



# *A Beautiful Game*

FOOTBALL THROUGH THE EYES OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST PLAYERS

Publicity Guidelines

Tom Watt

*foreword* Arsène Wenger *introduction* David Beckham

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# Specifications

Hardcover with jacket, 246mm x 290mm (landscape), 176 pages, 130 images, 67,665 words.



Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Ireland



South Africa

# About *A Beautiful Game*

*A Beautiful Game*: intimate, untold stories and unique, provocative perspectives on football, childhood and life from more than forty of the world's greatest players.

Wherever you are on earth, it's only a matter of time before you will come across children playing football. Another five minutes and you will probably find yourself having a ball rolled to your feet as an invitation to join in the game. Across every continent, football is a common language and a culture shared: a joy, a passion, an escape and an affirmation of identity understood and celebrated by children – and their parents – in every country on earth.

For this unique collaborative project, football writer Tom Watt talked to the world's top footballers about growing up and falling in love with the game: Argentina's Lionel Messi and Brazil's Gilberto Silva; England's David James and Scotland's Craig Gordon; Italy's Fabio Cannavaro, Spain's Iker Casillas and France's Franck Ribery; South Africa's Benni McCarthy and Nigeria's Nwankwo Kanu; the USA's Landon Donovan and Shunsuke Nakamura from Japan; the world's most famous player, David Beckham.

*A Beautiful Game* tells their stories, in the players' own words; stories of boys who would grow up to be heroes for a new generation of young players and fans. They look back to their childhoods: to their family homes, to their schoolrooms, to the friends they grew up with and to the places where they first played the game that has made them stars. The players' own words are brought to life with over 130 full-colour images which offer rare, emotive and striking insights into childhood all over the world and celebrate football's ability to touch the lives of children – and adults – wherever the beautiful game is played.

Five per cent of the originating publisher's revenue from sales of the book worldwide will benefit selected UNICEF sport-related projects.

The views or opinions expressed in this book do not necessarily reflect those of UNICEF.

FOREWORD

Football is a beautiful game because it belongs  
to us all.

~ ARSÈNE WENGER ~

# Foreword from *A Beautiful Game*

Football is a beautiful game because it belongs to us all. The whole world plays. Some of us play better than others, of course, but we all know how it feels to run and kick a ball. Wherever you are, from morning until night, you will see children playing football. Whatever sets those children – or their parents – apart, the game can bring them together. Across every continent, now more than ever, football is a common language and a culture shared: joy, passion, knowing what it is to be in a team; an escape, an inspiration, an affirmation of identity.

A ball, a tin can, a stone or a bundle of plastic bags held together with a rubber band; anything as long as it rolls. A crowded backstreet, a dusty yard, a windswept hillside or a few square metres of beach: where you first kick a ball is part of the landscape of childhood, as much as the schoolroom or the family home. The game is at the heart of growing up, at the heart of life itself, for millions of children all over the world.

What makes a player? Skill, of course. And athleticism. Intelligence, commitment, humility, courage and desire as well. What makes a top player? All those things and one thing more: the greatest players – whatever their backgrounds, whatever the journey they have made – all love football with the same intensity as they did when they were little boys. They love the game and maybe that, more than anything, is what makes us happy when we watch them play.

The best football players are recognized, respected and admired without regard to national borders. Their words and deeds can inspire boys and girls in their own countries and in countries on the other side of the world. Those players' lives have been transformed by football and, of course, the game can transform the lives of children everywhere who look up to them as well.

A great player can say he belongs to the country of his birth; or to the country where he has reached the top of his profession. He can say he belongs to both. The truth is: the great player belongs to football. And his spirit – maybe his story too – belongs to every child who plays.

I hope you enjoy *A Beautiful Game*.

Arsène Wenger  
London, November 2008

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From *A Beautiful Game* by Tom Watt.

