

MY LITTLE PONY
Season 9
2, 4, 6, Greaaat
EP 915
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Premise: January 23rd, 2018

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Logline: *The School of Friendship is starting a buckball team and Rainbow Dash has to come to terms with the fact that she won't be coaching the team—she'll be coaching the pep squad.*

Outside the School of Friendship, Twilight comes across Rainbow Dash schooling Snails on the finer points of setting up a Buckball pitch. Looking through a tripod-mounted, surveyor's theodolite, Dash references an official buckball league handbook as she shouts instructions across the lawn at Snails who levitates a paint roller and does his best to draw the lines to Dash's exacting specifications. Twilight questions whether the field really needs to be up to Dash's impossibly high standards and Dash looks at her like she's crazy. The School of Friendship will be officially entering Equestria's Scholastic Buckball League—the competition in the SBL is actually even more intense than the adult league and Dash wants to give her team—err, their team—as much of an advantage as she can. Twilight appreciates all of Dash's efforts, but asks her to keep in mind that the team will be made up of students, who might not be as focused on competition as she is. Dash, rattles off a few more complicated instructions to Snails, then turns to Twilight and insists that, though she might be a competitive pony, she'd never ask more from her team than they are prepared to give. Unconvinced, Twilight looks over at Snails, who's confused Dash's instructions and crisscrossed the painted lines all over himself.

Dash discusses the future of the school's buckball team with Fluttershy and Pinkie Pie and determines that in the best interests of the team, they should be the coaches. They are teachers at the school and also happen to be the best buckball players in all of Equestria, so it's a no-brainer. They also decide that, although Snails is a part of the championship team, he's probably not the best choice to be a coach. Snails readily agrees. He might be a phenomenal keeper, but he doesn't really know why or how he does it. Dash offers to help in any way she can and both Pinkie and Fluttershy ask her to help with tryouts. Chomping at the bit to get started, Dash papers the school with flyers, convinces students who are on the fence to attend, and generally gets her program ready. At tryouts, Dash quickly assess the talents and skills of the attendees and though all the students who show up are excited to be a part of the team, not all of them have what it takes. Luckily, anypony who doesn't make the team can still help out by joining the pep squad (headed by Snails) to cheer the school on. Dash makes a point that they are really all one team anyway and the pep squad bound students are excited to do their part. Unfortunately, it turns out that Snails isn't great at coaching them either. Later, Dash presents her final selections to Twilight, Pinkie, and Fluttershy who are impressed with the team she's put together—so much so, they ask Dash if she'd consider being a coach as well. Over the moon, Dash immediately accepts before learning that what they want is for Dash to coach the pep squad!

Snails is thrilled. Coaching the pep squad has been really stressful for him and he's much more comfortable as an assistant coach. Rainbow Dash, however, isn't as enthusiastic. She'd much rather be coaching the "real" team. When the pep squad members remind her how she said they were all part of the same team, Dash agrees. Of course the pep squad is a part of the team—just not the sports part. Determined to live up to their coach's expectations, the pep squad insists that they are prepared to do whatever it takes to get Dash as excited about cheering as they are. Impressed by their dedication, Dash decides to train the squad the only way she knows how and soon has them running drills just like the regular team. She even goes so far as to set up a scrimmage between the pep squad and the regular team. Dash justifies it by saying it will help all of them get in touch with what the actual team is doing, so they'll be able to cheer that much more effectively. Unfortunately, the pep squad, not knowing if they should cheer or play, end up more like rodeo clowns and make a mess of the whole thing. Not only is the pep squad disappointed by their sub-par buckballing performance, Pinkie, Fluttershy, and the team worry they won't have anyone to cheer for them during the actual games.

Admitting her mistake, Rainbow Dash decides that she isn't up to the task of leading the pep squad and steps down as coach. With no other option, the squad looks to Snails to take the reins and pulls them together for what ultimately looks destined to be a terrible performance, but at least the students are doing what they want to do—even as they fail to pull off the flips and gymnastic elements they want to add to their routine. Inspired, Dash sees how important cheering actually is to all of them. Realizing that cheering can have an athletic component, she comes up with a routine that caters to the squad's actual talents and abilities. Finally, the pep squad is ready for the first game of the season, as the School of Friendship faces the team from Celestia's school of magic in Canterlot. Intimidated by their imposing opponents (who use magic to transform some of their members into pegasi and earth ponies to fill out their team), Team Friendship relies on their pep squad to pump them up. Ultimately Dash and her pep squad step up and give the team the confidence they need to win in front of Celestia, Twilight and a cheering stadium of fans. Afterward, Dash admits being a part of the pep squad was just as good a feeling as playing ever was.