

OFFICIAL EVENT EDITION

The Autumn Cup Final

Riverside United FC



The Wisdom of Soccer — The Soccer of Life and the Life of Soccer

PRESENTED BY SPORTSMART4LIFE

A word from the organisers



Riverside United Football Club

A word from the organisers

Dear Sample Reader,

This copy is yours. Your name is on the cover, and it is inside on the pages too, because it was made for you and for nobody else. No two copies of this book are the same.

We wanted to give you something that outlasts a fixture list. Kit wears out. Medals go in a drawer. But a cup final is ninety minutes that a season waits all year for, and that is worth writing down somewhere you will find it again.

What follows are the real voices of this sport — players, coaches and writers, most of them talking about the parts nobody puts on a highlight reel. There is a section on pressure, and what the people who handle it best actually do differently. One on trust, and why a group that trusts each other beats a group that is merely talented. One on losing, which is the section we would ask you to read twice, because everyone in this sport has lost and everyone worth knowing came back. There is a section on joy, which is the reason any of us started. One on mastery, and the unglamorous patience it asks for. One on rivalry, and the respect that runs underneath it. And one on belonging — on being part of something whether or not you are the one on the field.

You do not have to read it in order. Keep it in the kit bag. Open it the night before a hard one. Let it fall open at whichever page finds you, and if a line is worth keeping, keep it.

The game has taught you things already — about nerve, about other people, about getting up. These pages are simply the same lessons in other people's words, gathered in one place so they are there when you need them.

Thank you for everything you give to this. It is noticed, and it matters more than the results ever say.

— **The Committee, Riverside United Football Club**

Foreword

Soccer is the world's most fluent language. It is spoken barefoot on gravel and in cathedrals of glass and steel, by children who have never owned boots and professionals who have never known silence. And wherever it is spoken, it says the same things: hold your nerve, trust your people, get up again, protect your joy, put in the touches, honour your rival, belong to something.

This collection gathers the voices of the game — players, managers, and the writers who loved it best — arranged around seven themes that belong as much to life as to soccer. Each chapter opens with an image and an idea, then hands the floor to the voices themselves.

Read it like you would watch a match: sometimes for the drama, sometimes for one moment of skill you will remember for years.

Ways to Walk with This Book

A collection like this is not meant to be read once and shelved. It is meant to be lived with — kept close, opened often, and put to work. Seven ways to begin:

- **The daily voice**
open anywhere each morning and take one voice with you into the day.
- **The reflection pause**
choose the theme your week is testing, read its essay slowly, and write one honest line of your own in response.
- **Match-day ritual**
before the big broadcast, read the theme the fixture will examine — rivalry before the derby, pressure before the final.
- **The team talk**
captains, coaches, teachers, parents: one voice a week is enough to open a changing room, a classroom or a dinner table.
- **The hard-week medicine**
when life tackles you, the defeat chapter is waiting. It was written for exactly that week.
- **The gift of a voice**
photograph the quote a friend needs today and send it with their name on the message.
- **The long read**
one theme per Sunday evening — a handful of weeks, properly kept.

However you use it, let it stay within reach of wherever you watch.

The Seven Themes

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THEME 1 OF 7

Pressure & Nerve

What the biggest moments ask of you — and how the brave breathe through them.



One player, one ball, eighty thousand opinions — and the only voice that matters is the quiet one inside.

Pressure & Nerve — in the game, in life

Every match funnels, sooner or later, into a single moment that cannot be delegated: the penalty, the last defender, the pass that must not go astray. Soccer is honest about pressure in a way life often is not — it puts the moment on a whistle, in front of witnesses, and starts the clock. Watch the great takers closely and you notice something strange: they slow down. The walk from the centre circle is unhurried. The ball is placed twice. The breath is audible. What they know is that nerve is not the absence of fear; it is a routine that holds when fear arrives — a sequence rehearsed so often that the body can carry the moment while the mind is shaking. And they know the other secret too: the willingness to miss. Nobody strikes a decisive ball while negotiating an escape from the consequences. Commitment is the technique. Life hands us penalty moments as well — the interview, the diagnosis, the difficult conversation, the offer that expires at noon. The same rules apply. Prepare before you need it, because the moment itself is a terrible classroom. Slow everything down when the world speeds up. Choose your corner while your head is clear, and then refuse to renegotiate with your doubt mid-stride. And if you miss — and sometimes you will — remember that every great taker has a miss they still dream about, and that they volunteered again the very next week. That, more than any conversion rate, is what nerve finally means.