## INTRODUCTION

I can't know what was happening in the rest of their lives. I don't even know if they were all friends: they might have been fighting each other an hour later! But, while we were playing, they were all together, sorting themselves out as teams; and all of them up for a game. Wherever you are in the world, it seems to me, that's what football can do.

~ DAVID BECKHAM ~

# Introduction from *A Beautiful Game*

I'd never been anywhere like Sierra Leone. While I was at Manchester United, we went to Thailand on a tour and, while we were there, we visited a facility called the Kredtrakarn Centre in Bangkok which was supported by UNICEF. All of the girls there had been involved in sex work or child labour at some point in their lives and exploited by adults. Some of them were still very young. The centre was a refuge for all of them. That must have been at least ten years ago now but the memory has stayed with me ever since: that visit opened my eyes to things I'd never thought about, things I couldn't even imagine.

That visit with United was my first introduction to UNICEF and I was honoured, afterwards, to be asked to get involved personally. I had an obvious connection with the Sport for Development programme and wanted to do something to help. Ever since agreeing to become a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, I'd always had this idea to do a trip to Africa as part of what I was doing with the charity. I wanted to go somewhere I felt I could actually do some good by visiting; I wanted to see what help people were getting from the fundraising I was involved in back at home. If I was going to properly understand what UNICEF was trying to do, I needed to see it in action for myself.

When the opportunity to do a visit like that was first mentioned, I talked to the people from UNICEF and we agreed that I should do the thing properly. I didn't want to go somewhere that had been tidied up for my visit so that we could take some nice photos. I wanted to go somewhere UNICEF's work was most needed, somewhere in real trouble. That's when the possibility of going to Sierra Leone came up. UNICEF's focus there is on child survival: 27 per cent of children in the country die before reaching their fifth birthday, the highest percentage anywhere in the world. Once I found out about the situation and the

fact that so many of those children die from preventable causes, despite some people telling me how dangerous it was and telling me I didn't need to go somewhere like that to make an impression, I was determined that Sierra Leone it would be.

It was all organized and I know a lot of work went into making that trip happen, early in 2008. It felt to me it was worth it. Don't get me wrong: I wasn't worried about my safety or anything like that before I went. To be honest, what I was worried about was what effect the things I was going to see might have on me. I suppose I didn't really have any idea how I was going to come away feeling. I've got to say that going to Sierra Leone turned out to be one of the most rewarding, most satisfying experiences of my life. It was a trip I won't ever forget.

It may seem hard to believe but, in the end, I left Sierra Leone feeling so positive. Of course I saw hunger, illness, devastation, and it was terrible; but, at the same time, the work I saw going on genuinely inspired me. What UNICEF is trying to do in Sierra Leone really is changing kids' lives there and the lives of their families too. I'd never have imagined that: that I would come away from a country that's suffered so much but still feel positive about Sierra Leone's future. UNICEF's work was going on and that meant there was hope. And, you know, football can be a little part of that.

Look at that picture. That was taken in a town called Mangorea, where we went to visit a newborn little girl named Mariatsu, just a day or two old. I went to Mariatsu's house with the community health nurse, Angele. That's her in the background. Mariatsu's mum, Alice, was 16 and was hoping to be able to go back to school soon. Angele was there to give Mariatsu her polio vaccination and I actually got to give her the drops that morning. I can't

describe the feeling to you. I just kept thinking: "Am I doing this right?" It was pretty incredible.

We stopped off at Mariatsu's house on our way to a community health outreach post near the town of Makeni in the Northern Province. Children from all the villages nearby can go there to see the nurses who check their growth, weigh them, give them vaccinations and talk to their parents about hygiene and nutrition. After we'd met the staff there and seen what was going on, we came outside and there were all these children waiting around. I looked at the crowd of kids and thought: "We should give them a football." I grabbed one and hid it behind my back. I think the kids had already seen it, though, and you can tell from the picture how excited they were.

