

Even though Brazil is green with trees, when the Brazilian soccer team plays, all people can see is yellow—the bright yellow of the fans’ jerseys. In Brazil, the people are crazy about soccer. Homes fill with friends crowding around the game on the TV. Streets stream with people. Restaurants overflow with fans. It’s crazy (in a fun way). And this is where our third kid-athlete, Amanda, grew up learning to play soccer.



In Brazil, even if kids don’t have a soccer ball, they make one. They’ll roll up socks or paper, or even use cans. They’ll use shoes as goal posts and will challenge each other one-on-one all the time to see who’s the best. Most kids want to play whenever they can. For Amanda, she’s fortunate to have a soccer goal next to her home. With an older brother and a younger sister who both love soccer too, the three siblings take turns hour after hour, learning new moves and trying them out on each other. Her little sister plays goalkeeper, diving sideways, stretching out to block shots. Her brother is the best player and challenges Amanda to competitions. Passing, shooting, dribbling, defending—they practice it all. At dinnertime, their parents either join them or call them in to eat and send them out again after schoolwork is finished.

SO, WHAT HAPPENS WHEN AMANDA PRACTICES SOCCER OVER AND OVER AGAIN? SIMPLE: SHE GETS BETTER AND BETTER AND BETTER. Now, Amanda plays forward for her school on one of the elite girls’ soccer teams in her city. She’s a top scorer because of how much she’s practiced. And what does it sound like when you score a goal in Brazil?

The fans cheer,
“GOL-AZ-000000000000!”



She’s hoping to yell that same cheer when her favorite team, the Gallos (the Roosters), play against their big rivals, Crucero (the Crosses), the other team in her city. Her family will gather at her grandparents’ house, the entire group wearing their striped black and white jerseys. They’ll eat, drink coffee and soda, and stay on their toes hoping to scream at the top of their lungs . . . “GOL-AZ-000000000000!”

AMANDA SCORES WITH PRACTICE.



CHARACTER QUESTIONS

1. What’s your favorite thing to practice?
2. What activity do you want to improve in the most, and what can you do to get better?

CHARACTER PLAY

It takes 10,000 hours to become an “expert” at something but just one practice session to get better.

DID YOU KNOW?

Brazil has the most men’s World Cup wins with 5. Germany and Italy are tied for second with 4 each.

ATHLETE SPOTLIGHT

In addition to soccer, Amanda also plays basketball and volleyball for her school.

WORLD WORDS

From the trees around Amanda’s school, small monkeys (*macaquinhos*) will peer into classrooms. For short, students will call them *mee-koo*s, as in, “A mee-koo stole my homework.”





CHARACTER COUNTS!



ACADEMIC DOMAIN - ENGAGEMENT IN LEARNING

Students accept and demonstrate personal responsibility for their education and are fully engaged in all aspects of the learning process.

Amanda wants to become a great soccer player but her team doesn't practice every night. So instead of waiting until the next practice to improve, she practices every night with her brother and sister. Amanda has learned that she needs to take personal responsibility for achieving her goals.

ACADEMIC DOMAIN - CREATIVITY SKILLS

Students demonstrate creativity and ingenuity by being original (creating something that is new or novel), flexible (willingness and ability to shift perspective), open-minded (ability to "think outside the box" and embrace new experiences and fresh and unique ideas) and practical (ability to put creative ideas into action).

In Brazil, not everyone lives near a soccer field. So, some kids make goal posts out of shoes. These kids are using creativity to find a way to play soccer.

CHARACTER DOMAIN - RESPECT

Students treat every individual with respect and judge others on their character and ability without regard to race, religion, sexual orientation, political ideology, gender, age, or other physical or personal characteristics based on the belief that all individuals are worthy and that their well-being and dignity is important simply because they are fellow human beings.

Sometimes boys and girls are treated differently in sports, but Amanda's brother treats her with respect and practices with her every night.

CHARACTER DOMAIN - FAIRNESS

Students strive to be fair and just in all their actions by

1. taking turns;
2. playing by the rules;
3. giving due credit to others;
4. asking for and taking only their fair share (i.e., what is due them)

They never:

1. cheat;
2. claim credit for the work of others;
3. recklessly or falsely blame or accuse others; or
4. take advantage of another's mistakes or ignorance (even when they think they can get away with it or that the other person deserves it).

Each night Amanda and her brother and sister take turns practicing different soccer skills. It would be easy to leave the youngest sister out but instead they choose to split up time with the ball fairly.