

# The Story of Football

Written by Grant Bage

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# Introduction

All over the world, boys, girls, women and men play football and support football teams. Football is taught in schools and played for fun in streets, parks and open spaces.

Yet football is more than just fun. Each week in every continent, millions of people buy expensive tickets to go to games played in vast stadiums by highly-paid players.



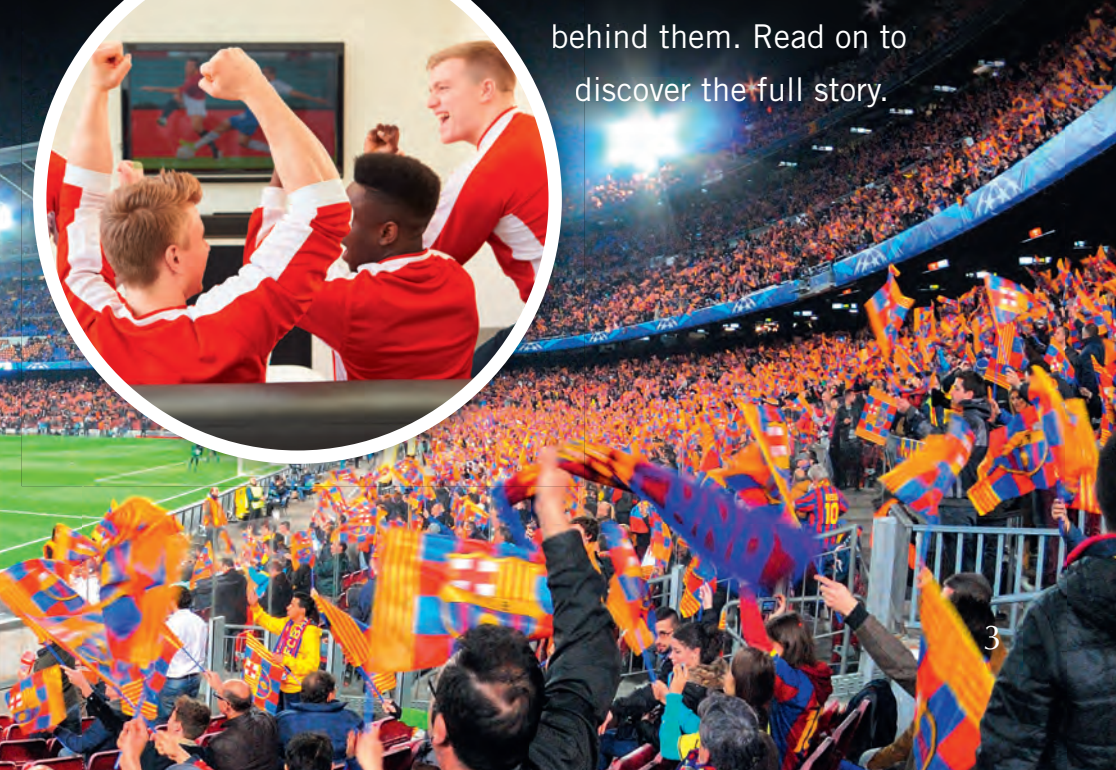
a fan's view at  
Barcelona's stadium



Every day, millions of people in hundreds of different countries watch football on TVs and computers, listen to football on radios and read about football in newspapers and magazines.

But the modern sport of football was only invented about 150 years ago. Why did football grow? How did a game that started with brutal battles over a ball, in school yards and on village greens, become one of the world's richest and most popular sports?

This book answers these questions by piecing together facts and true stories. Each piece of the jigsaw has its own tale to tell: football's rules, players, kit, cups, clubs and fans all have histories behind them. Read on to discover the full story.



# Growth of the game

## Roots

Nobody will ever know for certain when a round ball was first kicked by a human foot, but we do know that people have always played games.

The ancient Greeks enjoyed many sports. Designs on pots and speeches from Greek plays describe people throwing and kicking balls. This description was written by an ancient Greek called Antiphanes around 400 BCE: “Pass out. Throw a long one ... down, up, a short one. Pass it back. Get back!”

an ancient Greek ball game



Around 1st century, in ancient China, something called “kick-ball” was played.

The poet Li Yu wrote  
“A round ball and  
a square goal ...  
the ball is like the full  
moon, and the two teams  
stand opposed.”

When Europeans first sailed west to Central America over 500 years ago, they brought back many things: tomatoes, potatoes, chocolate, silver and gold. They also saw, for the first time, round balls made of rubber. These were used in games that Native Americans had been playing for hundreds of years. To Europeans, a solid ball that bounced was something special!

Although such ancient games were skilful and interesting, it was from different roots that modern football would grow.



This pot lid from ancient China shows boys kicking a ball.



This figure of a ball-player comes from Central America, around 100–400 CE.

## Fans and fun

There are many sensible reasons why people like football, but perhaps some reasons are also mysterious. People watch a few games for fun and then find themselves hooked. They turn into fans. “Fan” is short for “fanatic”, a word meaning somebody who believes in something so much that nothing can change it. Some football fans feel that for their team. They love them!





Fans' support is shown in many ways: wearing their team's shirt or buying mugs, pens, slippers, pyjamas, wallpaper, lunchboxes and lots of other things with their club's badge on. Some fans name their children after favourite players, while others haven't missed a match for 30 years. A few fans even ask that after dying, their ashes be scattered on the team's home pitch.

Fans, and not just players, make football entertaining. Their flags, banners, scarves and team shirts are a colourful sight. Fans bring matches to life with their claps, chants and songs. When a goal is scored, fans jump, shout and cheer. Professionals play football for money, for cups and for glory, but the best players also give everything, for the fans.

# The business of football

## Whose game is it?

Money from millions of fans has turned football into big business, but some of the world's biggest clubs grew from businesses in the first place.

Newton Heath is one example. It was started in 1878 by workers in the carriage department of the Lancashire and Yorkshire railway company. Wearing green and yellow, they played football against other railway companies. The club did well. It attracted fans and paid players, but by 1902 the owners had run out of money. Some rich local people paid the club's debts, bought the club and changed its colours to red and white. They also changed its name: Manchester United was born.

Newton Heath football club in 1890 – before they became Manchester United





fans of FC United of Manchester in 2014



But 103 years later in 2005, Manchester United was sold to new owners. Some fans disagreed and started a new club of their own: FC United of Manchester. By 2015, this new club had built their own ground for nearly 5,000 people. That's a lot smaller than Manchester United's ground which holds 75,000, but the new club is owned by its fans. It can't be sold or taken over, unless the fans agree.