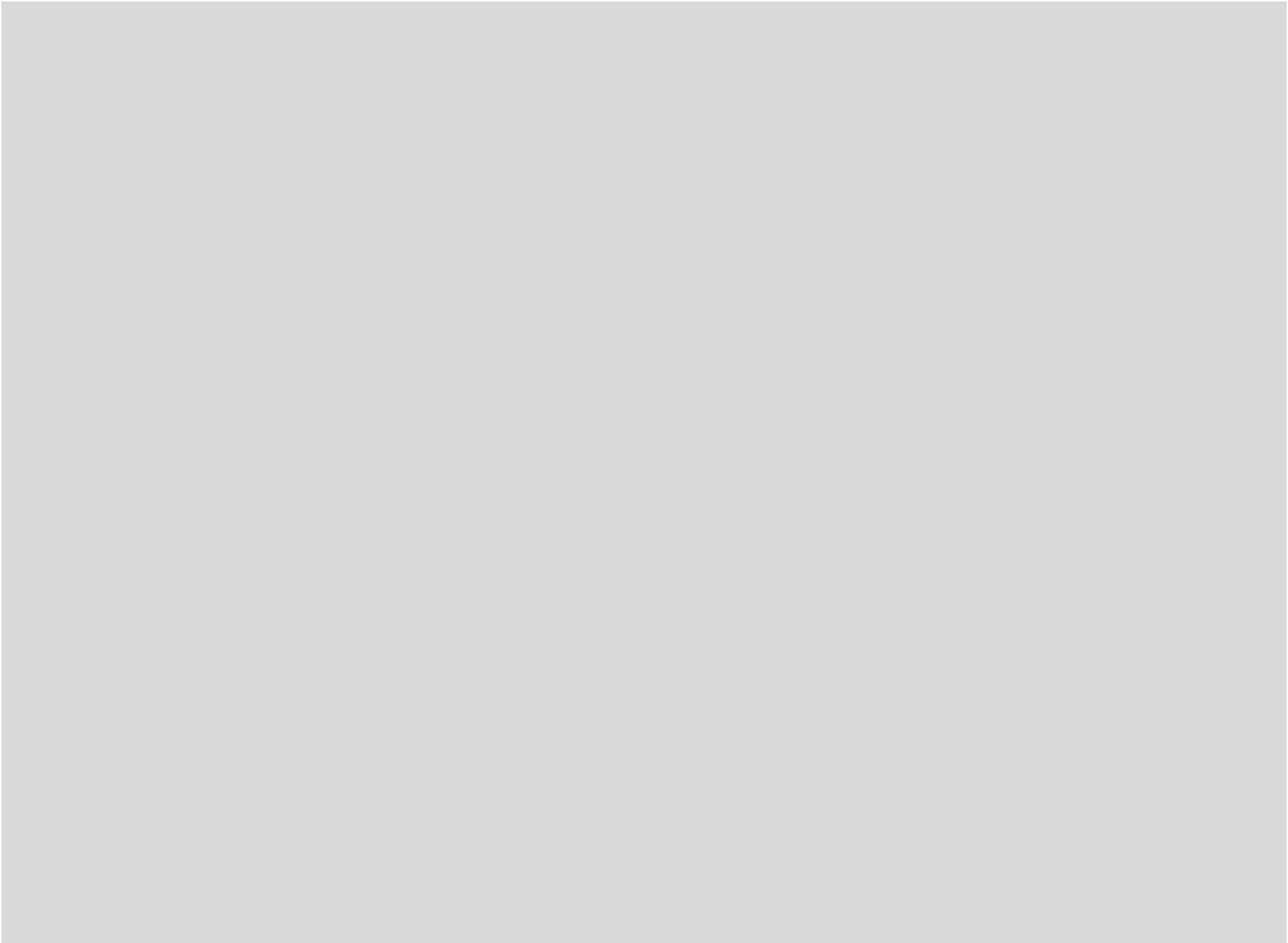




# PRESS ON

A CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE FOR SPORTS-LOVING TEENS





Dear

Editor

*Dear Editor,*

*I am writing to tell you that ever since I subscribed your magazine, all I have read in it is nonsense about sports. I want to read about pretty things, such as a warm sunset splashing color on the horizon, or drops of dew kissing soft pink flowers. Instead, all I read is about how this person has so much talent to bounce a big orange ball on the floor, and how that person is so good at hitting a little white ball with a stick. If you want to keep me as a customer, start writing about decent things that will interest your readers.*

*Sincerely,*

*Veronica Parkinson*

Dear Ms. Parkinson,

Thank you for your concern for our magazine and its readers. I apologize that our magazine did not meet your expectations. However, I feel obliged to inform you that our magazine is intended to be read by people who enjoy sports. With your best interests at heart, I have come to the conclusion that according to your letter, you may enjoy reading a nature magazine. I again apologize that our magazine did not meet your expectations and for any inconvenience this might have caused.