I found myself thinking how lucky our kids are at home; how much our kids have to enjoy. There, in Sierra Leone, you could see how much a football could mean to those children. A proper ball. The excitement on their faces is the same excitement, though, that I see on my own kids' faces when they're having fun. Playing football makes those children happy in Sierra Leone just like it makes our kids happy back at home. I think they were excited to see me. But I think they were even more excited about getting a real ball. They were amazed by it but, as soon as I handed it over, they were straight into playing a game: they ran off and forgot all about me.

I went through so many different emotions during my time with those children in Sierra Leone. We went to another UNICEF-supported clinic, Binkolo, in the town of Makeni. They look after mums and their children there, especially trying to prevent the transmission to newborns of HIV. I met so many children. Like those twins in the photo.

Can you imagine the love you feel? Of course I love my own children. But you're there in West Africa, away from everything you know, and holding those twins in your arms. They were just a few months old. They've no idea who you are or what's going on. But you can feel a parent's love welling up inside you. I'd been worried – I'm a bit on the emotional side, you know! – that I'd get upset; that I'd get a bit overwhelmed by it all. But you can see what's being done; their lives are so hard but those children look bright and happy. One boy came up to me when I arrived and handed me a little flower, a daisy or something. In return, he expected me to carry him around in my arms for the next hour! What could I do?

Well, I could play football. And I'd had in my mind all along that, as well as the visits, it would be great to do something to do with football, even though I wasn't sure what. Later in the day, we were driving along, just crossing over a bridge in a place called Aberdeen, which is a neighbourhood of the capital of Sierra Leone, Freetown. I saw this cloud of dust coming up off a field by the side of the road. There must have been about 40 kids on there, running around in the middle of a game of football: eight- and nine-year-olds through to guys my age.

I called out to our driver: "Stop!" A couple of the guys looking after us said it would be better not to stop right there but I just said, "No, I'm going for a game of football." There were some old metal goalposts; nets, even. I wandered over and they came running up to me. First, they were just amazed to see a white guy coming to join in. Then I think some of them recognized me. But we just started playing: it was a game of Shirts versus Skins. I played Shirts first half and then Skins after. We must have played for about half an hour. I've got to tell you: it was hot; ridiculously hot! I don't know if I've

ever sweated like that during a game of football. And I've definitely played on better pitches! It was really bumpy but some of the kids had great touch which was probably down to them playing on that sort of surface. So lean, too, look at them; fit – really good athletes. You can see, in the picture, the guy in the orange shorts and the red shirt. He took it on himself to become my "minder" during the game. He made sure nobody tried to kick me too hard or foul me. And, at the end, it was him that managed to get me back to our vehicle: it got a bit mad once we finished playing. I gave him my shirt to say thank you.

I can't know for sure but I got the feeling those lads are probably out on that pitch pretty well every hour of every day. You could see how much they love football; how much they love playing the game. People in Sierra Leone love watching too. Anywhere there's a TV, if there's a game on, you'll see 40 or 50 kids crowded round it, trying to have a look. The African Cup of Nations was on while I was out there and everybody wanted to be in front of a screen whenever there was a game. You'll be driving along the road and see a bar with a telly on and it's just a crowd of people – kids, adults, everybody – out in the street, watching. It's fantastic.

Manchester, Madrid, Los Angeles or Freetown: football's a game people love everywhere you go. Since I made my debut for Manchester United – that's a long time ago now! – one of the things that's changed in professional football is that there are players from all over the world playing in the different leagues now. From the supporter's point of view, I think foreign players have brought so much to the Premier League in England, for example. People like Eric Cantona and Dennis Bergkamp and Gianfranco Zola made a huge difference to English football while I was at United. At Real Madrid, it felt like a privilege for me to be playing alongside truly great players like Zine-

dine Zidane and Ronaldo. And, here in Los Angeles, it's the same: every dressing room, it seems, is full of players from different countries, different continents. But, even though you may not speak the same language as your teammate – and you may have been brought up in completely different backgrounds – when you're playing football together you understand each other perfectly. Just like with those lads by the side of the road in Sierra Leone: as soon as we had a ball in front of us, we all wanted the same thing. Didn't matter where we were or what the prize was: it was all of us together, just wanting to play and wanting to win. I can't know what was happening in the rest of their lives. I don't even know if they were all friends: they might have been fighting each other an hour later! But, while we were playing, they were all together, sorting themselves out as teams; and all of them up for a game. Wherever you are in the world, it seems to me, that's what football can do.

