

Fast and Furious Fred



from
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“The sports day teams are up!”, shrieked Charlie Chuckles.

Fred ran to the board and quickly scanned the list. He read the names once, and then twice, and his keen smile vanished. He hadn't been picked. Fred put on a brave face for the second year in a row as his fellow classmates gathered round to see who had made the team.



“You're too small”, Adam teased.

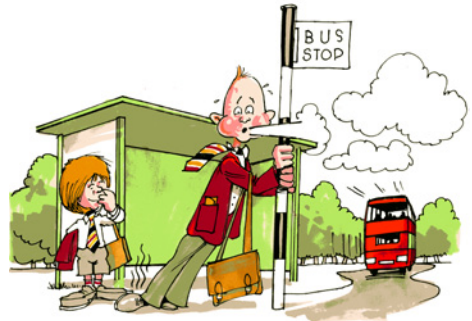
Johnny Jeffries stood up, towering above Fred, and said, “You've not got long enough legs to keep up with us!”

Fred wanted to cry. More than anything he had wanted to be picked for the team this year to show his dad that he was big and strong just like him. He had tried so hard all year at sports, and had got a glowing report from his teacher, Mrs. Tigerson. He was sure that this year was his big chance to join his best friends and be part of the winning team. His dad would be so proud, he'd thought.

“We'd rather have Sadie Slow Pants on our team”, said Charlie jokingly as he nudged Fred, bringing him back to reality.

Fred knew his friends were only kidding around but sometimes they could be so mean, he thought to himself.

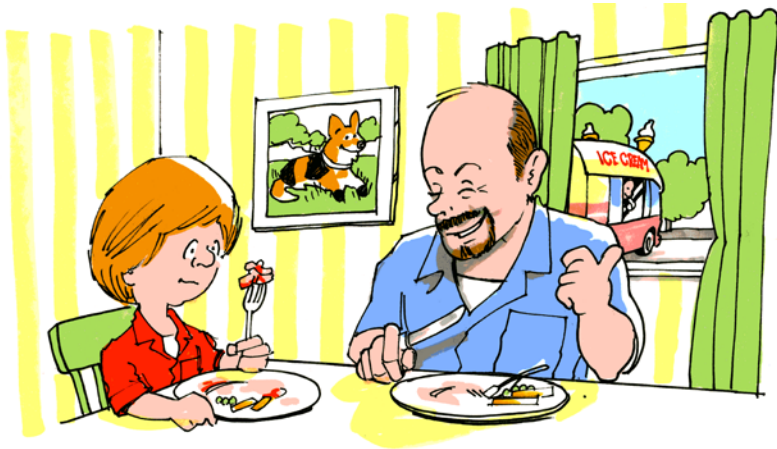
Fred had watched Adam run to try and catch the bus before and saw him reach the bus stop out of breath and red faced. Yes he was tall, but what difference did that make?



Fred walked home from school that night wishing he was big and tall like the other boys in his class and not little and small. Why did everybody think that being small automatically made you slower or weaker than everyone else? To top it off, he didn't want to have to tell his dad that he hadn't made it onto the team again. They'd spent ages practising in the park.

That night at the dinner table Fred stared hard at his plate of spaghetti shapes and picked up a pair of tomato soaked trainers, dangling them off the end of his fork. He wished that they harboured magical powers that would be able to make him run faster than all the school sports day teams put together. That would show them, he thought, as he gulped them down.

Fred's dad could see that he looked disappointed, "You'll get picked next year", he said reassuringly. "Don't be sad, just keep practising and you'll be ten times faster next year!" Fred knew his dad was only trying to help but he desperately wanted to show everyone, dad included, that he was just as fast as everyone else on the team. Fred's dad picked up his plate, 'Come on, the ice cream van's here, I'll race you for one.'



Fred was a little more positive when he arrived for school the next day. He'd beaten his dad to the ice cream van and his prize had been a double scoop vanilla waffle cone complete with chocolate flake - his favourite. He was determined to have fun despite not being on the team. He would help Mrs. Tigerson prepare the team oranges and then he would paint a huge banner saying 'Go Tigers!' to support his friends.