Sincerely,

Jack Williams, Editor In Chief

## West Stadium

**S**tanding so high, so regal and tall  
**T**he West Stadium always fills me with awe  
**A**nyone can see it from a good  
**D**istance away,  
**I**t's an  
**U**nbelievable view  
**M**any will say.

## With the Game on the Line

A Haiku

The Chiefs had first and  
goal and Smith made a pass that  
a defender caught.

## GAMEDAY GRANOLA

3 cups old fashioned oats  
3 tablespoons oil  
3 tablespoons maple syrup  
2 tablespoons honey  
1 tsp vanilla  
Pinch of salt

Pre-heat oven to 300. In large bowl, combine all ingredients and stir until well combined. Line a baking sheet with foil and spray with non-stick cooking spray. Pour granola mixture onto baking sheet and bake for 15 minutes. Stir granola and bake an additional 10-15 minutes or until golden brown. Let granola cool for 20 minutes. Enjoy as is or add dried fruit, nuts, or chocolate chips to the cooled granola for an extra special game day treat.

\*Helpful tip: when measuring oil and honey, measure the oil first, one tablespoon at a time, alternating with the honey. This will help keep honey from sticking to the measuring spoon.

# Coming a Long Way

As John Keller waited with the rest of the marching band to take the field for pregame, he couldn't help but feel sad knowing it was the last time he would play his snare drum for the home crowd. Having spent four years practicing and playing for the Kansas State University Marching Band, it was difficult saying good-bye to something that had become a special part of his life. Standing there, waiting to start the cadence and for the band to walk onto the field, John began to look back on the past few years. He thought of all the memories he had, and would have for the rest of his life.

John's band career at K-State started when he was a freshman. He had been working hard preparing for the auditions, and hoping that his efforts were enough that he could play the snare drum in the band. It was rare that a freshman got to play snare drum, simply because it was so difficult. But that didn't stop John

from trying. His efforts paid off. He got the snare drum!

Yet to play it required a lot of work. Despite countless hours of extra practice time, John had difficulty keeping up with the juniors and seniors that played the other snare drums. In the end, he had been moved to the cymbals. John remembered the immense disappointment he'd felt when he was told the news of the transition. It had definitely been a humbling experience. But now, looking back, John felt as though the switch was good. Adversity produces character.

John also remembered intensely waiting for the audition results his sophomore year, desperately wanting to know if he got the snare drum back. After what felt like hours, the announcements came through. He'd done it! He'd earned the snare drum back!

It wasn't just losing the snare drum and having to gain it back that John remembered from the past several years. Another unforgettable memory about being in the band was the pregame routine.

Every game day started with getting to the field with his fellow percussionists an hour earlier than

the remainder of band. Knowing how important it was for the drum line to not make mistakes, the percussionists always arrived at the stadium early to practice. John remembered many game days where he had to be at the field by six in the morning. He would stumble out of bed before dawn to make it to the field on time so the whole drum line could practice before the rest of the band arrived. Many mornings it was so cold they could see their breath. But it was all worth it.

After the rest of the band arrived and everyone practiced together for about another hour and a half, the whole band would trek over to Bramlage Coliseum to hang out and eat lunch. The lunches typically consisted of pizza or sandwiches ordered the day before. Despite anyone's best efforts, it was understandably very difficult to keep ready-made food fresh overnight. John smiled. He could still taste the cardboard pizza, and feel the soggy sandwiches in his fingers.

Some of John's favorite memories he had were from the Holiday Bowl. K-State went to that bowl game his sophomore year. From touring an aircraft carrier to having pep rallies at Disneyland, the Holiday

Bowl had made sure the bands on both sides had a blast!

Just then, the cue came to start the cadence and march onto the field. As John played and listened to the wild cheering of the fans, he came to a conclusion. *The best part of being in the band, he thought, is being a part of something so big, and so exciting!* He sure had come a long way since he first marched onto the field over four years ago.

Yes, John did come a long way in the four years he played in the band at K-State. And he's come a long way since then. I'm so blessed to have him as my dad!

