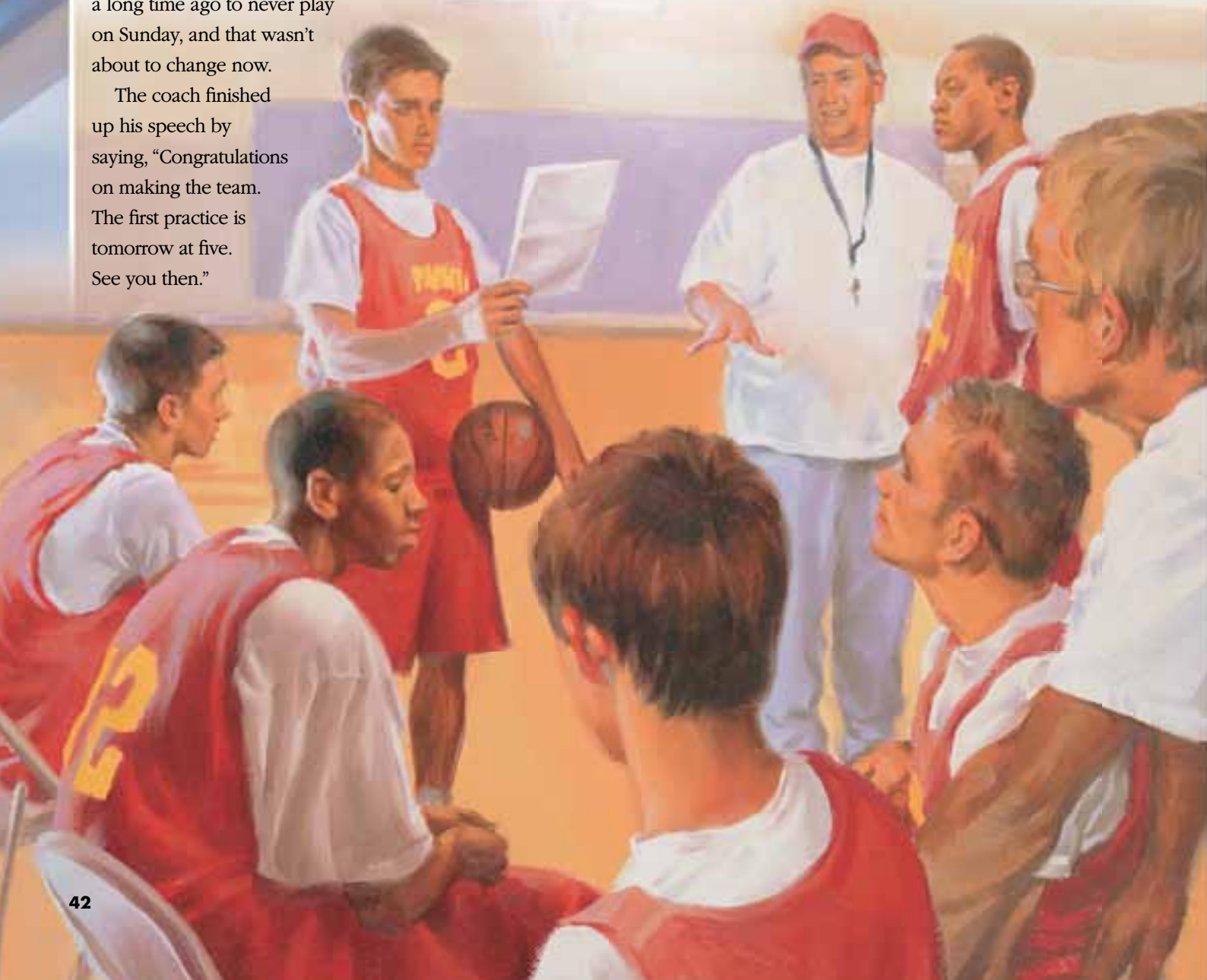
"Well, I was looking at the schedule, and I saw that there were eight games

on Sunday. I won't be able to play in those games," I said with a shaky voice.

