

Gryffindor vs Slytherin

The winter snow had given way to freezing rain, accompanied by a wind fierce enough to rattle the castle stones. Students bundled up in scarves and relied on weatherproofing spells to stay dry.

"What a miserable day!" Ginny exclaimed, wringing out her soaked robes. "Why do we always get stuck with the worst weather?"

The Gryffindor Quidditch team huddled in the locker room, their brooms stacked in a corner near a roaring fire crackling in the hearth.

"If this keeps up, we won't get anywhere," grumbled Dalia, pulling off a boot to pour out the water inside.

Coote and Peakes had removed their shoulder pads and were drying off with towels.

"We really need to work on our coordination," Seamus added. "We're still making too many mistakes with our passing."

"Forget that — we can't even dodge the Bludgers," Demelza muttered as she wrung out her hair.

Everyone chimed in, and soon the locker room erupted into a full-blown argument.

Seeking some quiet, Ginny locked herself in the captain's office and began rethinking their strategy for the upcoming match. Their first two games had ended in victories, but only narrowly, with Ginny barely managing to seize the Golden Snitch before her opponents.

While every player had given their all, it was clear the team was still young and lacked the cohesion needed to dominate. Coordination was their biggest weakness.

A loud knock on the door pulled her out of her thoughts. Ginny stood and opened the door to find Professor McGonagall on the threshold.

"I hope I'm not disturbing your strategizing, Miss Weasley," the professor began. "I understand your team has been struggling with coordination during practice."

Ginny opened her mouth to reply but found herself at a loss for words.

"This team is young and inexperienced, Professor," said a figure standing beside McGonagall. "They still need to find their rhythm."

The figure stepped into the doorway, revealing a tall, broad-shouldered woman with dark skin and a ponytail that trailed down her back.

Ginny was so stunned she couldn't form a response.

"Miss Weasley," McGonagall said with a smile, "I have the pleasure of introducing someone who has kindly agreed to offer your team some advice for the final match."

The tall figure stepped forward and extended her hand.

"I'm Gwenog Jones," she said. "Captain of the Holyhead Harpies."

Ginny reached out with a trembling hand, barely managing to shake Gwenog's.

"Well," Jones said, "you're going to need more energy than that to impress me—right now, it feels like I'm shaking the tentacle of the giant squid."

She let out a hearty laugh that took Ginny by surprise.

"Mrs. Jones has graciously agreed to review the strategies of each of our teams and provide some pointers for your upcoming matches," McGonagall explained, peering over Gwenog's broad shoulder.

Ginny could hardly believe it. The player she had idolized since childhood was here to coach her team. She felt a surge of determination—she had to show what they were capable of.

Leaving the office, she found her teammates whispering and pointing at Gwenog. Demelza and Dalia blushed furiously, while Seamus, Ritchie, and Jimmy argued over Gwenog's stats from the current season.

"Are you all ready to get back on the field?" Ginny called.

"Yeah!" they roared in unison.

They fastened their shoulder pads, laced their boots, and grabbed their brooms, racing toward the pitch.

Ginny tied her hair into a braid and followed, catching up as her team mounted their brooms and took off.

"It seems your presence has lit a fire under them, Gwenog," McGonagall observed.

Gwenog chuckled. "That's a reaction I see a lot when I visit students."

She gestured toward the field. "Let's see what they've got."

McGonagall motioned for her to go ahead, and they climbed into the stands to watch Gryffindor's practice.

Despite the dreadful weather, word of Gwenog Jones's presence spread like wildfire. Dozens of students packed the bleachers, hoping to catch a glimpse of the famous Holyhead Harpies captain.

The Gryffindor team hadn't expected such a turnout for their practice. Earlier, only a few spectators had been present, watching their fumbling passes and misplaced Bludger hits with little enthusiasm.

But now, the team's spirits were buoyed by the roaring crowd. Students waved house scarves and banners, chanting the players' names as if it were a championship match.

"Are they always this excitable?" McGonagall asked.

Gwenog hesitated. "I have to admit, this is... livelier than usual."

On the field, Ginny gathered her team and barked orders.