“Carra came up to me like he'd lost his mind. He grabbed me and said: 'Jerzy, Jerzy, Jerzy, remember Bruce Grobbelaar. He did crazy things to win the shootout in 1984. You have to do the same, you'll become a hero!'”

— Jerzy Dudek

Pressure & Nerve

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

"I've never run away from my responsibilities. Only those who have the courage to take a penalty miss them."

— Roberto Baggio

"Pressure is working down the pit. Pressure is having no work at all. Pressure is trying to escape relegation on 50 shillings a week. Pressure is not the European Cup or the Championship or the Cup Final."

— Bill Shankly

"As I began my run-up, I still hadn't decided what I was going to do. And then he moved and my mind was made up. It was all impromptu, not premeditated."

— Andrea Pirlo

"Since that day, I decided I will stand up and fight against abuse, stand up and shout."

— Samuel Eto'o

"Players change their mind in the last split second. You can see the ones that are more nervous. That's the one you go for, where they are hitting it with 85% conviction rather than 100%."

— Tim Krul

"For me, the pressure is the people who are in war. They don't have food to eat, they deal with the gunshots during the night. For me, that is the real pressure."

— Cristiano Ronaldo

"The first goal against Brazil was the most important one of my career because it gave me back my confidence in every sense of the word."

— Paolo Rossi

"There was a part of me thinking it's over, but another part saying: let's reset, let's try to get an early goal, let's give the fans something, a bit of pride, a bit of belief, and let's not make it embarrassing."

— Steven Gerrard

Pressure & Nerve

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

"We are competing against teams that are fully professional, and it shows. What we have done so far is amazing. Imagine if we had a fully-fledged professional league!"

— Desiree Ellis

"I knew that the only way to impress them was to run. So I ran until I was sweating blood."

— Victor Osimhen

"I don't believe in luck," you tell him. "And I don't believe in God. I believe in myself. Brian Howard Clough."

— David Peace

"Mistakes are made in every game. I had to make a decision early on in my life that I accept that."

— Peter Schmeichel

"I saw myself as an entertainer and I saw this penalty as a reflection of my personality. I wanted to give the fans something new to see."

— Antonin Panenka

"So my thinking was as soon as that ball went in the net due to my mistake, I hadn't made a mistake. Simple as that."

— Peter Schmeichel

"He started out playing for pleasure in the dirt streets of the slums, and now he plays out of duty in stadiums where he has no choice but to win."

— Eduardo Galeano

"It's squeaky bum time, and we've got the experience now to cope."

— Alex Ferguson

Pressure & Nerve

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“Name on the trophy? ... and Solskjaer has won it! Manchester United have reached the promised land!”

— Clive Tyldesley

“You have to thrive on that pressure and enjoy it because it also has the most rewards out of any position in the game.”

— Sam Kerr

“You have to instill confidence in yourself, and tell yourself that you're good enough until you really believe it.”

— Alex Morgan

“What also helps a referee to deal with the pressure is courage. You need the courage to take controversial decisions.”

— Pierluigi Collina

“The mental strength of refereeing now is probably one of the biggest things.”

— Mark Clattenburg

“If they scored four, we can score six.”

— Luis Enrique

“Goalkeepers need an element of insanity.”

— Oliver Kahn

“Boys, the outsiders are made of wood. Go onto the pitch and don't look up; the match is played down here.”

— Obdulio Varela

THE AUTUMN CUP FINAL

More from Pressure & Nerve



The moment before it starts.

“When you concede a second goal, you have to think about changing something. And if you concede a third? Well, then you definitely have to change, and that was very clear.”