"How come?" he asked with a surprised look on his face.

"It's a religious thing. I believe in keeping the Sabbath day holy and part of that is not playing sports on Sunday," I responded, feeling a little awkward with the situation.

"Okay, well listen. I would still love



to have you for the other games—that is if you still want to play,” he said with a smile.

“I would love to,” I said, and we shook hands as if to seal the agreement. I turned and walked out the door, feeling less awkward and more satisfied.

True, I wasn’t going to play for most of the league games and I might lose my starting position, but I felt good all the same. If I hadn’t made the decision early that I was never going to play on Sunday, I might have chosen differently. But I knew I would be blessed for keeping the Lord’s commandments. I confidently walked away from that room knowing that everything was going to be all right. **NE**

THE BEST COACH

BY HAHNA DANZ

During my freshman year in high school, I decided to join the track team. This choice required a lot of commitment because we practiced running every day for two hours after school. We also had to give up weekends to attend track meets. It was a tough but invigorating and rewarding sport.

One Wednesday after school we traveled two hours on the bus to attend a track meet. I had packed all my things but felt uneasy. Had I eaten right? Did I have good form? Should I do something to help me run better today? Questions and uncertainty filled my mind. My friend, Hayley, and I were in the first event. We were both

A CLOSE CALL

BY ANNA WAGNER

Two weeks after I got my driver’s license, my parents let me take the car for the whole day. I was ecstatic! I couldn’t wait to go driving around town. That morning in my prayers I had a strong feeling to pray for safety and that the Holy Spirit would guide and direct me. I hopped into the car and headed to town to do some shopping with my sister. I was surprised at how comfortable I felt driving. But I was uneasy. I had a feeling that at sometime during the day some sort of obstacle would be in the road and I would have to stop suddenly. I wondered if I was just nervous because it was my first time driving alone. I decided to drive slower than usual. I drove all day without incident but still had that

feeling.

When we headed home, it was dark out, and we had a 45-minute drive home in the country. I decided to drive about 5–10 miles under the speed limit. Just as I came around a bend, I saw a deer standing in the middle of the road. I had to quickly slam on my brakes to stop. I stopped a couple of feet in front of the deer, which just walked off, leaving us with our hearts pounding. I couldn’t believe how close it was. I know if I had not been warned by the Holy Ghost and had been going faster, I would have hit that deer. I am so grateful to have the Holy Ghost guiding and protecting me. **NE**

nervous. Quickly we went to our coach and asked, “Is there anything we can do right now to make us better?” He smiled and replied, “You should have asked me that on Monday.”

Being a good track runner requires preparation, and we felt foolish for not having asked this question before the big day came.

Track practice is like prayer. Sometimes we don’t want to do it every day; it can seem inconvenient and tiresome. Perhaps we’d rather be doing other things, or we feel like we don’t need it. But when “meet day” comes and there are trials ahead that we need to be strong enough to encounter, it may be too late to prepare

for them. We should ask for the Lord’s guidance every day so that He can help us to prepare for any obstacle placed before us. We can get strength and guidance from the Lord while we train and prepare rather than only at the times we need Him most. Then, when the adversary sends his “shafts in the whirlwind,” he will have “no power over you to drag you down . . . because of the rock upon which ye are built” (Helaman 5:12). We can receive strength from the ultimate coach, our loving Heavenly Father. I know that through daily prayer, obedience, and endurance, the Lord will prepare us to leap over any obstacle. **NE**



REFLECTIONS ON A HYMN

BY ELIZABETH ZIPPI

I attended the general Young Women broadcast in 2005 with my three sisters and our mom. Our family is from the Chicago area, and it was the first time we had been inside the Conference Center. I was amazed

