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AWESOME
FACTS ABOUT
FOOTBALL AND
THE WORLD!

Alex Bellos



BEN LYTTLETON

First published 2021 by Walker Books Ltd
87 Vauxhall Walk, London SE11 5HJ

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

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Printed and bound in Germany by GGP Media GmbH

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data:
a catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-5295-0050-9



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FOOTBALL SCHOOL

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≡ FANTASTIC ≡

FOOTBALL STORIES

FULL OF
AWESOME
FACTS ABOUT
FOOTBALL AND
THE WORLD!

Alex Bellos & Ben Lyttleton

Illustrated by Spike Gerrell

Welcome to Football School 20 Fantastic
Football Stories!

World Book Day edition!

I'm Alex!

And I'm Ben!

We're your teachers.

We mean coaches!

We think the **WORLD** of football.

So we've put our favourite stories
in this **BOOK**.

Which will have you in a **DAZE**!

You will get to read all about
some amazing players.

Like the youngest player to score in the
Champions League.

And the striker who helped
feed millions of children.

I'm hungry to know more!

Seconds, anyone?



In fact, inside this book are four smaller books.

The first tells stories of some
FANTASTIC FOOTBALLERS.

Followed by **TOP TEAMS**,
featuring a club called the Meringues.

Tasty!

The third book reveals football's
incredible **GAME CHANGERS.**

Like the young England star who made a
name for himself in Germany.

And the fourth book reveals several
UNBELIEVABLE TALES.

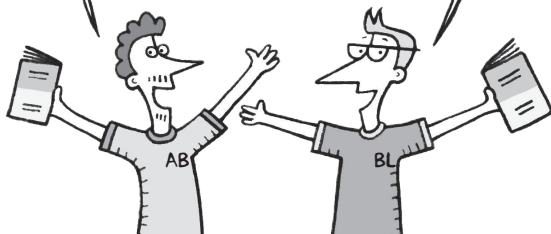
About burglars, a cave, goats and poo.
(But not goat poo.)

Yuk!

KEEP ALERT! At the end of each
book there is a quiz to test you on
what you've just learned.

All together now!

**ONLY ONE WORLD BOOK DAY, ONLY
ONE WOOOORLD BOOOOOOOK
DAAAAAY!!!**



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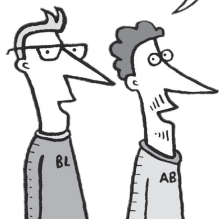
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World Book Day's mission is to offer every child and young person the opportunity to read and love books by giving you the chance to have a book of your own.

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FANTASTIC FOOTBALLERS

**A. BELLOS
&
B. LYTTLETON**



ANSU FATI

Born: 2002

Country: Spain

Position: Left-
winger

Ansu Fati is
a record-

breaking winger with the world at his feet: he is the youngest player ever to score a league goal for Barcelona, the youngest player to score for Spain and the youngest player to score in the Champions League. He managed all three feats before he turned eighteen!

Lionel Messi has tipped the rapid youngster to reach the top, which is just as well – Fati's emergence in the Barcelona team came when Messi was entering the swansong of his career. Fati looks set to be crowned his natural replacement.

There are similarities between the two players. Both were born outside Spain: Messi in Argentina and Fati in Guinea-Bissau

in West Africa. Both moved to Barcelona's youth academy, La Masia, at a young age: Messi at thirteen and Fati, after turning down Real Madrid, at ten. And both have exceptional skills and an eye for goal. Fati may even be the faster of the two!

Fati took his chance in the Barcelona team in 2019, after a spate of injuries hit Messi and Barcelona's other strikers, Luis Suárez and Ousmane Dembélé. He was just sixteen years old when he came off the bench to head home a goal in only his second appearance. That made him the youngest player ever to score for the club – even Messi waited until he was nearly eighteen for his first Barcelona goal! When Fati started a match soon after, he scored within two minutes. This teenager was in a hurry to the top!



Spain's national team was keen to select Fati, who also qualified to play for his birth country, Guinea-Bissau, and for Portugal. It did not take long to see why Spain wanted him. In his second match, Fati won a penalty after 90 seconds, and later curled in a shot that went in off the post. Another game, another goal, and another record smashed!



Fati normally plays on the left wing and likes to cut inside and shoot with his right foot. His pace makes him almost impossible to tackle. He has also impressed observers with his movement off the ball, and with his ability to cope with the pressure and attention from fans and the media. Nothing seems to phase Fati.