— Rafael Benítez

A few more from Pressure & Nerve



Nerve is not the absence of fear.

“I’m never relaxed for a penalty shootout.”

— Gianluigi Buffon

“As a striker, you might not touch the ball for 90 minutes, but you have to be ready for that one moment.”

— Sam Kerr

“I wasn’t concentrating on Shevchenko’s penalty. I was focusing on taking the next one for us, which was terrifying. I was absolutely shitting my pants.”

— Steven Gerrard

THEME 2 OF 7

Teamwork & Trust

Eleven players, one heartbeat — why nothing beautiful happens alone.



A pass is a promise: I see you, I believe in where you are going, and I am giving you what I have.

Teamwork & Trust — in the game, in life

No goal in soccer belongs to one person. Rewind any great strike and you find a dozen quiet gifts: the fullback's overlap that pulled a defender out of position, the midfielder's simple ball played a half-second early, the striker's run made forty times before it was finally found. The scorer gets the photograph; the move belongs to everyone. Teamwork is not chemistry that happens to lucky squads — it is trust built one honest pass at a time, and trust has precise mechanics. It is showing for the ball when the crowd is groaning. It is covering the channel your teammate abandoned, without being asked and without announcing it afterwards. It is the pass played to where your teammate will be, which is the purest compliment in sport: I believe in your next three steps. The deepest lesson soccer teaches about people is that you make others better not by being brilliant but by being reliable — and that the most valuable player is often the one making runs that are never rewarded, until the one time they are. Families, friendships and workplaces run on the same physics. Someone has to track back. Someone has to make the unglamorous run that creates space for somebody else's moment. Do it anyway, and do it again. Play the simple ball when your ego wants the spectacular one. Arrive where you said you would arrive. In the long season of a life together, the team that trusts beats the team of talents — every time it matters.

“Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire, it has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope, where once there was only despair.”

— Nelson Mandela

Teamwork & Trust

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“England used to have to dig deep all the time -- 2015 was the first time we beat Germany, that's insane to think of right now.”

— Lucy Bronze

“It was a group effort. We tried to improve our qualities as individuals and as a team. We succeeded, all together — us, the staff, and the players, because they showed a lot of desire.”

— Roberto Mancini

“For tactics you only need three or four men on the field who know what a team is.”

— Alfredo Di Stéfano

“After many years during which I saw many things, what I know most surely in the long run about morality and the obligations of men, I owe to sport... I learned it with the R.U.A.”

— Albert Camus

“Today we beg you on our knees. The one country in Africa with so many riches must not descend into war. Please lay down your weapons and hold elections.”

— Didier Drogba

“You cannot play with Riquelme without playing for Riquelme.”

— Jorge Valdano

“I'm continuing to fight for empowerment and equality, giving a voice to many women who unfortunately don't have one.”

— Marta

“It is no coincidence that we are here today, we have worked hard as a team. However, I am convinced that our dearly departed brothers who lost their lives here 19 years ago have lent us a helping hand.”

— Kalusha Bwalya

Teamwork & Trust

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“The Anfield boot room has become legendary, and we have a full and frank exchange of views in there in a leisurely atmosphere every Sunday morning. It's just like popping down to the local.”

— Bob Paisley

“This is an individual award, but it is unquestionably a team prize.”

— Alexia Putellas

“The captain of the plane shouted at me to run as it was about to blow. I turned and shouted at them to come back, but they just kept on running.”

— Harry Gregg

“I am a member of the team, and I rely on the team, I defer to it and sacrifice for it, because the team, not the individual, is the ultimate champion.”

— Mia Hamm

“Football is not about players, or at least not just about players; it is about shape and about space, about the intelligent deployment of players, and their movement within that deployment.”

— Jonathan Wilson

“We want professional treatment and what was seen was not professional at all.”

— Aitana Bonmatí

“What we had achieved, for the nation, was more than just football. It fed into Mandela's idea of Madiba magic. He wanted to bring the country together through sport and he certainly achieved that.”

— Mark Fish

“We want to fly Africa's flag high, just like Senegal, Ghana and Cameroon. We are here to represent Africa.”

