

# Star Wars

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Football is the main activity for Drew (7) and his brother Ethan (9). The boys are involved in various mid-week training sessions as well as playing competitively on Saturdays and Sundays in small-sided matches at the W Academy and Carolside Sports Club (Clarkston)

After school on Thursday afternoons, Drew's football training starts at five o'clock.

But he is engrossed, playing a Star Wars game on his iPad.

'Right, Drew, time to get ready for footie training.'

'But Grampa I'm too busy fighting the Aliens and I'm nearly up to level five.'

'No Drew, now please. **Look at the time!**

'Aw Grampa, I just need time to finish this level.'

'Come on. Over here, I'll help you get changed.'

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In the car heading to the mid-week W Academy training session, we talk about his Easter holiday to Tenerife.

'Now Drew, when you are on holiday, always turn your undies 'outside in' when you go to bed so you can use them for the next day. Saves space on packing and cuts down on laundry. But remember, always check for skid marks.'

From the back of the car Drew exploded:

'**SKID MARKS!** How would I get skid marks on my underpants. Did they fall under a car or something?'

'No, not tyre skid marks. No, skid marks on underpants are stains from not wiping your bottom properly.'

'I always wipe my bottom properly.'

'Good for you. So, no skid marks, no worries which mean you'll only need five pairs of undies for your holiday, not ten.'

'You want me to put on old undies? Ugh! NO WAY!'

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It is March 2023; we are at the five-asides pitches at Rouken Glen Park. I am huddled with other parents and grandparents, watching from outside the enclosure, shivering as a stiff cold breeze holds off spitting rain during the training session. There are nineteen boys and one girl. After the warmup and skills routines, they are divided into four teams of five, two sides on court competing while the others stay in the corners, waiting their turn to play.

In the W Academy system, the players are assigned positions for each session but being enthusiastic and desperate for the glory of scoring goals, most youngsters tend to swarm around the ball.

Drew's team has Kieran in goals wearing his bright yellow padded gloves. Drew, assigned the role of the main defender, took up his allotted position in front of in midfield with Findlay on the left side, David on the right and Ryan assigned as their central striker.

Back on that March day, Drew played a 'stormer', marshalling the other team's attackers, easing the player on the ball into a corner before , nicking the ball, swirling and skipping past those trying to dispossess him and, after a few swerves and nutmegs, passing to his forwards.

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In the car heading home I praised his performance:

'Drew, you were *fantastic* today. Really, really good. Top marks. You were like Franz Beckenbauer, the German midfield general, back in the day.'

'Yes, Grampa, I was good. D'you know, I'm probably the best player at W Academy in my age group.'

Drew is not a pushy or boastful boy and this statement came as a surprise. Then, in a quieter, serious voice he continued:

'But Grampa, what am I supposed to do about Findlay?'

Findlay was the main scorer in every game. He is very fast and aggressive.

'Yes, Findlay has a really fierce left foot shot, hasn't he?'

'But Grampa, he keeps getting out position, taking Ryan's place as central striker and even wandering over beside David on the right. I mean, how am I supposed to find them with my passes if their all in a bunch and out of position? It's so, so annoying.'

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'But you were immense, Drew, right on top of your game today.'

'Actually Grampa, I think I'm too good for Carolside now. I think I should be moving on to a better team.'

'Oh no, Drew. You know you've got to stick with Carolside since your Dad is one of the leaders, yes?'

'Yeah, I know. But Grampa, would you be honest with me and tell me how I can improve my game?'

'Well, I would say you are very competent in everything you do but there is just one thing that might help. You should try to pass the ball quicker. Less dribbling. Pass and move, triangles.'

Drew thought about this advice, then changed topic.

'Grampa, you're seventy-five, right? So, did I tell you my story about my rocket gun which fires a warhead with seventy-five rockets and each rocket divides into seventy-five separate missiles which can hit seventy-five separate Alien Targets. Which earns you bonus points and each warhead goes up to a hundred rockets and each rocket divides into a hundred missiles and hits a hundred Alien Targets and you get more bonus points and . . .

Drew's story tumbled along as we continued back to Netherlee through the gathering gloom, my car now part of a mid-evening traffic start-stop commuter conga.

'Grampa, d'you want to know where I get my ideas for my stories?'

'Yes Drew, but first can I tell you *where I get my ideas from?*'

'Where?'

'Well Drew, I wait until round about now and watch where the sun goes down and a bright flashing purple light sends stories right into my brain.'

Without missing a beat, Drew replied:

**'Yeah, yeah, Grampa, I get those sorts of stories too but mostly I get my ideas from video games.'**

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