



'Dad, why can't I play soccer?'

Jake imagined running down the pitch, super fast and much too tricky for other players. He'd fire the ball at goal like a cannon.



Dad looked surprised. 'I didn't know you wanted to,' he said.

'Jonah's going to play,' said Jake. 'And some of the other kids at school played last year. Benji scored trillions of goals, and everyone says it's really fun.'

'Of course you can play, Jake,' Dad told him. 'But we'll need to get you some boots!'

On Saturday morning, Dad took Jake shopping. First they went to the bookshop, where Dad bought *Soccer Tips for Juniors*. Jake liked the pictures. All the players wore shiny shirts and flashy boots.

'Can we get boots like those?'



'We'll see,' Dad replied.

At the sports shop, piles of shoeboxes reached to the ceiling. In the kids' section, there were boots in black, white and silver.

'Can I get silver ones? Please Dad?'



Dad looked at the price. His eyes widened.

'Wow-ee,' he said. 'Boots didn't cost this much in my day!'

But he let Jake try on the silver boots, and then he bought them.

'Thanks Dad!'



2.

Jake knew he was going to be great at soccer – a champion for sure! He couldn't wait to start training.

The coach had thick hairy legs and a big head. His name was Rob, and he was wearing a yellow shirt with 'Socceroos' written on it.

Jake was impressed. 'Did you play for the Socceroos?'

Some of the kids laughed.



'Anyone can dream!' Rob replied. 'But no, I bought this at a sale.'

Jake saw now that most of the other kids were also wearing professional team strips.

'I play for Brazil,' said Benji.

'Barcelona,' said a girl with her hair tied back tight.

'Man U,' said one of the boys.



Rob's loud voice soon had them jogging to the other side of the park. He set up two rows of plastic cones while they were gone.

Jake lined up behind the others and watched them dribble around the cones. Benji and the Barcelona girl zoomed along like the ball was glued to their feet.



Jake didn't find dribbling so easy. He jogged slowly, trying to touch the ball gently with his boots so that it stayed somewhere near. It stayed so near that he tripped over it. When he tried to push the ball out further, it shot right away from him. Jake's zigzag run took so long he got puffed.



While Jake struggled, Jonah was getting the hang of things. Jake hung his head and looked at his silver boots. He knew it wasn't their fault, but he wished it was.