



## STRIKER AND THE TEAM

*By Tor Caldwell*

*In an old part of the town there's a huge scrapheap, protected by a high metal fence. It's full of lots of different things, waiting to be re-used or made into something else. During the day, people come and go and the scrapheap is busy with the noise of shouting and machinery. But at night, when everyone has left, the scrapheap really comes alive. Because that's when the NumBots come out of hiding.*

A short distance from the cluster of recycled homes stood a large clearing, which the bots used as their football stadium. Discarded street lamps casted large spotlights all over the ground. The stadium was lit for an exciting night in the scrapheap...

Rows and rows of recycled floorboards lined all four edges of the pitch where hundreds and hundreds of bots were already sitting and waiting in excitement. A buzz was growing in and around the football stadium. The Full Moon Football Match was played beneath every silvery full moon against the Alloy All-Stars, who were a team from a neighbouring scrapyards. It was a thrilling occasion to behold!

Just outside of the stadium, strings of bots wound round the scrapheap as they queued up for tickets to the match. The air was filled with lots of excited chatter, cheering and chanting.

"I hope StrikerBot scores - she's amazing!"

"I think it will be a draw, both teams are really good!"

The electric atmosphere stretched to the changing rooms, where the scrapheap's star player, StrikerBot, was getting ready for the game ahead with her trusty football team: PenguinBot, TractorBot and FlamingoBot. As the cheers and chanting from the stadium grew louder, Striker gathered the team.

"Ok team," Striker said once they were huddled arm-in-arm. "Let's go out there and do our best!"

"Woop woop!" Flamingo hooted.

"Go team!" Tractor called.

"Good luck everyone!" Striker smiled, patting Penguin on the shoulder.

Striker picked up the tin can which they used as a ball, and led her team towards the entrance to the playing field. All of the bots in the stands went wild when they stepped out onto the pitch where the Alloy All-Stars, the opposition, were waiting in anticipation.

The tin can was placed in the middle of the pitch and when the whistle blew, Striker kicked-off. The can immediately fell at the tyres of Tractor, who found it hard to control it with his *enormous* wheels.

“Oo - er - hmmph - ah,” he rolled forwards then reversed. Then he looked down. Oops - he had run over the can and now it was completely flat.

“Tractor!” Striker moaned, “you squashed the can!”

Tractor blushed. “Sorry everyone...” he groaned.

They quickly replaced the tin can and continued to play.

This time, Striker made sure she didn't pass to Tractor. Instead, she passed the can to Penguin, who stopped it with his flippers and then, looking down gasped in amazement.

“Wooah! It's so shiny - like the stars!” He bent down and scooped it up with his wings, admiring his beaky reflection.

Immediately, the whistle blew and the game stopped.

“Penguin!” Striker wailed. “You're not allowed to pick up the can! Now it's a freekick to the other team!”

Penguin shrugged - what was the big deal?

Shaking her head, Striker watched as the other team lined up to take the freekick.

Flamingo stood in goal, wearing one roller skate whilst she stretched out her wings as far as possible.

“Got to save it, got to save it...” she muttered to herself.

The whole stadium watched as the Alloy All-Stars took the freekick. The tin can sailed through the air, heading straight towards Flamingo. With her wings outstretched, she lost her balance and began to skid and wobble on her roller skate...

“Wooah - woouoooooah - ah,” whoooooosh! Flamingo fell face forward as the can soared past her into the goal. The Alloy All-Stars celebrated and cheered as Striker put her face in her hands. Striker's team was one nil down.

“Flamingo! You’re meant to stop the can from going into the goal! You can’t fall over!”

Flamingo giggled. “Sorry team - it can be very wobbly on a set of wheels!”

The whistle blew for half-time and the teams headed back to the changing rooms. Striker followed, trudging off the pitch behind the rest, feeling very disheartened by her team’s performance.

As she left the pitch, RustyBot approached her. He had been watching and supporting his friends, but he couldn’t help but notice that Striker was looking very fed up. She was sighing and huffing and dragging her wheels.

“What is wrong Striker?” Rusty asked. “It’s only half time!”

“It’s no good. We’re trying and failing! The others just can’t play as well as I can.”

Rusty scratched his head. “I think you are looking at their weaknesses. Maybe you need to re-arrange the team! Everyone has different strengths and skills - you just need to find them!”

This got Striker thinking. Reflecting on the first half, she realised each bot did show a particular set of skills...she just had to find a way for them to shine!

Feeling excited, she huddled the team together in the changing room - with a brand new plan.

When they returned to the pitch, the team took their new positions, the noise from the crowd drowning out their thoughts. The Alloy All-Stars kicked off and immediately took a shot at the goal. But this time, it was Penguin who stood between the goalposts, ready to try and save anything that came his way. As the tin can soared towards him, a large grin spread across his beak.

“Now I can use my wings!” Penguin cried in excitement.

He leapt upwards with his wings outstretched in the air and caught the can before it could go into the goal. The crowd cheered in glee!

“Woah Penguin! That was amazing!” Striker exclaimed.

The Alloy All-Stars made several attempts to get to the goal, but everytime, something large stood in their way. No matter how hard they tried, they simply could not get past the looming figure of Tractor. What a mighty defender! Before, Tractor’s enormous wheels had flattened the can, but now they were the perfect size to stop anyone getting past.

Striker watched on in awe! “Wow Tractor - you’re so strong!”

The game continued and the tin can fell to the feet of Striker, who decided to pass it to Flamingo. This time, instead of wobbling and falling, Flamingo soared past everyone at rocket

speed on her one roller skate! Zooming past all of the other players, she gave the can a mighty kick and everyone in the stadium watched as it sailed into the goal. The crowd went wild!

Striker ran over to Flamingo and gave her a big hug!

“What a goal!” Striker whooped with glee. “You were so fast!”

The final whistle blew and the noise from the stands erupted! A 1-1 draw - what a game!

Both teams shared the precious trophy, which they lifted together! Recycled camera lights flashed and flickered as the team came together for a big hug. Striker looked up into the stands and saw Rusty jumping up and down, waving his arms in the air as he cheered his friends on! Rusty clambered over to the team to congratulate them on a world-class performance. Before he could speak, Striker gave him a big, excited hug!

“We were amazing out there!” She beamed. “Our different skills and strengths came together to make an excellent team! You see, each one of us is unique and special in our own way. Our skills may shine in different ways and in different situations. What’s most important is that we respect and appreciate each other - always!”