David Beckham  
Los Angeles, October 2008

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# Contributors featured in *A Beautiful Game*

## By name

David Beckham – Italy	Craig Gordon – Scotland	Martin Laursen – Denmark	Tomáš Rosický – Czech Republic
Artur Boruc – Poland	Eidur Gudjohnsen – Iceland	Benni McCarthy – South Africa	Carloz Ruíz – Guatemala
Fabio Cannavaro – Italy	Iván Guerrero – Honduras	Lionel Messi – Argentina	Georgios Samaras – Greece
Iker Casillas – Spain	David Healy – Northern Ireland	Christoph Metzelder – Germany	Mark Schwarzer – Australia
Ulises De La Cruz – Ecuador	Ahmed “Mido” Hossam – Egypt	Sulley Muntari – Ghana	Gilberto Silva – Brazil
Mahamadou Diarra – Mali	Radhi Jaïdi – Tunisia	Benjani Mwaruwari – Zimbabwe	Alexey Smertin – Russia
Landon Donovan – USA	David James – England	Shunsuke Nakamura – Japan	Claudio Suárez – Mexico
Emmanuel Eboué – Côte d’Ivoire	Ante Jazic – Canada	Ryan Nelsen – New Zealand	Robin Van Persie – Netherlands
Talal El Karkouri – Morocco	Toni Kallio – Finland	Morten Gamst Pedersen – Norway	Johann Vogel – Switzerland
Luís Figo – Portugal	Nwankwo Kanu – Nigeria	Emanuel Pogatetz – Austria	Arsène Wenger – England
Maykel Galindo – Cuba	Vincent Kompany – Belgium	Franck Ribéry – France	

## By country

Argentina – Lionel Messi	Egypt – Ahmed “Mido”Hossam	Italy – David Beckham	Poland – Artur Boruc
Australia – Mark Schwarzer	England – David James	Italy – Fabio Cannavaro	Portugal – Luís Figo
Austria – Emanuel Pogatetz	England – Arsène Wenger	Japan – Shunsuke Nakamura	Russia – Alexey Smertin
Belgium – Vincent Kompany	Finland – Toni Kallio	Mali – Mahamadou Diarra	Scotland – Craig Gordon
Brazil – Gilberto Silva	France – Franck Ribéry	Mexico – Claudio Suárez	South Africa – Benni McCarthy
Canada – Ante Jazic	Germany – Christoph Metzelder	Morocco – Talal El Karkouri	Spain – Iker Casillas
Côte d’Ivoire – Emmanuel Eboué	Ghana – Sulley Muntari	Netherlands – Robin Van Persie	Switzerland – Johann Vogel
Cuba – Maykel Galindo	Greece – Georgios Samaras	New Zealand – Ryan Nelsen	Tunisia – Radhi Jaïdi
Czech Republic – Tomáš Rosický	Guatemala – Carloz Ruíz	Nigeria – Nwankwo Kanu	USA – Landon Donovan
Denmark – Martin Laursen	Hondura – Iván Guerrero	Northern Ireland – David Healy	Zimbabwe – Benjani Mwaruwari
Ecuador – Ulises De La Cruz	Iceland – Eidur Gudjohnsen	Norway – Morten Gamst Pedersen	

# Tom Watt biography and headshot



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Tom Watt is an English actor, writer and broadcaster. TV, film and stage credits include *EastEnders*, *Patriot Games* and *Fever Pitch*. Tom has broadcast about football extensively in the UK and the US. He co-produced the innovative children's sports series, *Rookies*, for Channel Four television and created the successful *Row Z* for BBC Choice TV. After presenting sports shows over the past ten years for BBC and independent radio and TV stations, he is currently the lead presenter for BBC London's football coverage and hosts weekly programmes for Arsenal's club TV Channel.