— Walid Regragui

Teamwork & Trust

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“We said we wanted to make our legacy about winning — and that's what we did.”

— Leah Williamson

“No one, no matter how talented, is bigger than the team.”

— Alex Ferguson

“It is something that has affected me personally. I think players, leaders and the media have to join forces so that no one feels looked down upon because of the colour of their skin.”

— Samuel Eto'o

“Cups are not won by individuals, but by men in a team who put their club before personal prestige. I am lucky – I have the players who do just that for Celtic.”

— Jock Stein

“What gives Strunz the right?! Strunz has been here two years, has played ten games, is always injured! (Was erlauben Strunz?!)”

— Giovanni Trapattoni

“When it comes to the team, your ego can't get in the way of the performance of the team.”

— Peter Schmeichel

“I've got to pay tribute to my team, as I could never have done it without them.”

— Miroslav Klose

“It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination.”

— Nelson Mandela

THE AUTUMN CUP FINAL

More from Teamwork & Trust



Nobody does this alone.

“My mother was a cleaning lady and my father was a street vendor. They gave up their lives for me. Today, I play for them.”

— Achraf Hakimi

A few more from Teamwork & Trust



Trust, built in the ordinary weeks.

“I wanted my players to feel strong and the opponents to feel weak. Our pressing was psychological as much as physical, our pressing was always collective.”

— Arrigo Sacchi

“You fought for change and you succeeded. I carry that fight and resilience in my blood.”

— Aitana Bonmatí

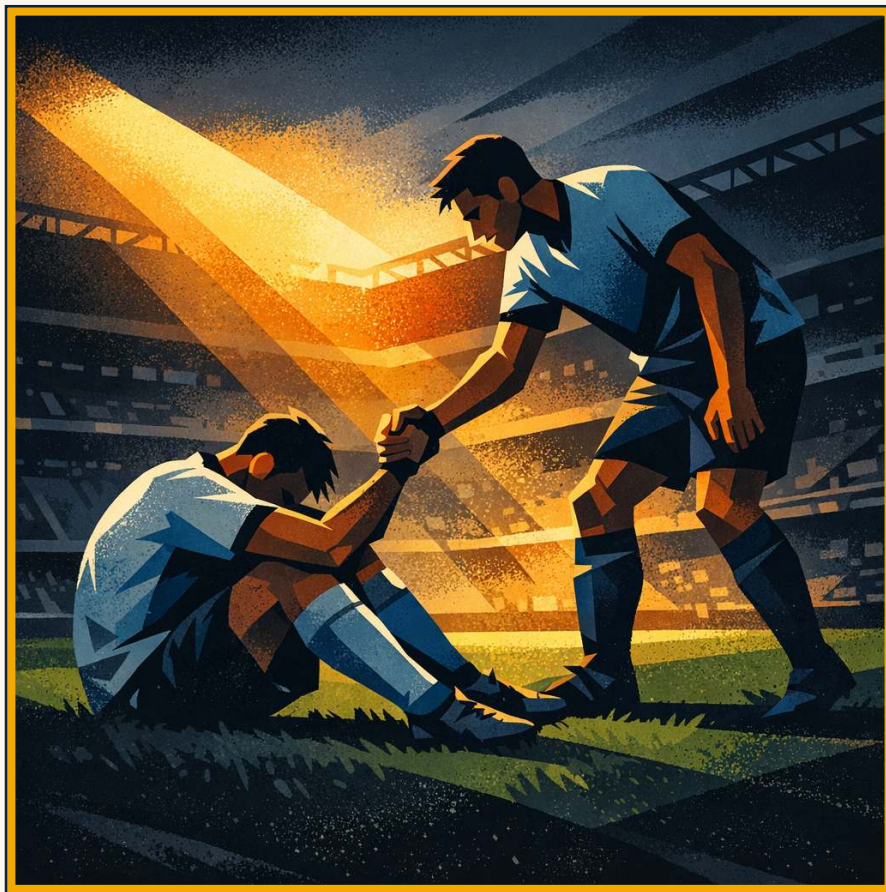
“If you're not a leader on the bench, don't call yourself a leader on the field. You're either a leader everywhere or nowhere.”