# In the School Hallway

As Lillian walked down the hall of Sun River Middle School, she spotted a new poster on the bulletin board. *Cheerleading tryouts 7 pm Tuesday, it announced. Go Tigers!*

Behind her, Lillian heard a familiar mocking voice.

“You can’t honestly be thinking about trying out, can you?” It was Emma, her all time arch-nemesis. Emma was very athletic and very talented when it came to any sport. Lillian was not, and Emma enjoyed torturing her because of it.

“Actually, I was going to do just that,” Lillian informed her. She sounded more confident than she felt.

“You?” Emma stared at her in disbelief. “But you’ve tried and failed nearly every sport the school has to offer! Do you think this will be any different?”

Lillian tossed her head and stalked off. What Emma had said was true. Because she was jealous of Emma’s athleticism, Lillian had tried nearly every sport the school had to offer, yet without much success. *Cheerleading, she thought, is something I’ve never tried before! Maybe this is finally the sport I have a talent for!*

\* \* \*

The night of the tryouts arrived. Lillian tried as hard as hard as she could to do all of the moves the coach showed

the girls. Yet at the end of the evening, she had never felt so discouraged. She had not done well at all, and Emma had teased her mercilessly about it. Lillian promised herself she would play her saxophone when she got home. Playing and writing music was always a comfort after a hard day.

The next morning, several girls were gathered around the bulletin board, twittering excitedly about the results of the tryouts that were posted there. Lillian tried to slip past without being noticed, but Emma didn’t give her a chance.

“Hey, Lillian, it’s too bad you didn’t make the cheerleading squad! Otherwise I may actually have been proven wrong, and you would have shown me you can do a sport!” she called out, and the other girls snickered.

Lillian’s eyes burned with tears as she darted past the girls. *If I have time, I’ll visit Grandma after school today, she told herself. That will make me feel better.*

\* \* \*

After finishing her homework and letting Mom know where she was going, Lillian walked down the street to her grandmother’s house.

“Why hello, Lillian, how nice to see you!” Grandma greeted her. “Sit down, and I’ll make hot cocoa.”

“Thanks!” Lillian panted. “It’s really cold and windy outside.”

She sat down at the table and watched as Grandma mixed up the cocoa and placed a steaming mug in front of

her. Grandma seated herself across from her with her own cup of cocoa.

“Are you okay?” she asked. “You’re unusually quiet.”

Lillian held back tears as she told Grandma about Emma, how she wanted to prove she had a talent for sports like Emma, and how she had tried nearly every sport the school offered. “How can I show everyone I have a talent for sports if I fail every sport I try?” she asked tearfully.

Grandma sipped her cocoa in silence. She was quiet long after Lillian was done talking.

“Lillian,” she finally said. “What are talents for?”

Lillian was taken aback by the question. “Well . . . . I don’t know. I never really thought about having talents for a specific reason other than, like, your talents are what you’re known for, and good for.”

“Who gives us talents?” Grandma asked.

“Why, God of course,” Lillian answered. “He made us, after all.”

“Right,” Grandma replied. “Do you know why God gives us talents?”

Lillian shook her head.

“God gives us talents so we can bring glory to Him,” Grandma told her. “And He gives us talents so we can use them to accomplish His will and fulfill His plan for our lives. And Lillian,” she added, “His plan for you is different from His plan for Emma.”

Lillian stared into her cocoa, pondering what Grandma had just said. A wave of shame washed over her as she realized that wanting desperately to be like Emma instead of herself was practically telling her perfect God that He made a mistake. She looked up at Grandma with tears in her eyes. “I don’t know why I didn’t see that before now!” she exclaimed.

“God made you, Lillian, with a talent for music,” Grandma said with a smile.

“I’m tired of being jealous of Emma,” Lillian declared. “And I’m going to tell her that at school tomorrow!”

\* \* \*

Lillian found Emma in the hallway at school the next morning. Gathering up her courage, she said boldly, “Emma, I’ve been envious of you and your talent for sports. That’s why I’ve been trying to find a sport I was good at.” Taking a deep breath, she continued. “My grandma told me that God gives us talents to fulfill His plan for our lives, and His plan for you is different than His plan for me.” She paused. “What I want to say is, I’m sorry for being jealous of you. I’d – I’d love to be friends.”

To Lillian’s shock, Emma began to cry. “All this time,” she sobbed, “I was jealous of you, and your talent for music. You’re one of the best musicians in the school orchestra. I teased you because I wanted to feel like I was better than you.” She wiped her eyes and smiled. “Yes,” she said softly. “I would love to be friends.”