As well as writing on football for every major UK newspaper, Tom is the author of several books about the game: *The End*, a groundbreaking oral history of Arsenal FC; *A Passion For The Game*, 90 firsthand accounts of life behind the scenes in English football; *The Greatest Stage*, the official history of Wembley Stadium; and, most recently, *My Side*, the best-selling autobiography of David Beckham. Tom also produces school books based around football, the latest of which, a 12-book series called *The Jags*, was published earlier this year.

## Q&A with Tom Watt

*We are interested in the story behind *A Beautiful Game*. What inspired you to put this book together?*

The idea for *A Beautiful Game* came from a conversation with one of my heroes in the game. Alan Sefton is the Community Officer for Arsenal Football club, a man who's spent the last thirty years using football as a means to transform the lives of people both in North London and around the world. We'd been working together on a book project which used the exploits of a fictional Premier League team to engage reluctant readers in schools around the UK. We were talking about the ethnic mix of the team, Shelby Town, and it dawned on me that the only place as ethnically diverse as an inner-city classroom in modern Britain is probably a Premier League dressing room. That thought was the key idea for *A Beautiful Game*: that players from all over the world, whatever their backgrounds and experiences of childhood, share one thing in common. A love of the game.

*How were you able to gain access to so many top-level professional footballers?*

I have to say that the players themselves were all happy to spend time talking about their childhoods and their earliest footballing experiences. I'd say I needed 15 minutes; not one of them started looking at his watch as conversations continued for anything up to a couple of hours! As for getting introductions to those players: I've worked around football for many years now and have good relationships with a lot of players, managers, agents, club chairmen, chief executives, communications officers and football writers. Once I explained the project to people – and they knew about the link-up with UNICEF – everyone I approached was very supportive. Anybody I didn't already know, I knew somebody who did! I think the success of the project was based on people being inspired by the idea and then trusting me to achieve what I'd set out to do. There are a lot of thank yous at the back of the book!

*How long did it take to complete the interviews and where did you travel?*

The interviews for *A Beautiful Game* took around 18 months to complete. Arranging them, obviously, was a time-consuming business! The way the world map of football is at the moment, most top footballers play for European clubs. So I was able to tie up interviews in the UK, Spain, Italy and Germany. I worked on the introduction with David Beckham in the US and interviewed half a dozen players from Major League Soccer while I was there. Three or four interviews were also done at last year's African Cup of Nations in Nigeria.

*You have covered football as a radio presenter and journalist, and have also written books on the subject. You obviously have a passion for the game. For you, what is it about football that is so special?*

I grew up playing football in the street in North London. It was always pretty obvious that I didn't have much by way of natural talent but, as far as I'm concerned, that's the great thing about the game: you don't have to be any good at football for it to have a positive and enduring influence on your life! It's the simplest team game there is, understood and enjoyed all over the world. A passion for football breaks through every social, ethnic and geographical barrier. I already knew that and writing *A Beautiful Game* has only served to confirm it!

*You started out your career as an actor. What led you to writing; was it a desire to write about football in particular?*

I've always written. Not least plays, scripts and film treatments when I was younger. I found, though, when I wrote my first football book, *The End*, that this was a subject – a passion – that I shared with a lot of other people. My interest and the interest of a readership coincided for once! All my writing on football, I should point out, is by way of helping other people tell their stories, be that in the context of oral history, reportage or ghost-writing autobiography.

*You ghost-wrote David Beckham's autobiography My Side. Why do you think David Beckham has become such a hero, both within the footballing world and outside of it?*

I think even a cursory glance through *My Side* will explain that better than I can in a sentence or two here. David has great qualities as a player and as a man which, I think, have been recognised inside football and out: professionalism, humility, courage, a capacity for hard work. Sound like good grounds for role-model status to me!

