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WHAT SOCCER MEANS TO ME

I'm not artistic or musically-inclined. Drawing and singing don't come easy to me. In fact, I draw with stick figures and can't carry a tune. But when I step onto the field as center mid, I am creative in a different way. By bending a ball artfully past the back line, I "create" opportunities for my team's forwards to score. I am also a conductor, controlling the "musical" tempo of a game, speeding up or slowing down play. Whether it is a quick give-and-go to knock a defender off her feet, an overlapping run, a half-volley at the top of the box, or a Cruyff to get out of a tight space, each practice and game allows me the opportunity to express myself.

Every NWSL and USWNT soccer game I watch inspires me. After each game, I try to pull off whatever amazing pass, move or shot I've seen, like a painter imitating another artist's style. Whenever I have a free moment, I'm outside with a ball, trying to come up with my own moves. I love going to practice and showing my teammates my latest trick.

Soccer has taught me so much – self-discipline, teamwork and winning/losing graciously. But just as important, it has given me the opportunity to express myself creatively. I cannot thank the beautiful game of soccer enough for the sheer joy it has brought me and for providing a platform for using my imagination.