

# Sports Samples

## Soccer Speaks Many Languages

By Dianna Geers

**Football, soccer—by any name, this sport has helped Innocent in many ways.**

Innocent Ndayinze crumpled an old plastic bag into a tiny clump, tied it with string, and stuffed it into another plastic bag. He continued doing this until the crumpled bags became large enough to be the ball for a football game with his friends. For goalposts, the boys took off their shirts and laid them on the parched land.

### A Sport for Everyone

Innocent and his friends lived in the Mku kwa refugee camp in Tanzania. The children formed football teams, had competitions, and played at every chance.

The refugee families in the camp were separated based on ethnicity—the Tutsis in one section, the Hutus in another, and the families with both Tutsis and Hutus in their own section. This was



During high school, Innocent earned seven varsity letters in soccer, basketball, and American football.

because the Tutsis and Hutus were fighting each other in a civil war. Despite this, all of the children played together.

"We didn't worry if the other kids were Tutsis or Hutus," recalls Innocent. "We just thought of them as our friends." Playing football gave all the children a common bond.

Innocent and his family have found a new life a long way from their original home.

### Life in a Refugee Camp

Refugee camps such as Mku kwa exist around the world. They are places where groups of people live when their homeland is unsafe because of natural disaster, famine, or war. When people flee their country to escape persecution or violence, they are called refugees. International laws protect them.

When Innocent was four years old, he and his family left their home country of Burundi. The civil war had made it too dangerous to stay there. They walked until they reached the Mku kwa refugee camp. Innocent's dad built a two-room house for his family out of mud and sticks that they gathered.

Since Innocent's family had left many of their belongings behind, they needed food and clothing. People from around the world donated these items to the refugee camp. If it weren't for such help from others, "I would probably not be alive today," Innocent says.

Innocent's parents lined up once a month to receive food and clothing for the family. They cooked their food on a wood fire outside of their house. Most of the time, all they had was rice.

While living in the camp, Innocent's dad fixed radios and helped build mud homes for other refugees. Innocent's mother worked as a nurse, helping to care for the sick. Innocent went to school in the camp. His favorite part was recess, when he would play football.

### Moving to America

After five years of living in the refugee camp, Innocent's family moved to the United States with

the help of a charitable organization. When they reached the United States, Innocent's family went first to Kentucky and then to Iowa.

Everyone in Innocent's family spoke Kirundi and French, but not English. A church group was helping them, and a few of its members began to teach them English. They also helped Innocent's family set up an apartment, buy groceries, and enroll the children in school.



### Friendship Through Soccer

Innocent was nine when he began school in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He knew none of the other kids, and he didn't speak the language of his classmates very well.

At recess, though, there was something he understood. Kids played his favorite game, but in the United States they called it soccer instead of football.

Through soccer, Innocent made friends. They helped him learn English words and American games. Innocent found that people everywhere can be

friendly and helpful. It didn't matter if they spoke a different language or were from a different place.

### A Bright Future

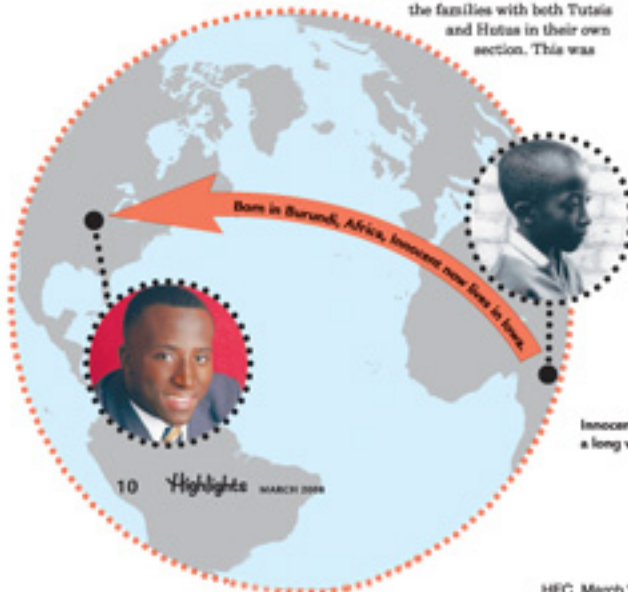
Over the years, Innocent's family has adjusted to life in America. Now an American citizen and a freshman at Iowa State University, Innocent gets good grades and speaks English fluently. He earned a scholarship, and he



is majoring in construction engineering so that he can learn to build houses, as his father did. He plays American football, basketball, and—you guessed it—soccer.

