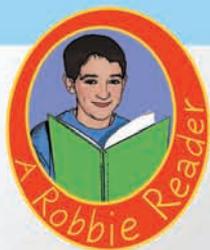


NO HANDS ALLOWED



Abby Wambach



Tamra Orr



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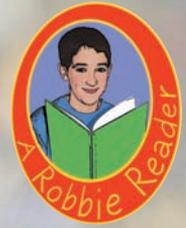


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One Unstoppable.....	5
Chapter Two No Fear	9
Chapter Three The Most Valuable . . . Prankster?.....	13
Chapter Four To the World Cup.....	17
Chapter Five Making an Impact	23
Chronology	27
Glossary	28
Find Out More	29
Works Consulted	29
Index	32



CHAPTER ONE

Unstoppable

Blood was dripping down her face and shoulders, but all Abby Wambach could think about was getting back out on the field.

It was the opening game for the Women's World Cup in September 2007. Wambach was determined to win against North Korea, even though she was already running with a sore right toe. Despite the discomfort, she took a pass from captain Kristine Lilly on the right side of the penalty area and shot the ball straight into the net. It was close! The **goalkeeper's** gloves touched the ball but could not stop it.

Just a few minutes later, Wambach was defending a cross. She ran right into North Korea's Ri Kum-Suk. Wambach dropped to the ground, blood spurting from a deep cut on the



Bloody but determined, Wambach headed in for stitches.

back of her head. It was clear that she needed a doctor. As she left the field, North Korea scored a goal.

“When they scored right away as I went off, I started to get worried,” said Wambach. “So I started to run to the locker room to get stitches put in.”

Coach Greg Ryan had to decide whether to replace Wambach or wait for her to come back out on the field. “It was a very tough call,” said Ryan. “The doctor said they could get her back within just a few minutes. Abby is such an important player to this team. I thought we could withstand playing 11 against 10.”



“I really had to hurry up the process,” said Wambach. “I was yelling at the doctors to get it done quicker. I . . . hurried up and got my jersey on and ran as fast as I could.” With eleven stitches, she dashed back in the game, which ended in a 2-2 tie.

When the World Cup was over days later, Wambach’s team had won the third-place bronze medal. She had scored a goal that earned the respect of her team and fans alike. First Lilly passed from the left sideline. Wambach played it against her chest and then hammered a left-footed shot from 12 yards inside the upper left corner on the near post. Former U.S. team captain Julie Foudy stated, “You just can’t hit it any sweeter than that. It shows why she is one of the greatest players in the world right now. That’s unstoppable; unbelievable the way she hit that.”

Perhaps that is the perfect way to describe Abby Wambach on the soccer field—she is unstoppable. She has been right from the beginning.

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