"Don't let the crowd get to you. Pretend this is just another practice session."

She turned to the Chasers. "Seamus, Demelza, Dalia — I want you to focus on your passing drills. Run a Hawk Head formation, with Demelza leading the charge."

She then addressed the Beaters. "Ritchie, Jimmy, you're with me. We'll do our best to break up their attack."

The two Beaters grinned and bumped their bats together.

Finally, Ginny looked at the Keeper. "Garrett, give it everything you've got to block their shots. Got it?"

He pounded a fist against his chest, ready for action.

"Everyone set? Let's go!"

They rose as one, taking their positions.

Ginny tossed the Quaffle to Seamus, who caught it and immediately passed it to Demelza.

She snagged it midair and lobbed it to Dalia, who expertly caught it in one hand.

"Here we go!" Dalia shouted.

She leaned forward on her broom, speeding toward the goalposts with her teammates close behind. Faking a pass to Demelza on her left, she let the Quaffle drop to Seamus, flying just beneath her.

Seamus caught it and hurled it high, the ball arcing over most of the pitch and landing perfectly in Dalia's hands. She zoomed forward, aiming for the unguarded goal ring.

Garrett, the Keeper, scrambled to cover the right hoop, but Dalia's powerful throw sailed through effortlessly.

The crowd erupted into cheers, chanting Dalia's name as she grinned triumphantly.

"Not bad at all," Gwenog noted. "That was a solid strategy."

McGonagall gave a satisfied nod.

Ginny retrieved the Quaffle and threw it back to the Chasers for another run.

This time, Seamus caught it first. He raced down the pitch, ignoring his teammates' calls for a pass. Ginny wasn't fooled — she watched his co-Chasers closely as they shadowed him, arms raised and shouting for the ball.

To avoid another failure, Peakes sent a Bludger straight at him, which he dodged with a swift spin. He surged toward the same goal Dalia had scored through, but Garrett was ready this time.

At the last moment, Coote sent the second Bludger, forcing him to dodge by letting go of the Quaffle, which fell into Demelza's hands. She quickly passed it back to Dalia, who effortlessly pushed it through the center hoop.

Cheers erupted once again, congratulating the Chasers, who high-fived each other in celebration.

"That was a very clever feint," McGonagall remarked, clapping at the performance.

Jones said nothing, rubbing her chin as she watched the players launch another attack.

"It's far too predictable," she observed.

Surprised, McGonagall stifled a gasp.

"What do you mean?"

Without taking her eyes off the field, Jones replied, "It's another feint. That young boy is the real scorer. If you watch his teammate's slightly withdrawn position, you'll notice she's preparing to dodge the pass the Quaffle-carrier will send, so he can take the shot and catch the Keeper off guard by scoring on the left."

McGonagall focused on the field, astonished when the prediction came true. Garrett followed the Quaffle's path but couldn't block the shot as it sailed through the left hoop.

Gwenog Jones leapt from the stands and landed gracefully on the muddy field, slowing her descent with her wand. She whistled sharply, calling the players to her.

She motioned for the Chasers to stay back as she gave instructions to the defense.

From the stands, McGonagall couldn't make out a word of what she was saying — and she wasn't alone. The supporters' cheers were so loud that the students practically had to shout to hear each other.

In the chaos, Erine seized the opportunity to press Attilius for more information. At Slughorn's party, he'd hinted that the Carrows were after him and were aware of the DA's activities.

"You said you knew why I was here, but you haven't tried to turn me in or do anything against us. Why?"

Attilius kept his gaze on the players below.

"I said that because, despite how discreet your little group tries to be, I think you're going to be very useful in the months to come."

Erine frowned, confused.

"Don't you follow the news?" he asked.

Seeing her bewildered expression, he elaborated.

"The news says Potter escaped from Malfoy Manor where he'd been captured, and they destroyed something that belonged to the Dark Lord. When I saw him..."

"You saw Voldemort?" she blurted loudly.

Several students turned to gape at her, mouths agape. Erine pressed her lips together, realizing her mistake.

With a snap of his fingers, Attilius muffled the surrounding noise until it was a distant hum.