Innocent has played soccer for as long as he can remember, and it has helped him in many ways. The game brought him together with children from different backgrounds while he lived in a refugee camp. It helped him feel at home when he was a new arrival in America. And through the opportunities it has created for him, it is helping him to fulfill his dreams. 

Click and play! Try a soccer Hidden Pictures puzzle on [HighlightsKids.com](http://HighlightsKids.com).





At the 2007 World Championships in Osaka, Japan, Allyson Felix won three gold medals.

# Allyson Felix Speed Queen

By Michele Deppe

**A**llyson Felix is one of the fastest women in the world. But it took some trial and error to figure that out.

### Finding Her Sport

Raised in Los Angeles, Allyson played basketball in grade school. She enjoyed shooting hoops, but she wasn't that good. The other players called her "chicken legs" because they thought she looked too skinny to be an athlete.

Her older brother, Wes, thought she was doing the wrong sport. Growing up, Allyson could always run fast enough to keep up with Wes. "My brother did well at track. He encouraged me to go out for the team, so I did," says Allyson.

The ninth-grader wanted to prove to herself—and to everyone else—that she could excel.

### An Impressive Start

At track practice, Allyson ran well—so well, in fact, that the coach, Jonathan Patton, thought something was wrong. Was his stopwatch broken? Was the distance measured incorrectly?

Patton asked other girls to run. Their times were normal. Then he asked Allyson to run again. There was nothing wrong with his watch or the distance. Allyson Felix was just plain fast.

"The coach kind of realized that I was running pretty well," Allyson says.

Only ten weeks into the track season, Allyson qualified for the state meet. As a freshman, she was one of the youngest runners there. Despite running against older girls with more experience, Allyson finished seventh in the 200-meter race.

### Making Her Mark

The following year, Allyson picked up speed. The sophomore won the state title in the 100-meter race, placed second in the 200-meter, and began winning races at national and international competitions.

The girl they called "chicken legs" has her eyes on Olympic gold.



The next year was even better. Allyson won both of the short-sprint titles at the state meet with running times that were her personal bests.

During her senior year, she broke national records and continued to medal and to earn titles at the state, national, and international levels.

Then she really shocked everyone.

At a meet in Mexico City, the 17-year-old senior ran the 200-meter race in a superfast 22.11 seconds.

This made Allyson the fastest woman in the world at this distance.

### The Road to Success

After high school, Allyson decided not to choose between going to college and continuing to compete professionally; she resolved to do both. She enrolled in college and trained as a professional track athlete for several hours each day. She set high goals for herself as a runner and as a student.

Allyson's hard work has paid off. She has completed her bachelor's degree in elementary education, and she has continued to improve as a runner. At the 2004 Olympics in Athens, she won a silver medal in the 200-meter race. Since 2005, Allyson has ranked first in the world in that event.

The 22-year-old's next big goal is taking home gold from the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, China. She has been training hard to prepare. Meanwhile, Allyson has kept winning competitions. At the 2007 World Championships, she picked up three gold medals.

After the Olympics, Allyson wants to return to college to earn a master's degree. She also sees herself teaching in the future. "Someday I want to teach fourth- and fifth-graders," she says.



Since 2005, Allyson Felix has ranked first in the world in the 200-meter dash.

### It's All About Balance

The soft-spoken track star says that she works hard to keep her life in balance.

"You need time with your family and friends," Allyson says. "You also need to rest and relax. Training all of the time isn't for me."

Allyson wants to be a top runner, but she also wants to continue growing as a person. The athlete says that she wants to collect "experiences" as well as medals.

"I run every race to win it," says Allyson. "But if I don't win, I'll learn something. And that's OK, too."

### Be Your Best

Allyson has been compared to

other track stars. "I admire other runners," she says, but she only wants to be the best Allyson Felix that she can be. "I am my own person," she says. "You should always be yourself."

Just as Allyson wants to go all the way with her own potential, she believes that everyone has a special talent.

"Find out what you are good at," she says. "Then work hard to get the most out of your gift. If people make fun and call you names, let that inspire you to work even harder."