Barcelona was so determined to keep Fati that they gave him a new contract the following season, and placed his value at an eye-watering £425 million. "I hope I can be at Barcelona all my life," Fati said.

Barcelona will be hoping for the same!



FRIENDS AND RIVALS

When he was in Barcelona's youth academy, Fati formed a devastating strike partnership with a player from Japan called Takefusa Kubo. In one season for the Under-12s, the pair scored 130 goals between them. Kubo left Barcelona but ended up back in Spain when he signed for Real Madrid. Fati and Kubo have not let their clubs' rivalry ruin their friendship. Mates before teams!



HARRY KANE

Born: 1993

Country: England

Position: Centre-forward

Relentless
in training

and prolific in front of goal, Harry Kane is the hard-working centre-forward who overcame a series of rejections to become England captain and the Golden Boot winner for scoring the most goals at the 2018 World Cup. Humble Harry is a true hero!

Kane started out at Arsenal's academy, but he was released when he was eight. "We'll just work harder and find another club," his dad told him. That's exactly what Kane did – although it took time. Kane was eleven when he joined the Tottenham Hotspur academy. At eighteen, he was sent on loan to clubs playing in lower divisions, like Leyton

Orient, Millwall, Norwich and Leicester City. He scored a handful of goals but never stood out as a star of the future. Kane wondered if he'd ever play in the Premier League. He later said that coming through these episodes of self-doubt, and developing resilience in the face of adversity, was crucial to his career success.

He was stuck on the substitutes' bench at Leicester when he watched an American football documentary that changed his mindset. Kane learned that the New England Patriots quarterback, Tom Brady, was always overlooked as a youngster. Brady worked obsessively to improve and became one of the most successful players in American football history. Kane was inspired: he even called one of his dogs Brady! From that day on, he was going to be like Brady and work as hard as possible to get his chance.

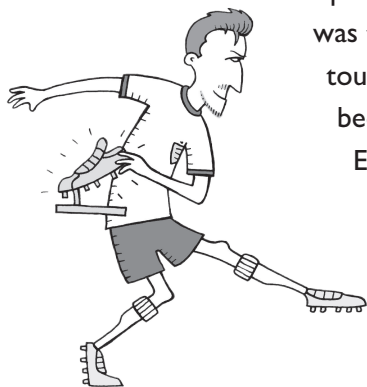


His moment came in November 2014 when, after scoring a few goals for Spurs in cup competitions, he scored his first Premier League goal with a last-minute free kick to beat Aston Villa. “All the things I went through before I scored Goal Number One ... that’s what made me who I am,” he said. Kane kept his place in the team and went on to score over 30 goals that season. A Spurs star was born.

Kane never stopped scoring: in November 2020, he scored goal number 200 for Spurs. With over 150 Premier League goals, he is closing in on Alan Shearer’s record as the league’s all-time leading scorer. As Kane developed, it turned out that he was good at everything – scoring with either foot, holding up the ball, crossing for teammates and heading. His main strength, though, was his drive and determination: the continued effort he put in to improve his game. He stayed late after training for extra shooting, focusing on aiming low in the corners. He became stronger and

faster, took ice baths to aid his recovery, employed a chef at home to ensure his nutrition was correct and even learned to love eating fish. His dedication extended to his fans: he once spent two hours in the stadium car park signing autographs.

These are the reasons why England coach Gareth Southgate appointed him captain before the 2018 World Cup. "He is absolutely the role model you want," said Southgate. England reached the World



Cup semi-final and Kane was the top scorer in the tournament with six goals, becoming only the second Englishman (after Gary Lineker in 1986) to win the Golden Boot.



STAR SCHOOL

Harry Kane went to the same school as former England star David Beckham. This is just one of the things they have in common. Both footballers have also captained the England national team.



MEGAN RAPINOE

Born: 1985

Country: USA

Position: Winger

Megan Rapinoe

dyed her hair bright pink for the 2019 World Cup, but that was only one of the reasons the USA winger stood out. Rapinoe was a well-known campaigner for equality and tolerance as well as a key part of the USA team that had won the previous World Cup. She was the USA captain in 2019, and the team was tipped to win the title again.

Halfway through the tournament Rapinoe became its most talked-about player. She had a public row with the most powerful person in the world, Donald Trump, who at that time was the president of the USA.

In the USA, when the national football team wins the World Cup, it is traditional for them to pay a visit to the president at his residence, the White House. But Rapinoe said that if her team won she would refuse to go. She said her refusal was because she disagreed with President Trump's attitude towards women and Black people.