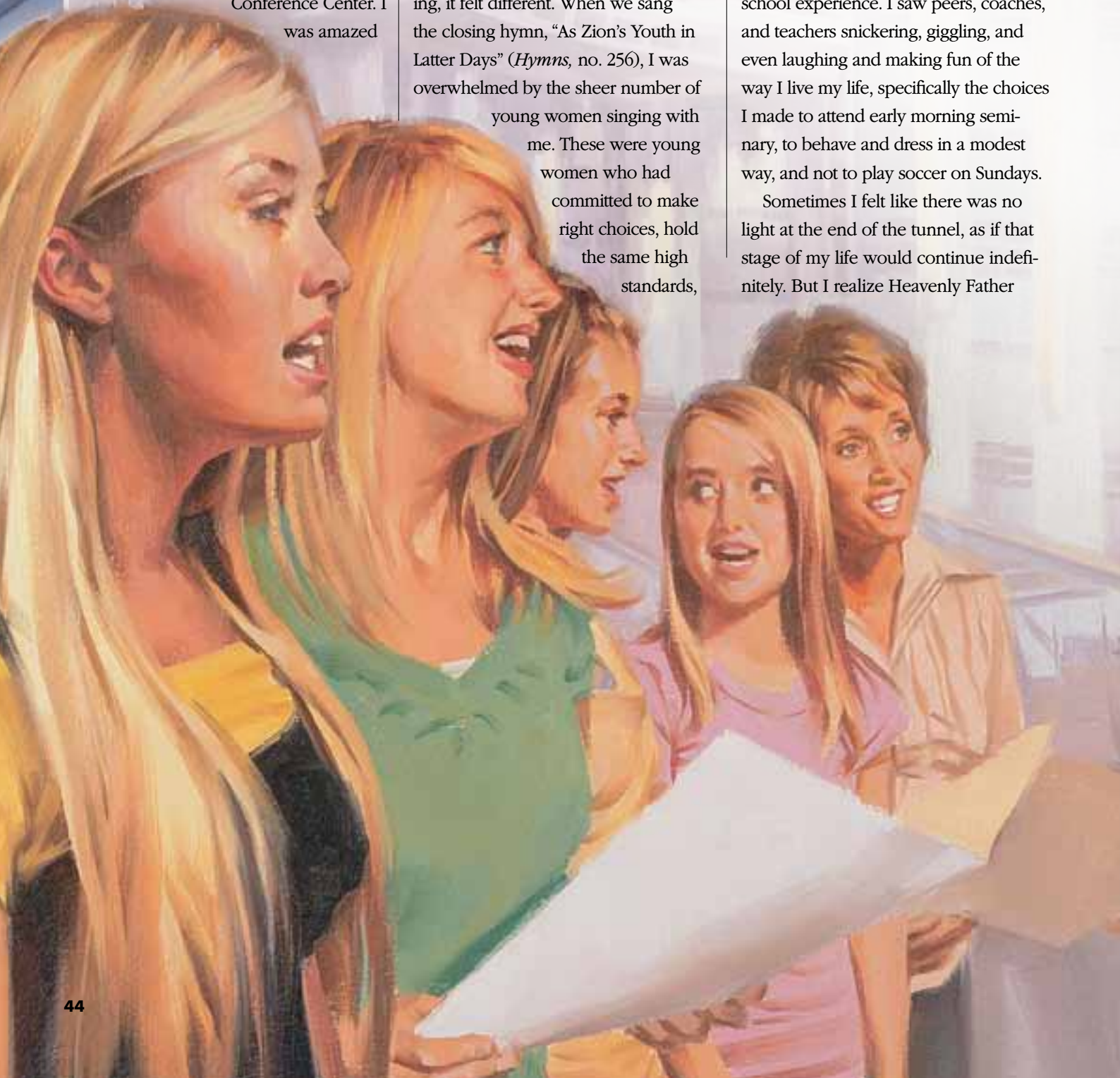
at how many young women were there together. I was used to watching the broadcast in a dark stake center with a few other young women and leaders.