Lillian grinned as they walked arm in arm down the hallway to class.

## POSTSEASON DRAMA

The Royals hadn't played in the postseason  
Since the year 1985.

Till in 2014, they earned a Wild Card berth,  
Left the drought's number of years 29.

They fell behind in the Wild Card game,  
Found themselves losing 7-3 in the 8<sup>th</sup>.  
Till they came roaring back, then in the 12<sup>th</sup>  
They defeated the Oakland A's.

Next up were the Los Angeles Angels.  
Their record was best in baseball.  
Yet against all odds the Royals did sweep them.  
Somehow forcing the Angels to fall.

In the ALCS, they faced the Orioles,  
The team with the most home runs.  
But the Royals on fire, they swept them as well!  
Oh wow, now isn't this fun!

For now they were headed to the World Series!  
Never count out the underdog team!  
Yet would midnight strike on Cinderella?  
(This question was pondered in the league.)

Then in the Series a dogfight erupted  
Between the Royals and Giants.  
Until, oh what a marvelous thrill,  
The Royals did force a Game 7.

Then with 2 outs in the bottom of the 9<sup>th</sup>  
And down by only one run,  
Tying run on 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Royal's catcher popped out.  
Alas, the Giants had won.

## Just Wait Till Next Season. . . . .

After sweeping their way through  
the 2014 playoffs, only to just barely  
lose to the San Francisco Giants in  
the World Series, the Kansas City  
Royals played through the 2015  
season with a vengeance.

Overcoming odds, key injuries, and  
even a few family deaths, the Royals  
ended the regular season with the  
best record in the American League.  
They would go on to defeat the  
Houston Astros in the American  
League Division Series, beat the  
Toronto Blue Jays for their second  
straight American League  
Championship, and finally defeat  
the New York Mets for their first  
World Series title in 30 years.

## THERE ONCE WAS A BASEBALL

There once was a baseball named Pat  
Who decided to ride on a bat.  
He sat down on the thing  
Then began wondering,  
“Perhaps the bat’s tire is flat.”

### The Game’s End

Fans watch  
In suspense as  
The ball sails closer and  
Closer and over the wall . . . a  
Home run.

## My Top Three 2015 World Series Moments

### #3: Esky’s Inside the Park Home Run

In Game 1 of the 2015 World Series, Matt Harvey started for the New York Mets. Taking the mound in the 1<sup>st</sup> inning, he faced the Royals leadoff hitter, shortstop Alcides Escobar. All postseason, Escobar had been swinging at the first pitch. This time wasn’t any different. Esky hit the ball deep into left center field, and outfielders Michael Conforto and Yoenis Cespedes misplayed the hit. Cespedes accidentally kicked the ball and it rolled toward the wall, allowing Escobar to score easily.

### #2: Johnny Cueto’s Complete Game

After coming off of a horrible start in Toronto during the ALCS, Cueto bounced back in an awesome way. He gave up just two hits and one run for a 9-inning complete game in Game 2 of the 2015 World Series.

### #1: Hosmer’s Mad Dash

Matt Harvey took the mound again in Game 5, which was an elimination game, seeing how the Royals led the series 3-1. Harvey threw 8 shutout innings and convinced his manager to let him pitch the 9<sup>th</sup>. The Mets had a 2 run lead, but it wasn’t enough. KC scored a run, then had first baseman Eric Hosmer on third with one out and catcher Salvador Perez at the plate. Perez hit a ground ball that Mets third baseman David Wright fielded and threw to first for the out. As soon as he turned to make the throw, Hosmer sprinted for home. The throw to the plate flew to the backstop and Hosmer was safe. The Royals later won the game in 12 innings for their first World Series championship in 30 years.

# COUNT IT ALL JOY

Isabella's face burned as Maryanne's laughing voice echoed through the gym, "Of course your father doesn't love you if you make silly mistakes like that! Letting the volleyball drop right in front of you! You sure are lucky that it might not end up mattering."

Isabella turned to face her teammate. "He may have not spoken to me since he and Mom got divorced six years ago," she answered softly, "but Christy helped show me that I have a Heavenly Father who loves me." She smiled. "Jesus even helped me to forgive my father for ignoring me!"

Maryanne snorted. "I'm glad Christy moved three towns away, so that she doesn't mislead the rest of us!"

