

Ready, Set, Invent!

"I can't believe the Young Inventors' National Competition is tomorrow!" Marina said. "I hope I'm ready."

"Well, you've worked hard, and you have a great invention," her dad said. "I think you're more than ready."

Marina scooped up her invention, the Scoreball, from its stand. She had invented it to solve the problem of keeping score during fast-moving basketball games.

The Scoreball recorded points whenever it dropped through the hoop. It stopped arguments and made playing more fun for Marina and her friends. Marina had come in first with the Scoreball at other events, but there was a lot more at stake with the national competition. The top prize was a college scholarship.

Marina knew that it would be a battle. Another inventor named Dana Dutcher had won plenty of awards with her own invention. Tomorrow they would meet and compete, face-to-face.

Meanwhile, Dana Dutcher helped tie the shoes of her triplet brothers. Soon, her family would be piling in the van for the long drive to the Young Inventors' National Competition.

She gave each of her little brothers a high five. "I owe you guys," she said. "You gave me the idea for the Zipper-Zapper in the first place."

Last winter, Dana's teacher had told the class to think of a problem and an invention that would solve it. Every morning, Dana had watched her brothers struggling to zip their own coats. Because of them, she designed a magnetic zipper starter that made zipping easier for little hands. The Zipper-Zapper had worked.

It had racked up awards, too, but the national competition was different. The top prize was a college scholarship that Dana didn't just want to win. She needed to win it. Dana had read about the inventor she was up against. Marina Moore and her Scoreball had her worried.

Sunny Day People

Some people, they say, are “born on a sunny day.” Anna was one of them. Anna saw the best in every situation. In basketball, she counted how many times she took a shot, not just the points she made. She collected joke books, too. Though some of the jokes were corny, her friends laughed because of how Anna told them.

Once, during the same week, Anna had to get glasses *and* braces. Anna chose purple glasses, and rainbow colored braces. “I think I look unique,” she said.

Anna was the tour guide when new kids came to school. She’d smile like they were old friends, and show them around. After a day with Anna, kids were excited to go to their new school.

Meanwhile, Sara was a new kid at Hoover Middle School. Her family had just moved to town from Chicago, and Sara was very nervous. At her old school Sara had a lot of friends she had known all of her life. It was not uncommon to find Sara and a friend doing something silly.

Once Sara and her best friend, Kelly, went to a Chicago Cubs baseball game and sang “Take Me Out to the Ballpark” together while hopping on one foot. The other people around them just laughed along with the two girls.

However, those days were now gone. Sara was on her own. As she stood quietly on the front steps of the school, Sara looked up and saw a strange girl with rainbow colored braces coming towards her. Right way, Sara knew she was *not* going to like this person.