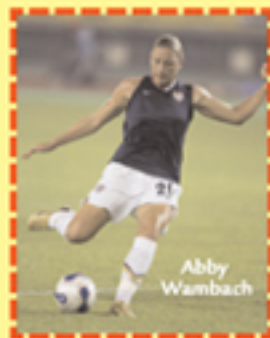
Sometimes people still call her "chicken legs." But Allyson doesn't mind now. Chickens are pretty hard to catch.

See the Olympic results for Allyson's events on [highlightskids.com](http://highlightskids.com)!



**W**e celebrate moms on Mother's Day, but we learn from them every day of the year. We asked some top athletes how their mothers influenced them. Here's what they said.

Abby Wambach is a goal-scoring machine. She has the best goals-per-game ratio in U.S. women's soccer history, and she was named the U.S. Soccer Female Athlete of the Year two years in a row. This Olympic gold-medal winner says that her mom taught her to keep going when things got tough.



Abby Wambach

"My mom wasn't the type to sit and cry when things were bad. My family just moved ahead if things got hard for us. As the youngest of seven children, I learned to be thick-skinned. In 2003, I didn't make the Olympic roster, and that hurt. But thanks to my mom, I was tough enough to learn from that experience to keep working hard until I was good enough to be on the team."

Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Donovan McNabb is well known for his prowess on the field, but

# Coach Mom

By Marty Kaminsky

he is also famous for doing soup commercials with his mother, Wilma. He is one of the most respected players in the National Football League, but he says that thanks to his mom, he doesn't take himself too seriously.

"One of the important lessons I learned from my mother was to always keep my sense of humor, even in tough times, and to be myself. I've been able to lean on that advice a lot in my career. There have been times when things didn't go the way I would've liked, such as a loss in a big game. My teammates look toward me for my reaction, and it's important that I be myself and stay positive."

When Freddy Adu's mother moved his family from Ghana to the United States in 1997, it was to help her sons gain a better education. She worked two jobs so that the family could live and eat well—and so that Freddy could play on club soccer teams. Her hard work has paid off. Adu, a two-time Major League Soccer All-Star, now plays for Sport Lisboa e Benfica, a Portuguese powerhouse.

**These athletes learned a lot from their mothers.**



Donovan McNabb and his mother, Wilma.



Freddy Adu and his mother.

"My mom is so important because she has supported me through everything. She allowed me to play and go where I needed to in order to improve. She inspired me with how hard she worked—it taught me the value of working to achieve my goals. I've always strived to get to a point in my career where I was working hard so that she wouldn't have to."



Tamika Catchings

Women's National Basketball Association All-Star Tamika Catchings has won an Olympic gold medal and several World Championship medals with the USA women's basketball team. While she was at the University of Tennessee, her team won a national title. Despite her long list of awards, Catchings stays humble. The star forward of the Indiana Fever says that she owes her humility to her mother.

"My mother taught me the importance of family. We always stuck up for and supported one another. I grew up with a hearing and speech problem, so I was teased a lot. My mom was there to motivate me, and she never let me give up. She also taught me to be humble and to appreciate what I had—to never take anything for granted."

New York Mets All-Star third baseman David Wright is a fan favorite because of his top-notch play and his kindness and generosity off the field. In 2007, he won the Rawlings Gold Glove Award for third basemen in the National League. Wright started the David Wright Foundation to raise awareness for those in need and to raise money for charitable organizations. He credits his parents for supporting him.

"I grew up in a very loving family. I owe so much to both my parents. My mother always taught me to be respectful and patient. She drove me to Little League games and supported me

whether I was 0-for-4 or hit a home run. She is a very caring person who is generous. I feel so grateful for what I have, and I owe it all to my mom and dad."



Allison Jones

Skier Allison Jones was born without a right thighbone. It is difficult to walk—let alone ski—on one leg, but Jones says that her mother taught her never to let obstacles hold her back. She won a gold medal at the 2006 Paralympics and has been a U.S. national champion, a World Cup titleholder, and a three-time gold medalist at the World Championships. Jones is also a Paralympic cyclist.

"I was born with one leg, but I was told: 'Don't take so far an answer.' Whatever my younger sister learned to do, my mom taught me to do as well—jumping off bleachers, rock climbing, track and field, white-water rafting, water-skiing. She never saw me as having a disability. I've tried everything that's been put out in front of me." 



David Wright