“Yes,” he confirmed, leaning in to whisper. “I saw him at the top of the Astronomy Tower. He didn’t look well. He was paler than usual, with dark circles under his eyes. I didn’t feel the same aura of oppression he usually projects.”

“You think he’s getting weaker?” she asked.

“That’s the impression I got,” he admitted. “I don’t know what Potter and his friends are doing, but it seems to be working. Judging by the concern I saw in the Dark Lord’s eyes, they’re close to finishing him off.”

Erine’s eyes widened.

“Until then, don’t draw attention to yourself, and make sure your friends keep preparing for the big day.”

“What ‘big day’ are you talking about?”

He fixed his striking green eyes on her, a faint smile playing on his lips.

“The day He’s finally gone.”

Erine burst into laughter.

“You can’t be serious. You really think Potter is going to take him down?”

Attilius studied her intently.

“Have you ever looked into prophecies?” he asked.

Erine shook her head.

“Two years ago, your group infiltrated the Department of Mysteries at the Ministry of Magic to retrieve a prophecy about Potter and the Dark Lord.”

She squinted at him.

“How do you know all this?”

“I’ve done some research,” he replied. “I think Potter has figured out how to get rid of him once and for all.”

“But why would you want him gone if you work for him?” Erine probed. “Shouldn’t you want to protect him?”

Attilius turned his gaze back to the players, who were resuming their training while Gwenog Jones returned to the stands.

“I don’t have to explain my motivations. All you need to know is that it’s better for all of us if he disappears once and for all.”

With that, he ended the conversation and left the stands, heading back to the castle.

Erine was still reeling from the revelation. Voldemort was finally going to fall. Potter was doing everything to ensure that the scourge plaguing the Wizarding World would be defeated.

She focused her attention back on the field, letting Attilius go about his business. The players were back in position, and the Chasers were launching another attack.

Seamus had possession of the Quaffle again, charging toward the goal and sending the ball straight to Demelza. Ginny, holding back, spotted the opportunity Gwenog Jones had mentioned and dove for the scarlet ball, intercepting it.

Her opponents were utterly baffled. She’d surged forward so quickly that by the time they turned around to block her, she was already hurtling toward the goalposts, shooting through the center hoop with precision, earning thunderous cheers from the crowd.

As she returned to her side of the field, she stopped next to the Holyhead Harpies’ captain and high-fived her.

“How did you know about the long pass?” McGonagall asked.

Jones smiled.

“Experience, dear.”

The training session wrapped up about thirty minutes later. The players landed in the muddy center of the field, soaked to the bone but grinning from ear to ear. They had surpassed their expectations, realizing their skills had significantly improved.

They hugged each other and headed back to the locker rooms, arms draped around one another, eager for a hot shower.

Once changed, they made their way toward the castle while Ginny lingered in her office.

“Still going over tactics?” came a voice behind her.

She turned and saw the Holyhead Harpies' captain leaning casually against the doorframe.

"You need to know when to stop sometimes, you know?"

Ginny smiled.

"That's what my mother always says," she replied. "But when you've grown up with six brothers, you always have to be on your guard."

"I completely understand," Jones said. "I've got five sisters, and let me tell you, it was hard to make myself heard in all that chaos."

"Five sisters?!" Ginny exclaimed. "Who was the eldest?"

Jones pointed a thumb at herself.

"And let me assure you, being the eldest didn't make it any easier."

Ginny laughed, quickly joined by Gwenog, who glanced around the room, nostalgia glinting in her eyes.

"It's funny how far away all of that seems now," Jones said. "It feels like another life."

"You went to Hogwarts?" Ginny asked.

"Of course," she said. "I joined my house team when I was just twelve. I played every position before settling on Beater. There was nothing I loved more than clearing the way for my teammates so we could win matches."

"Which house were you in?" Ginny asked curiously.

A sly smile spread across Gwenog's face.

"Not Gryffindor, I can tell you that. Nor Slytherin."

"Ravenclaw?" Ginny guessed.

Jones shook her head slowly.

"Hufflepuff?!" Ginny choked. "I don't believe it."

Jones raised her eyebrows.

"What's so surprising about that?"