— Abby Wambach

THEME 3 OF 7

Defeat & Bouncing Back

Losing is part of the fixture list — what you do next is the real result.



The final whistle ends the match, never the story — the season always plays on.

Defeat & Bouncing Back — in the game, in life

Soccer schedules heartbreak. Relegations, missed penalties, ninety-third-minute goals against, seasons of work undone in one deflection — the game guarantees that everyone, eventually, sits on the turf with nothing left. That is precisely its gift. Because there is always a next fixture, soccer forces the skill that life politely calls resilience and players simply call Monday: grieve fast, learn faster, report for training. Watch what the best teams do in the tunnel after a defeat. They do not pretend it doesn't hurt — pretending is just defeat with extra steps. They let it hurt on the bus, watch the tape without flinching in the morning, name the two things that were theirs to fix, and then close the folder. The best teams are not the ones that never lose; they are the ones whose response to losing is so reliable it becomes their identity, until opponents fear beating them because of what comes back the following week. There is a quieter lesson underneath: defeat is information wearing an unpleasant coat. The scoreline tells you the truth that praise never will — where the gap is, what the habit costs, which comfort has become a weakness. When your own ninety-third minute comes — the setback, the rejection, the plan in pieces on the kitchen table — do it the professional way. Feel it fully, briefly. Watch your tape honestly. Keep the lesson and bin the shame, because only one of them is useful. Then pick the team for next week, and put yourself on the sheet.

“This has been by far one of the hardest decisions of my life. This decision has always been one I have wanted to make on my terms. And this is my time to say goodbye to football as a player while I watch the next generation shine.”

— Janine van Wyk

Defeat & Bouncing Back

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“Since that day, I decided I will stand up and fight against abuse.”

— Samuel Eto'o

“It was an inexcusable gesture, and to them, and to the people in education whose job it is to show children what they should and shouldn't do, I want to apologise.”

— Zinedine Zidane

“I still think about my miss to this day. Honestly, not as often as I used to, but I still wake up and it's there.”

— John Terry

“I have finished. (Ich habe fertig.)”

— Giovanni Trapattoni

“Sometimes it engulfs me with a terrible regret and sadness, and guilt that I walked away and found so much.”

— Bobby Charlton

“No más! No más!”

— Samuel Eto'o

“Making mistakes is part of the job. It's a risk you must take.”

— Pierluigi Collina

“It was the toughest moment of my career. I still dream about it. If I could erase a moment, it would be that one.”

— Roberto Baggio

Defeat & Bouncing Back

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

"It was hard to accept that I had to stop playing at 28."

— Marco van Basten

"Living with it is extremely difficult. The only thing people remember is this small, silly mistake."

— Gareth Southgate

"Failure is not something to be ashamed of, it's something to be powered by. Failure is the highest octane fuel your life can run on."

— Abby Wambach

"The fact that our World Cup [success] has been tarnished will have been worth it, if it serves to bring about definite improvements."

— Aitana Bonmatí

"I failed that time. Period. And it affected me for years. It was the worst moment of my career. I still dream about it."

— Roberto Baggio

"My penalty was not good enough, it should have gone in, but I will never apologise for who I am and where I came from."

— Marcus Rashford

"At no time did I consent to the kiss he gave me. It shouldn't happen in any social or work setting."

— Jenni Hermoso

"I am proud of the award. You know that despite the defeat you've achieved something big, but it's hard when you come so close and fall short."

— Luka Modrić

Defeat & Bouncing Back

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“The greatest lesson of my career.”

— Stuart Pearce

“Football was the only escape route for me and my family, to make sure I do everything I could to get them out of poverty.”

— Victor Osimhen

“If I make a mistake, it beats me up. It's about being able to cope with you being wrong.”

— Mark Clattenburg

“I have had some really low Sundays where I have made a massive mistake.”

— Howard Webb

“Under Brazilian law, a man is innocent until proven guilty. But I have been convicted for fifty years.”