This time, participating in the meeting, it felt different. When we sang the closing hymn, “As Zion’s Youth in Latter Days” (*Hymns*, no. 256), I was overwhelmed by the sheer number of young women singing with me. These were young women who had committed to make right choices, hold the same high standards,

and continue through life in faith.

The words of the second verse especially struck me. “The truths and values we embrace / Are mocked on ev’ry hand.” Immediately I thought of my high school experience. I saw peers, coaches, and teachers snickering, giggling, and even laughing and making fun of the way I live my life, specifically the choices I made to attend early morning seminary, to behave and dress in a modest way, and not to play soccer on Sundays.

Sometimes I felt like there was no light at the end of the tunnel, as if that stage of my life would continue indefinitely. But I realize Heavenly Father



gave me those experiences because He loves me, and that is enough. He knows what is best for me, and though I look back on my high school years with very few fond memories, I know it was when I built my own testimony. I learned to pray about anything and everything and to trust in my Savior. I decided for myself that the Lord and His Church are worth anything I have to sacrifice in order to stand up and be counted as a disciple of Christ. **NE**

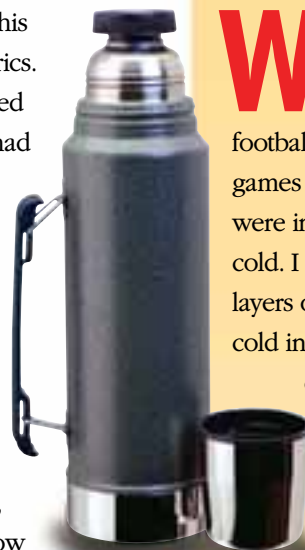
BEFRIENDING OUR CHURCH LEADERS

BY ASHLEY BLISS

It wasn't long ago that Lem Guluka became our new bishop. I had never met him before, so I had no strong feelings about his being called. He was a smart-looking man and a convert from Africa. He started performing his duties the very day we sustained him. He'd come to our lessons in Young Women and hold youth activities at his house. The first time he did this, most of the youth were still in the "getting to know you" stage. One of us asked what his favorite animal was. He replied, "The rooster." The rooster? I was surprised at such an odd response, and the others seemed to share this reaction. Then he broke into an imitation

of a rooster's strut. By this time, we were in hysterics. It was then that I realized how much his calling had really affected me.

I grew to love this man, my bishop, who could make us laugh and who was always there when we needed him. It made me think of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and how getting to know Him, as a convert myself, made a big difference in my life. Bishop Guluka is the most Christlike person I know. As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we gain testimonies by drawing closer to God and His Son. Likewise, by befriending our Church leaders, we can receive guidance. I learned that lesson through one of my most reliable friends—the bishop. **NE**



JUST ONE SIP

BY DAN BARKER

While in high school in Alberta, Canada, I went to watch our junior and senior football teams play back-to-back games in the city playoffs. The games were in late October, and it was very cold. I had applied a number of thick layers of clothes, but I became very cold into the second game. I was so cold that I was shivering.

The people behind me noticed I was cold and offered a hot drink of coffee from their thermos.

I was tempted as I saw the steam coming off the thermos and thought how good it would feel to warm my insides. It would only be one drink, and no one would know. Then I thought of my parents and teachers who had steered me straight and trained me to prepare for this situation. I could remember the lessons in family home evening, Sunday School, priesthood meetings, and seminary that taught me how freedom is gained by obeying our Father's commandments.

As the cup was being poured, I remembered previous mistakes, and the result of those mistakes on my life. I resolved to do the right thing. I thanked them for their offer but refused the coffee. As I walked home after the games, my heart felt light. I now understood better than ever the freedom gained from obedience to the commandments and what my parents, teachers, and the general authorities were trying so hard to teach me. **NE**

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