

Shoot It Harder, Shoot It Softer

by Vinnie Rotondaro



The arcade was full of little kids, and they were all playing different games - racing games, basketball games, pinball games. Beeps and buzzers and "game over" sounds were ringing all over the place.

Davey was over at a basketball game called Hoop Fever. He took a quarter out of his pocket and stuck it in the machine. A scoreboard with big red numbers lit up - five, four, three, two, one: Go!

Five rubber basketballs rolled down. Davey had 50 seconds to shoot as many buckets as possible. He really wanted to beat his all-time record of 10 buckets, and was feeling a little nervous. Davey picked up a ball and took his first shot, using all his might. The ball sailed out of his hands, slammed into the backboard and came bouncing back.

Davey knew he shot the ball too hard. He quickly picked up another ball and shot it with a little less power. This time the ball clanged off the back of the hoop. Still a little too hard. He picked up another ball and shot it with even less strength. It was just right. The ball bounced on the rim and fell through the net. Davey kept shooting just like that, and ended up getting 12 buckets. He beat his all-time record!

Across the way, Samantha was playing her brother Harry in a game of air hockey. Samantha was smaller than Harry and wasn't as strong, but she knew how to outsmart him. Every time

Harry hit the puck with his hand mallet, he would hit it as hard as he could and it would go flying - sometimes right off the table!

Samantha knew this about Harry. So she would keep her mallet right in front of her goal, and Harry's shot always bounced right off it. When Samantha got the puck, she would shoot just hard enough to keep it moving, but not too hard. The puck would go back and forth, back and forth - not too fast, and not too slow - and Harry would let his guard down. When this happened Samantha would strike. She would smack the puck as hard as she could, and it would shoot right into Harry's goal. Score!