Realizing her mistake, Ginny quickly backtracked.

"I didn't mean to be rude. It's just that I have friends in Hufflepuff, and none of them have a personality like yours."

Jones stroked her chin thoughtfully.

"I'm not so sure. I've met their team captain, and I can tell you, he's not a pushover."

"You mean Zacharias Smith?" Ginny asked.

Jones nodded.

"I don't think much of him," she admitted. "I don't like the way he treats my other Hufflepuff friends. He tends to put himself ahead of his teammates."

Jones smirked.

"Isn't that what the other houses do to Hufflepuff?" she quipped.

Ginny's eyes widened.

"Absolutely not!" she exclaimed. "At least, I don't know anyone in my house who feels superior to Hufflepuff. But I can't say the same for Ravenclaw and Slytherin. They often think they're better than everyone else."

Gwenog made an uncertain face but decided not to comment.

"Anyway, that's not why I'm here," she said. "I came to watch your last matches, and I think I'm not the only one who will be interested in the talents of your teams."

Ginny raised her eyebrows.

"You mean other professionals will be here to recruit us?" she asked.

The player nodded.

"I heard Skye Parkin will be coming to recruit a few players for her new team."

The news stunned Ginny. Two Quidditch legends were coming to watch her final match as Gryffindor team captain and Seeker. She had to be at her best and secure a victory against Slytherin.

The two young women left the locker room and headed back to the castle to dine in the Great Hall.

The next two weeks flew by. Teachers struggled more and more to maintain order among the houses. Spells flew left and right. Some students ended up with elephant trunks or their heads stuck in pumpkins.

The infirmary was constantly full. Professors had no choice but to punish groups of students, and the Carrows delighted in overseeing detentions, offering "Cruciatus practice sessions" to their favored students.

Peeves wasn't helping either. The Hogwarts poltergeist darted through the hallways, throwing dungbombs at passersby who dove into empty classrooms or hid behind their books.

"Charge!" he yelled, tossing bombs as he soared by.

He even targeted professors like the Carrows, who hadn't yet grown used to his antics. They tried casting all manner of curses at Peeves, but nothing seemed to hit him. He merely laughed, floating just out of reach.

Erine spent more and more time with Attilius, trying to learn more about his mission, but he worked hard to conceal his true intentions. Whenever possible, he slipped away to avoid her relentless questioning.

Meanwhile, Neville encouraged D.A. members to gather more frequently to resist the Carrows' presence, but students were growing more and more hesitant. They feared punishment and the Cruciatus Curse for participating in the clandestine group.

Meetings became increasingly rare, and none were held until after the Quidditch matches.

Each house eyed the others warily. Ravenclaws distrusted Hufflepuffs, and Gryffindors never turned their backs on Slytherins.

When the first match took place, supporters from each team crowded into their respective stands, cheering their players and jeering the opposition.

During the match, several players were hit by projectiles from the stands and had to retreat behind shielding spells to avoid being hurt.

Madam Hooch had to stop the match twice, as a Chaser from each team was knocked out by crystal balls hurled from the audience, putting them out of play for about ten minutes.

Seeing that the headmaster refused to attend the match, Professor McGonagall had to step in and threaten the crowd with collective punishment if another such incident occurred.

"Aren't you ashamed to act like wild boars in front of our guests?!" she scolded, gesturing towards the recruiters.

The match resumed, albeit with some isolated incidents, and ended with Hufflepuff's Seeker Maggie Gelbert snatching the Golden Snitch right under Ravenclaw's Seeker, who couldn't resist yelling at Madam Hooch for a foul he claimed she'd missed.

She was about to intervene when Gwenog Jones rushed onto the field, pulling the player aside to whisper something in his ear. He quickly calmed down, approached the referee to apologize, and congratulated Hufflepuff's Seeker on her skillful catch.

Gwenog applauded the sportsmanship, and the rest of the crowd soon joined in, cheering both teams for their fair play.

This intervention restored calm for a few days, but as the final approached the following Saturday, underhanded tactics and spells once again filled the castle's corridors.

To avoid any unfortunate accidents, Gryffindor team members were always escorted by two or three students for protection. Ginny couldn't take a step without groups of students rushing to accompany her between classes.