As he rounded the corner into the playground, he noticed a huge crowd at the front gates. From where Fred stood, it looked like a huge human spider's web. 'Being small can come in handy', thought Fred as he wriggled his way to the front of the crowd. Right there in front of him was Johnny Jeffries, sporting a giant yellow plaster cast that started at his foot and snaked all the way up to his knee. It looked like he was wearing a wellington boot.



"I was playing cowboys and Indians", he said, his voice quavering. "And I fell jumping off my bunk bed and broke my leg."

'Ouch', thought Fred.

"Mrs. Tigerson says you'll have to take my place at sports day." Fred could tell Johnny was close to tears.

"I won't let you down Johnny, you'll see", said Fred as he helped his friend into the classroom. Fred felt

bad for Johnny but could hardly believe his luck! This was his big chance to show everyone just how fast he could really go. It was down to him to make sure The Tigers triumphed and he was up for the challenge! He just wished his dad would be there to watch.

"Ready, steady, go!" yelled Mr. Brown, the Head Teacher.

Fred was off like a shot – bounce, bounce, bouncing like a pogo stick, straight up into the air and back down as he took the lead in the sack race.

Although everyone else's sacks fitted them perfectly, Fred's came right up to his chin and could almost cover his head. However, Fred didn't let that stop him and he quickly rolled the sack down to fit. Being small meant he could move in quick neat jumps.



His nimble legs powered him to the finish line two jumps clean of Michael Moody. The Tigers, watching from the side lines, let out an almighty roar, making them sound exactly like their real tigers in the jungle. They knew that Fred's success had put them into the lead.

Adam and Charlie only managed second place in the three legged race so Fred knew that if they were to remain in the lead, he'd have to ace the egg and spoon race....



...which he did with ease! Even Mr. Brown had to check to make sure that the egg wasn't glued to the spoon! It hadn't so much as rocked as Fred was running.

He made the pole vault look easy beating Timothy Tallboy from Team Wotsits hands down. And he set a new school record in the sandpit for the hop, skip and jump – jumping twice the length of Harry Hopalong in Team Bananas.

The Tigers were brimming with excitement and were on the verge of victory; just the relay race to go. "You're not bad for a guy with little legs", cheered Johnny. Fred was delighted but still felt a little sad that his dad was missing out. If only he'd been there to cheer him on – he would be so very proud of him.

Just then the whistle blew for the start of the relay race. Fred would run last in his team because he was so incredibly fast. The pressure was well and truly on as Fred got into position. The entire school was cheering and shouting. Fred suddenly felt nervous; very nervous in fact. The noise of the crowd and the fact that it was up to Fred to win it for The Tigers gave him butterflies in his tummy. Fred could hear the sound of his heart thumping in his ears and started to panic. He wasn't sure he could do it.

Just then he noticed the crowd moving at the finish line. As he looked out, Fred saw his dad squeezing to the front of the spectators. He was cheering and shouting louder than anyone else: "Come on Fred, you're the fastest, you can do it, just like we practised, keep your head up, **Come on Fred!**"



Fred turned his attention back to the race. He glanced backwards to see that Adam was neck and neck with Timothy. Turning back round he focused on his dad at the finish line. As soon as he felt the silvery coldness of the baton in his grasp he took off like a dart flying through the air. He was unstoppable and was leaps ahead of the other teams. He ran right across the finish line, jumping onto his dad who pushed him high up onto his shoulders declaring him the champion.





The rest of Team Tiger huddled round, "I take it all back!" said Charlie excitedly, "You're like lightning!" exclaimed Adam. "You can take my place anytime!" screamed Johnny. "It was a team effort" replied Fred shyly.

"Here's to next year", toasted Fred's dad as Mrs. Tigerson handed out juice to the winning team. The Tigers raised their cups,

"Here's to fast and furious Fred!" they cheered.



The End.