Lily Jacobson

October 16, 2013

Period 6

**Personal Best**

Millions of thoughts ran through my brain as people wished me luck while I walked toward the starting block. My body was shaking, and I was ready to back down, and not even race because I was so nervous. My hands were sweating and people were noticing how flustered I looked. However, this was my event, and I wanted more than anything to win. I knew I had to, and I’d be disappointed and would feel as if I let myself down if I didn’t win. *I have to win this,* I thought.

I was the reigning champion in the fifty yard breaststroke of the annual R.I.M.A. swim league championship meet. This year, I’d have to beat my rival, Jennifer, and my personal best time to win. Jennifer and I were the top two best swimmers in breaststroke in our league, and I wanted to beat her, so I could be number one. Last year, winning a gold medal in this event was easier than this year because I was younger, and I wasn’t facing my rival in the finals. Also, the competition wasn’t as intense or fierce. I had been training and working hard to win in this event all season long but I kept doubting myself and telling myself that I couldn’t win.

At championships, this race would be my last race of not only the meet, but the entire season. I knew I wanted to end the season with a win. Already I had earned medals at these championships in earlier races. However, in my heart, I felt that this was the most important one. When they called my event to line up behind the starting blocks, I heard my coach calling me over to talk to him first.

“Go line up, and hurry!” Coach Jerry commanded. “You’ll be fine, just relax. You’ve trained hard for this.”

“Okay, Coach. I’ll see you after my race,” I replied in a shaky voice.

As I turned away from him to walk to the starting block, my coach added, “You can do this, Lily, and I know you can win.” I slowly walked away, my heart racing, and my hands clenched tightly together, sweating. The next time that I’d talk to him, I would know if I won my race or not.

“The next event is event number forty-four, the girl’s fifty yard breaststroke. This is the finals of the event,” The announcer’s voice echoed through the pool room, letting me know that it was time for my race, and to climb up onto the starting block. My heart was beating furiously and my stomach felt like an empty pit of darkness. It was time to concentrate on techniques, try to relax my body, and focus on doing my absolute best.

“Take your mark,” the announcer’s voice boomed through the megaphone. I bent over, gripping the front of the starting block, ready to go, as my body shook rapidly. I was trying to stay calm and not fall in the pool before my cue to start.

As I dove into the pool, my mind suddenly turned off. All of the helpful tips my teammates and coaches had told me to improve my swimming, were gone and all I could think was, *faster, faster, faster*. I wanted to swim faster and faster but my body was telling me something different. As a result of being so nervous, my lungs felt tight as if I weren’t taking in any air at all. As I hit the first (of two) walls ready for my flip turn, I saw my whole team above me, hanging over the edge of the pool at the end of the lane screaming and pointing and telling me to pull and kick harder and faster. Just by the looks on their faces, which I briefly saw, I could tell I was neck and neck with another swimmer, and most likely it was Jennifer.

I swam faster and faster as I could see the wall approaching slowly, as if I weren’t swimming fast, even though I felt out of breath and exhausted. The wall was right in front of me so I decided to give it one last burst of energy. I kicked and pulled faster than I ever had before and could feel my body’s level of energy diminish down to nothing. I had “left myself in the pool” which is what they tell every swimmer to do in a race that matters.

My hands abruptly slammed into the wall. I was completely breathless. All I wanted to do was look at the scoreboard because I could see in the lane next to me my rival, Jennifer, had finished as well. I picked up my head slowly and I blocked out everything as I glanced up at the scoreboard, high up on the wall. I could see my teammates, still cheering for me, but then the moment became like a slow motion movie, as I waited for the results to appear on the scoreboard.

Finally, I glanced up at the scoreboard and saw my name. I slowly read Jacobson, L- 38.77, 1 mapped out across the scoreboard like it was meant to be. I saw my name, my personal best time, 38.77 seconds, and that I had one first place in the race. I had won the gold! I felt happy, excited, and thrilled. I then looked back down to see my rival, Jennifer, floating and looking dumbfounded in the water. I reached over to shake her hand to show good sportsmanship. She reluctantly obliged and silently shook my hand. Then I climbed out of the pool, dripping wet of course, and my body was cold. But before I could even get my towel, I’d have to see my team. So I walked over to our team’s bench.

“Lily, congratulations, I’m so proud of you, you won,” were the cheers coming from my team. Everyone congratulated and hugged me. Cheers echoed throughout the building, and I saw my parents standing up, clapping, yelling, and smiling. My sister and teammate was near tears, so proud of what I had done. Suddenly I realized that I would be on our team record board because I had the best time in my age-group. I’d also be a RIMA all-star, and go to a special annual swim meet where the best teams and swimmers compete. Everything seemed to be falling into place.

The race and that win gave me the ability to say, yes, I am good at something I love, and I can prove it. From that experience, I don’t get so nervous before I swim at important meets. The one moment that I will never forget was looking up at that scoreboard and seeing the number one next to my name. It was my special day and my special moment and I will always remember the biggest and best smile I had on my face when I climbed out of the pool, very proud of what I had just accomplished, winning the gold. Most importantly, my time was my new personal best.