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If at First You Don't Succeed

Emily Goldberg
NSU University School

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If at First You Don't Succeed...

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Emily Goldberg

How hard is it to kick a black and white ball? Is it more difficult than finding vectors, writing research papers, or solving quadratic equations? I have gone through almost 12 years of school without ever kicking a ball. But, this year I decided to try something new: soccer.

My athletic friends thought I was crazy. They emphatically stated, "Emily, you can't play soccer. First, you don't have soccer socks. Second, soccer requires an immense time commitment. Third, there is a distinct difference between softball and soccer. Fourth, you're a senior..." The list continued. Nevertheless, I was adamant and confidently responded, "First, I can buy socks. Second, I *am* willing to make a commitment. Third, I understand the difference; softball requires a glove while soccer requires a foot. Fourth, it doesn't matter that I'm a senior because I am certainly too old to try new things."

For the next two weeks, I put on my soccer clothes and marched onto the field with a bottle of water in hand. I practiced running, scoring, kicking and dribbling every day after school until dusk. I was determined to prove to the coaches, my friends, and myself that I could play soccer.

Then came Judgment Day. I was confident that the coaches were noticeably impressed by my athletic soccer prowess and would pronounce me the newest, yet oldest, member of the team. My position as a soccer player was in the bag! However, as I approached the wall that displayed the 2001 girl's varsity soccer roster, I felt my confidence gradually turn into apprehension and then fear. What if I didn't make the team? I quickly ran my finger down the list – Cooperdoot, Farberwager, Gelfenstein, Hanoverwitz. They forgot Goldberg. I looked again, this time slowly and meticulously. Still, my name did not appear. Failure! I had not made the team. I had tried something new and had failed.

Before that dismal day, I had always achieved and often surpassed my goals. In elementary school I received a Florida Young Playwrights Award, presented by Pulitzer-Prize winning playwright, Edward Albee, for my play *Three Geeks and a Nerd*. In middle school, I auditioned for a role in a community theater production of *The Children's Hour* by Lillian Hellman. I got the part. In high school, I participated in Outward Bound, a four-day Everglades survival program, and progressed to Tribe West, a four-week summer camp program filled with physical challenges that included camping, hiking the Grand Canyon, rock climbing, cliff jumping, whitewater rafting and caving. This year, however, I experienced what my younger chess-playing sister would have said what defeated: "Sometimes, you have to move a piece backward in order to move a step forward."

As a senior in high school, I have learned that I may not always meet all of my expectations and sometimes I may be disappointed with certain outcomes, as in my soccer career. Nevertheless, I will continue to try new things. I may or may not reach my goals, but at least I will have tried. After all...how hard is it to swim a lap?