When Saturday arrived, the entire team was escorted by Professor McGonagall to prepare without incident. Professor Slughorn did the same for the Slytherin team.

Nearly the entire castle population made their way to the Quidditch pitch, trading insults and shouting slogans for their teams. They wore their house colors, carried banners, and displayed paintings and signs proclaiming support.

Just minutes remained before the match. The players were gathered in their respective locker rooms, each going through their pre-game rituals.

While Ginny locked herself in her office to review the team's final maneuvers, the others tightened their boots and adjusted their shoulder pads.

"I can almost feel the energy of the pitch," Seamus said, waving his hand in front of his eyes.

The others stared at him, confused.

"You have no idea how long I've dreamed of stepping onto this field and bringing the cup home to our house," he continued. "I've always cheered from the stands for my friends, but now I can finally give it my all to keep the cup in our hands."

The other team members nodded in agreement. They had no intention of letting Slytherin take the trophy.

"Seamus is right," Ginny said, emerging from her office. "The cup has been ours for four years, and I'm not about to give it up now."

She locked eyes with each team member.

"And you?" she asked.

A roar echoed through the locker room as the players cheered and patted each other on the back.

"Let's win this match," Ginny declared.

"Let's bring the cup home," Garrett added.

She glanced at him, and he gave her a wink.

"For our friends," Seamus whispered to his captain.

She nodded.

"For our friends," she agreed.

Each player grabbed their broom and waited for the commentator's call. This role, formerly held by Lee Jordan, had been surprisingly taken over by Rolf Scamander.

"Please welcome today's teams!" he announced. "First, the reigning champions led by the talented Ginny Weasley, playing as Seeker: the Gryffindor team!"

Thunderous applause erupted as seven scarlet figures soared out of the locker room and circled the stands.

"Now let's welcome the challengers, returning after several uncertain seasons with a talented new roster: the Slytherin team!"

Another round of applause echoed as a wave of green and silver emerged from their locker room, circling the pitch and rallying their supporters.

Each captain landed near Madam Hooch for the coin toss. Gryffindor won the pitch, and the players took their positions as the match began.

At Madam Hooch's whistle, she tossed the Quaffle into the air, signaling the start of the final.

"And Blaise Zabini grabs the Quaffle!" Rolf announced. "He dodges his opponents' attempts and heads straight for the goal. He passes it to Trent, who sends it to Binx."

The crowd roared as Seamus darted forward, intercepting the ball and passing it to Dalia.

"Willow's got the ball! She passes to Robins, who sends it back to Willow. The two players are lightning fast. Finnigan is open—are we about to see the first goal of the match?"

One of Slytherin's Beaters sent a Bludger hurtling toward Dalia, forcing her to swerve and drop the scarlet ball.

"An excellent defense by Crabbe, thwarting Gryffindor's attack. Binx recovers the Quaffle and races toward Williams' goal. Will he manage to score this time?"

Garrett stood still, watching the three Chasers closely to avoid being caught off guard. Binx lobbed the ball to Zabini, who struck it with a powerful kick.

The keeper dove to block the shot but only managed to graze the ball with his fingertips. The Quaffle hurtled toward the hoops, striking one and bouncing away.

"Oh, what a shame!" Rolf commented. "We were so close to seeing Slytherin's first goal, but the keeper held his ground."

Seamus sped toward the falling ball, noticing Zabini approaching fast. Though Zabini's broom seemed quicker, Seamus had the advantage of proximity.

At the last moment, Seamus veered and leaped off his broom to run a few steps, kicking the ball hard toward Demelza, who headed it straight into the left hoop.

"Goal for Gryffindor!" exclaimed Rolf. "Magnificent teamwork from Seamus Finnigan and Demelza Robins!"

The two players joined up to high-five each other as their supporters roared with joy.

"There it is!" Rolf continued. "The score is open. Slytherin takes back the Quaffle. Zabini races toward the opposing goals. He aims, and... he scores!"

A new wave of applause echoed through the stands. The Slytherin player paraded in front of the spectators waving green and silver banners.