*Football has the power to transform lives financially. Do you think it has the power to transform lives in other ways?*

Absolutely it does. In fact, I'd go so far as to say that *A Beautiful Game* is inspired by a wish to show how football can transform people's lives in all sorts of ways. The stories in the book aren't to do with how much money these players might be earning now. The stories are about the impact the game made on them, their families, their friends and their communities before a professional career in football ever seemed possible. Read their stories and it's abundantly clear that football would have been enormously important, would have affected all these guys' lives, even if they hadn't gone on to become stars in the game.

*The importance of football in childhood is a key theme in A Beautiful Game. Was it important for you as a child and what do you think the sport can do for children?*

Football is a rehearsal for life's passions, disappointments, demands, frustrations and joys.

*And finally, the all-important question, which team do you support?*

I grew up in the days when people used to support their local team. Now, not a day goes by without me being grateful for the happy accident that had me grow up a 15 minutes walk away from Highbury, the Home of Football, the home of Arsenal.

# How to request interviews

Tom Watt is based in the United Kingdom. Should a media organization be interested in interviewing him, please contact:

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See 'How to Request Artwork' for details of how to obtain images featured in *A Beautiful Game*.

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Please include the following information in your request:

1. What artwork you require, quoting the page number and description provided.
2. The intended use of the artwork, including details of the publication it is to appear in and any other relevant information.
3. How you would like the artwork supplied, i.e. CD, DVD, FTP site or other.
4. Full contact details, including telephone, fax, courier delivery address, email address and contact person.

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# About UNICEF

UNICEF is the world's leading organisation working for children and their rights. UNICEF reaches children in more than 150 countries around the world, helping them to survive and thrive from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments and receives no money from the UN.

For more information about UNICEF please contact Katie Morrison (Senior Media Officer, UNICEF UK): [katiem@unicef.org.uk](mailto:katiem@unicef.org.uk)

# About PQ Blackwell

PQ Blackwell is an acclaimed creator and producer of internationally bestselling illustrated books and associated licensed products. Distinguished by their design and production quality, PQ Blackwell's books are highly sought after by many of the world's foremost illustrated book publishers and are marketed in approximately 30 countries. PQ Blackwell's co-publishing and licensing partners include Hachette Livre, Chronicle Books, Andrews McMeel Universal, Bloomsbury Publishing, HarperCollins, Harry N. Abrams and the La Martinière group of companies, among others.

Founded by New Zealander Geoff Blackwell, PQ Blackwell collaborates with some of the world's leading photographers. Blackwell, along with PQB's Editor in Chief Ruth Hobday, was instrumental in the development of M.I.L.K. – Moments of Intimacy, Laughter and Kinship – a collection of images founded on humanity and selected from the work of 17,000 photographers from 164 countries. M.I.L.K. has been exhibited at venues around the world, including New York's Grand Central Terminal, the Sydney OperaHouse, and London's Science Museum, and M.I.L.K. books have sold three million copies in more than ten languages. PQ Blackwell's projects have included *Mandela: The Authorized Portrait*, and *Diana: The Portrait*, published in collaboration with Nelson Mandela and the Spencer family respectively; and *Equus* by British photographer Tim Flach, an epic portrait of horses published in a standard edition and a large format limited edition in collaboration with renowned purveyor of luxury goods, Asprey.

PQ Blackwell's latest project, *Wisdom*, is inspired by the idea that one of the greatest gifts one generation can give to another is the wisdom it has gained from experience. Produced in cooperation with Archbishop Desmond Tutu, photographer and film-maker Andrew Zuckerman has recorded the thoughts and ideas of fifty of the world's most prominent over 65-year olds and the resulting book and film was published in Fall 2008, together with a multimedia exhibition at the State Library of NSW in Sydney, Australia.

PQ Blackwell's offices are located in a converted Art Deco church in Auckland, New Zealand.

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