Isabella pushed all thoughts of her father from her mind. Right now she needed to focus on the game, and her job of defensive specialist in the back row. Here their team was, only one point away from a win in the semifinals in a national volleyball tournament!

As Isabella took her position on the court after the timeout, she glanced at her mom, who was sitting alone in the bleachers as always.

The serve came whizzing over the net. Isabella made a dig to pass it to the setter. The setter set up Maryanne, who hit it in the corner beyond the defenders to receive the final point. The girls all shrieked with delight. They were headed to the championship!

\* \* \*

After practice on Monday, the girls were all twittering with excitement, wondering what the JCA Lions would be like, and how it would feel to play in the championship.

"My little sister and some of her friends are making several cool navy and silver posters to cheer us on," Janet informed everyone. "I saw the ones they've already made. They're awesome! They say things like 'Let's Go LMS!' and 'Beat 'em Bulldogs!' It makes me wish the game was sooner than Saturday!"

Maryanne elbowed Isabella. "Both of my parents are planning on coming to watch. How about yours, Isabella?"

Isabella flushed. "My mom's planning on coming," she replied in her soft spoken way. "I don't think my dad can, though."

"Can, or will?" Maryanne questioned.

"I don't know," Isabella quietly answered.

"He's your father," Maryanne responded. "Surely you know whether or not he wants to come to your volleyball game."

"I don't know," Isabella said again. An idea was beginning to form in her head. "But I bet I could find out."

\* \* \*

\* \* \*

As the bus pulled up in front of her house, Isabella began to feel nervous. She had no idea what to say to Mom. She got off the bus and walked up the driveway onto the front porch. Taking a deep breath, she opened the front door. At first glance, the house appeared to be empty. *Maybe she's still at work*, Isabella thought hopefully.

Just then Mom came in from the kitchen. "Hello," she greeted Isabella. "How was your day?"

"Good," Isabella answered. Mustering up her courage, she began, "Mom, I was wondering....Could I invite Dad to the game on Saturday?" She hurried on before Mom could argue. "I know you don't want to see him, and you wouldn't have to sit with him or anything, I just want to talk to him, and at least invite him to my game, because he is my father, and he should at least know that I'm playing in the championship of a national tournament...." Isabella's voice trailed off as she blinked back tears.

"Alright," Mom sighed. "Let me give you his phone number."

Moments later, Isabella was seated on her bed. She fidgeted impatiently as she waited for someone to answer the phone.

"Hello?"

Isabella's heart leaped. "Hi Dad, it's me, Isabella."

"Isabella?" Dad sounded baffled. "Why are you calling me?"

Taking a deep breath, Isabella began, "My volleyball team is playing in a national tournament, and we are playing in the championship on Saturday, at the rec center in

the state capital. I wanted to invite you to come."

There was silence. Then Dad finally sighed, "Look, Isabella, weekends are when I hang out with friends and enjoy myself. In case you didn't know, I have to work Monday through Friday every week. And I don't want to watch volleyball this weekend."

"Okay," Isabella answered quietly.

"Goodbye Isabella." Dad hung up.

Isabella looked at the phone in her hand in distress. She buried her face into her pillow and cried.

\* \* \*

At school that week, Isabella couldn't seem to concentrate on anything. She couldn't shake the hurt feeling she had whenever she thought of her father. Practices didn't go much better.

"I got it!" Janet called as Maryanne's serve came flying over the net. Isabella heard her call it, but determined to prove herself after a countless number of mistakes, Isabella went after the ball anyway.

*Wham!* The girls collided and Isabella's wrist was bent awkwardly between her and the floor.

Janet scrambled to her feet. "I'm alright!" she hollered. She peered down at Isabella, who was grimacing as she held her wrist. "Are you okay?"

"My arm!" Isabella gasped. "It hurts so badly!"

\* \* \*

The next day at school, Janet came up to Isabella. "I am so sorry! Is your arm broken or just sprained?"

Isabella looked down at the bright pink cast on her left arm. “The doctor said it’s broken,” she answered quietly. “And it’s not your fault we ran into each other. I should have let you get the ball, since you were calling for it.”

“Can I sign your cast?” Janet asked.

“Sure,” Isabella responded.

Janet pulled a pen out of her pocket, and wrote carefully on Isabella’s cast. “Thanks!” she exclaimed. She dropped the pen back into her pocket. “I’d better get to class. See you later today?” she questioned.

Isabella sighed. “I don’t think so,” she replied softly. “But I’ll see you Saturday at the game.” *I just wish Dad was coming*, she thought to herself.