For nearly an hour, neither team managed to pull ahead of the other. The score remained 50 to 30 for Gryffindor.

Ginny scanned the pitch in search of the Golden Snitch but couldn't catch sight of the small golden ball. She spent her time circling the pitch, looking everywhere for a glint of the Snitch's fluttering wings.

"And Gryffindor regains the Quaffle!" announced Rolf. "Willow speeds toward the goals."

Ginny leaned down to watch her teammates and spotted a strange glint near the Slytherin goalposts. She sped off toward what appeared to be the Snitch, immediately followed by the opposing team's Seeker.

"It seems the Seekers have spotted the Snitch," the commentator noted. "Weasley and Wardrobe are neck and neck, chasing the tiny golden ball like wolves after their prey."

The crowd held its collective breath. The commentator's voice struggled to rise above the cheers of encouragement from both sides. Each team desperately wanted victory.

Ginny flattened herself against her broomstick, trying to make herself as aerodynamic as possible. The opposing Seeker, equipped with a better broom, pushed her own to full speed and quickly overtook Ginny, who refused to back down.

At the last moment, Ginny swerved as the Snitch suddenly changed course, shooting upward. Launched at too high a speed, Wardrobe couldn't adjust her trajectory in time.

She noticed the Snitch's sudden direction change just in time to avoid crashing into the ground. With a sharp kick, she shot back upward but couldn't close the gap between herself and Ginny.

Ginny surged forward, heading straight toward the sun and squinting against its glare. She struggled to see where the Snitch was heading and relied on Rolf's commentary to track its movements.

She glimpsed the golden ball darting toward the stands, hiding among the spectators.

Ginny hesitated for a second before diving after her competitor, who showed no hesitation in plowing through the crowd to grab the Snitch.

Ginny soared over Wardrobe, pushing her broom to its limit to pull ahead. She chanced a glance at the crowd and caught the encouraging gaze of Gwenog Jones, who gave her a firm nod.

Ginny launched herself from her broom, diving headlong toward the Snitch. She managed to close her hand around the small golden ball just as she crashed into the Slytherin supporters.

For a moment, time seemed to freeze before cheers erupted across the stands. The supporters lifted the young girl and carried her triumphantly on their shoulders.

"Weasley caught the Snitch!" roared Rolf. "Gryffindor wins!"

Cheers echoed throughout the stadium. Supporters dressed in red and gold hugged one another before rushing toward Ginny, lifting her onto their shoulders to parade her around the pitch.

They set her down amidst her team as Professor McGonagall approached with the cup, a broad smile lighting her face.

"You did it, Miss Weasley!" she exclaimed.

Ginny blinked in confusion.

"You've managed to outshine your brothers," McGonagall clarified.

Ginny beamed and threw herself into the arms of her Transfiguration professor. Initially startled, McGonagall returned the embrace warmly.

She gently pushed Ginny back and raised her arm to present the tournament's victors.

The supporters accompanied the players back to the common room, where the celebrations lasted well into the night. Some students pulled out treats from their stashes and prepared a true feast.

Someone tossed a bottle of Butterbeer to Ginny, who went to sit in one of the battered armchairs by the fireplace. She had barely sat down when a second-year student approached her.

"Someone's waiting for you outside."

She stared at him, surprised.

"Who is it?" she asked.

The boy gave her a mysterious smile.

"I think you should see for yourself."

Curious, Ginny stood and stepped through the Fat Lady's portrait. There, she found Gwenog Jones and Professor McGonagall waiting with broad smiles.

"Professor?" she asked, puzzled. "What's going on? Is everything alright?"

The professor stepped aside to let the Holyhead Harpies' captain speak.

"I came to congratulate you on your magnificent match," she said. "I thought you and your team were outstanding, but I don't think you're playing in the right position."

Ginny was at a loss for words.

"I think you should consider switching positions," Jones insisted. "I have a feeling you're not in your natural role."

Ginny nodded slowly.

"I prefer playing as a Chaser," she admitted, "but I couldn't find anyone skilled enough to fill the position. I had to step in when our usual Seeker was unavailable."

Her gaze drifted as she thought of the boy who held her heart.