It isn't the first time that Rapinoe has spoken up for her beliefs. She is as fearless in standing up for her principles as she is at tormenting defenders on the pitch. She has criticized her bosses at US Soccer for wage discrimination, and she and her girlfriend, a professional basketball player, were the first gay couple to appear on the cover of an American sports magazine.

However, Rapinoe had not made controversial comments so openly, or at such a crucial time for the team, as those directed against President Trump.

When President Trump heard about her comments he was furious. He said she should go and win the tournament before speaking out.



SISTER SLOGANS

Rapinoe has set up a fashion label with her twin sister Rachael. Their slogan is Be Your Best You – which is appropriate, as this Megan is the best Megan we know!

He warned her not to disrespect her own country. Never before has the leader of a country had such a public falling out with the biggest star in its national team.

The pressure on Rapinoe was enormous going into the quarter-final against hosts France. But it took just five minutes for her to make her mark, with a smart goal from a free kick outside the area. She ran to the touchline with her team-mates behind her, and faced the cheering crowd with her arms spread wide, and chest out. The goal celebration made her look defiant and proud, and it became known as The Pose.

Rapinoe scored again in the second half; it was the crucial winning goal as

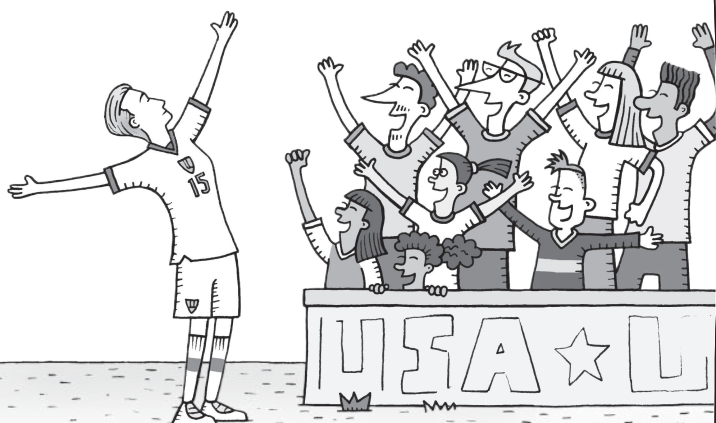


France netted a late consolation. Rapinoe was injured for the semi-final match against England, which the USA won 2–1, but she was fit again for the final. And she was back on the scoresheet too, opening the scoring with a neat penalty in USA's 2–0 win over the Netherlands.

USA were the winners of the 2019 World Cup. Rapinoe scooped the Golden Boot for top goal-scorer. Later that year she also won the Ballon D'Or for the world's best player.

Rapinoe's triumphs in 2019 were especially sweet because she had also silenced her most high-profile critic, President Trump.

And did she – or the team – visit President Trump at the White House? What do you think? Of course not! Megan Rapinoe is a star who sticks fiercely to her principles.





MARCUS RASHFORD

Born: 1997

Country: England

Position: Forward

England
striker

Marcus Rashford spent his time during the coronavirus pandemic doing something far more important than scoring goals. He persuaded the British government to help hungry children receive free meals.

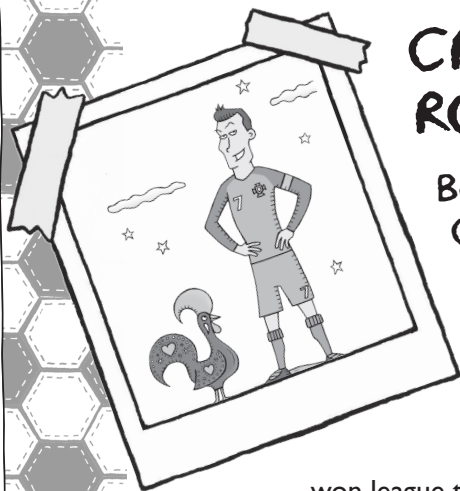
There are over one million children in England who rely on eating some of their meals at school every day. Rashford was one of them not so long ago. He grew up in Manchester with his mum and four siblings. Rashford went to a breakfast club in the morning, had a free school lunch, then an after-school snack, before his mum would cook dinner for the family after coming in late from work.

Rashford went on to become centre-forward for his local team, Manchester United, and then a regular starter for England. As his fame grew, so did his determination to help the next generation of vulnerable children. During the pandemic, he worked with a food charity to raise funds to deliver food to hungry children when schools were closed.