“Sounds good.” Janet waved as she walked away.

Isabella glanced down at her cast. There, written in small print, were the words,

*You are a great teammate! Because of your shining example, I have given my life to Jesus. Get well soon!*

— Janet

\* \* \*

That night, Isabella had never felt more discouraged or upset. She decided to call Christy and ask her a question.

“Hello?”

“Hi, Christy, it’s Isabella.”

“Hi, Isabella! How have you been?”

Tears filled Isabella’s eyes. “Not good. People say I’m a joyful person, but I’ve felt anything but this past week. . . .”

“What’s been going on?” Christy asked.

Isabella told Christy about going to the championship, Maryanne teasing her, calling her father, feeling hurt toward her father all week, and breaking her arm.

“That *is* a *really* rough week,” Christy agreed. “Are you sure nothing good happened other than winning the semifinals of the tournament?”

“Well, not exactly.” Isabella softly began with a smile on her face. “My teammate Janet gave her life to Jesus, and she said it was because of my example.”

“Praise the Lord!” Christy exclaimed. “See, Isabella, you are being a light for Jesus even if you don’t realize it!”

“But, Christy,” Isabella choked back tears. “How can I be joyful when bad things happen?”

Christy was silent for a moment. “I agree it’s very difficult,” she finally sighed. “Once when I was having a hard time being joyful, my mom told me to look up Philippians 4:4. Here, let me get my Bible and read it to you. Philippians 4:4 says, “Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again, rejoice!””

“But how?” Isabella asked.

“Listen to James 1:2-4: ‘Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.’”

“Wow!” Isabella exclaimed. “So the Bible says to rejoice in the Lord *always*, and to rejoice when you go through trials because it makes you stronger in your faith!”

“Yep!” Christy answered. “And I’ve found that one way to feel joyful is to focus on what you have to be thankful for. It’s hard to be

gloomy when you're thinking about what God has done for you."

Isabella began to feel a sort of anticipation. "Christy, can we pray together, that God will help me be joyful and thank Him for all he's given me?"

"Of course!" Christy exclaimed.

That night Isabella went to bed feeling more joyful than ever.

\* \* \*

\* \* \*

Saturday dawned bright and sunny. As Mom was dropping Isabella at the rec center, Isabella noticed a man standing by the front entrance of the building. Mom gasped.

"What is it?" Isabella asked.

"That man by the door!" Mom exclaimed. "He's your father!"

Isabella let out a glad cry. As soon as she said goodbye to Mom, she was off and running toward the building.

"Isabella!" Dad exclaimed as she ran up to him. "I've been waiting for you to arrive!"

"What made you change your mind?" Isabella asked excitedly.

"After your phone call, I got to thinking, and a friend of mine agreed with me, that you were my daughter, and you deserve to be treated better than I've been giving you. So I decided that I would take this weekend and come watch your game and hang out with you." He patted her shoulder, and for the first time, he noticed her cast. "Isabella, what happened?" he asked.

"It happened on Thursday, during practice," Isabella murmured. "I'm sorry you can't see me play."

"Don't worry about it," he told her gruffly. "I'm just glad I can spend the weekend with you." He cleared his throat. "Do you think you could tell me what makes you so happy, and why you don't hate me despite all I've done?"

Isabella's face broke into a grin. "Absolutely!" she agreed.

The two of them walked hand in hand into the rec center.

Dear George,  
I've been following March Madness for years now. I enjoy filling out a bracket after studying participating teams, and cheering on my Final Four and Elite Eight teams. All the fun in March has got me wondering; is there a trick to filling out a perfect bracket?

Sincerely,  
Joe Jones

# Dear George

Dear Mr. Jones,

There are three approaches to filling out a perfect bracket, and you could use more than one. The first approach is to look at history, such as how different seeds do in different matchups. As a few examples, 1) a 16 seed has never beat a 1 seed in the Round of 64, and 2) all four 1 seeds have reached the Final Four only once, in 2008.

Another approach you could take is to look at the current season. You could research who is the hottest team coming in, or whether or not they have a large momentum factor. You also could research how each team has handled the big games against good teams, or what each team's strengths and weaknesses are (do they have a stellar defense, or high 3-point percentage, etc.)

The final approach to take is to go with your gut. Since 1985, a total of three 14 or 15 seeds have made it to the Sweet Sixteen, and four times a double-digit seed has reached the Final Four. It certainly can be unpredictable. That's why they call it madness!

Sincerely,  
George