He led a campaign to ensure children received free school meals in all holidays during the pandemic. He personally persuaded Prime Minister Boris Johnson to promise that the government would spend over £400 million to support children in need. “Can we not all agree that no child should be going to bed hungry?” Rashford said.

In October 2020, Rashford was recognized by the Queen as an MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) for his efforts in fighting child food poverty. Rashford has shown the world that he is a hero both on and off the pitch.





CRISTIANO RONALDO

Born: 1985

Country: Portugal

Position: Centre-forward

Cristiano Ronaldo has

won league titles and Champions

League finals. He has broken goal-scoring records and lifted the Ballon D'Or. But his most memorable game is one in which he did not score a dramatic winner or bag a hat-trick. It was the 2016 Euro final, in which Portugal was up against France. The game would become known as The Ronaldo Final – but not for the reasons you might expect.

Portugal had never won an international tournament and Ronaldo was desperate to win. At the 2016 Euros, Portugal were a defensively solid team that relied on Ronaldo's individual brilliance. He was captain and had played a huge role in helping Portugal reach the final.

In the knockout matches, Ronaldo was decisive: he set up Portugal's winner against Croatia, then scored in the penalty shoot-out win over Poland. His goal and assist in the semi-final against Wales clinched Portugal's spot in the final. Their opponents were France, the tournament hosts who, with the likes of Paul Pogba and Antoine Griezmann, were expected to win.



Seven minutes into the final, Ronaldo collided with France winger Dimitri Payet and fell to the ground clutching his knee. The whole of Portugal held its breath. He received treatment and limped back onto the pitch. He could barely walk and with tears in his eyes, he asked the coach to replace him.

The star player was stretchered off with not even half an hour of the match played. Every Portuguese fan's greatest nightmare had come true; on the biggest stage of all, Ronaldo would not be able to save the day for his nation. Surely Portugal's chances were ruined.

Ronaldo watched the rest of the game, which finished 0–0, from the sidelines.



In the period before extra time, he walked around each of his team-mates,

urging them to make one last effort towards making history.

As the last 30 minutes of the match played out, Ronaldo became even more animated. He stood next to coach Fernando Santos, limping heavily as he bellowed out tactical instructions. Ronaldo was demonstrating the desire to win that has pushed him to become one of the best players of his generation.

The game was decided ten minutes before the end. One of Portugal's substitutes, Eder, hit a low shot from outside the area that whizzed into the corner of the France net. Ronaldo could not have done it better himself!

On the sideline, Ronaldo pumped his fists in excitement. When the final whistle blew, confirming Portugal as European champions, Ronaldo cried again, though this time the tears were of relief, joy and happiness. Ronaldo had dragged Portugal to the final, and his team-mates repaid him in the best way possible.

Ronaldo had broken several individual records during the tournament – including all-time top goal-scorer and appearance-maker, as well as the only player to score in four different tournaments – but winning the final as a team was the only thing that mattered to him. He tied a Portugal flag around his waist and hobbled towards the presentation area to lift the trophy. With tears in his eyes, he hoisted aloft the trophy. One of the greatest individual players in the game had helped his country make history.



QUIZ

1. **Ansu Fati plays for Spain but in what African country was he born?**
 - a) Senegal
 - b) The Gambia
 - c) Mali
 - d) Guinea-Bissau
2. **Harry Kane went to the same school as which previous England captain?**
 - a) Wayne Rooney
 - b) David Beckham
 - c) Bobby Moore
 - d) Steven Gerrard
3. **Why was Marcus Rashford awarded an MBE in 2020?**
 - a) For his superb football skills
 - b) For his efforts in fighting child food poverty
 - c) He rescued a cat from a tree.
 - d) He donated money to charity.
4. **Which high-profile critic did Megan Rapinoe silence by helping USA win the 2019 World Cup?**
 - a) Boris Johnson
 - b) Her mum
 - c) President Trump
 - d) Lady Gaga
5. **How did Cristiano Ronaldo help Portugal win the 2016 Euro final?**
 - a) He coached the team from the sidelines.
 - b) He picked the team.
 - c) He scored a hat-trick.
 - d) He saved a penalty.

DISCOVER THE MOST MIND-BLOWING MOMENTS IN FOOTBALL



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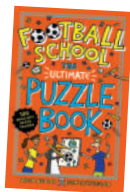
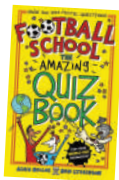
The record-breaking Champions League scorer

The top club known as the Meringues

The footballers who pood on the pitch



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