— Moacir Barbosa

“Every disadvantage has its advantage.”

— Johan Cruyff

“We didn't win, but beautiful football was our legacy.”

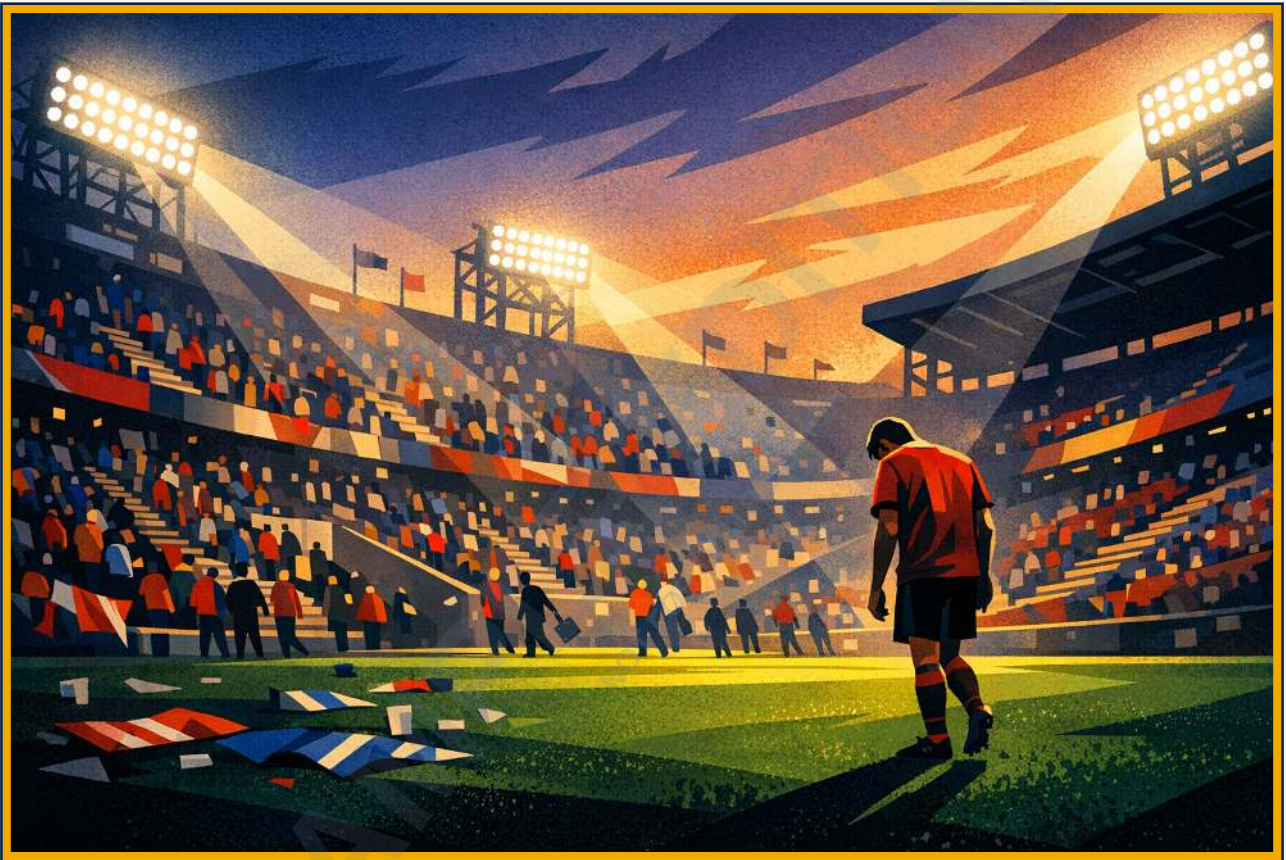
— Johan Neeskens

“I was forced to retire at a young age. It is hard to finish your career, particularly when you're not the one deciding the terms it's going to end in.”

— Iker Casillas

THE AUTUMN CUP FINAL

More from Defeat & Bouncing Back



The walk back.

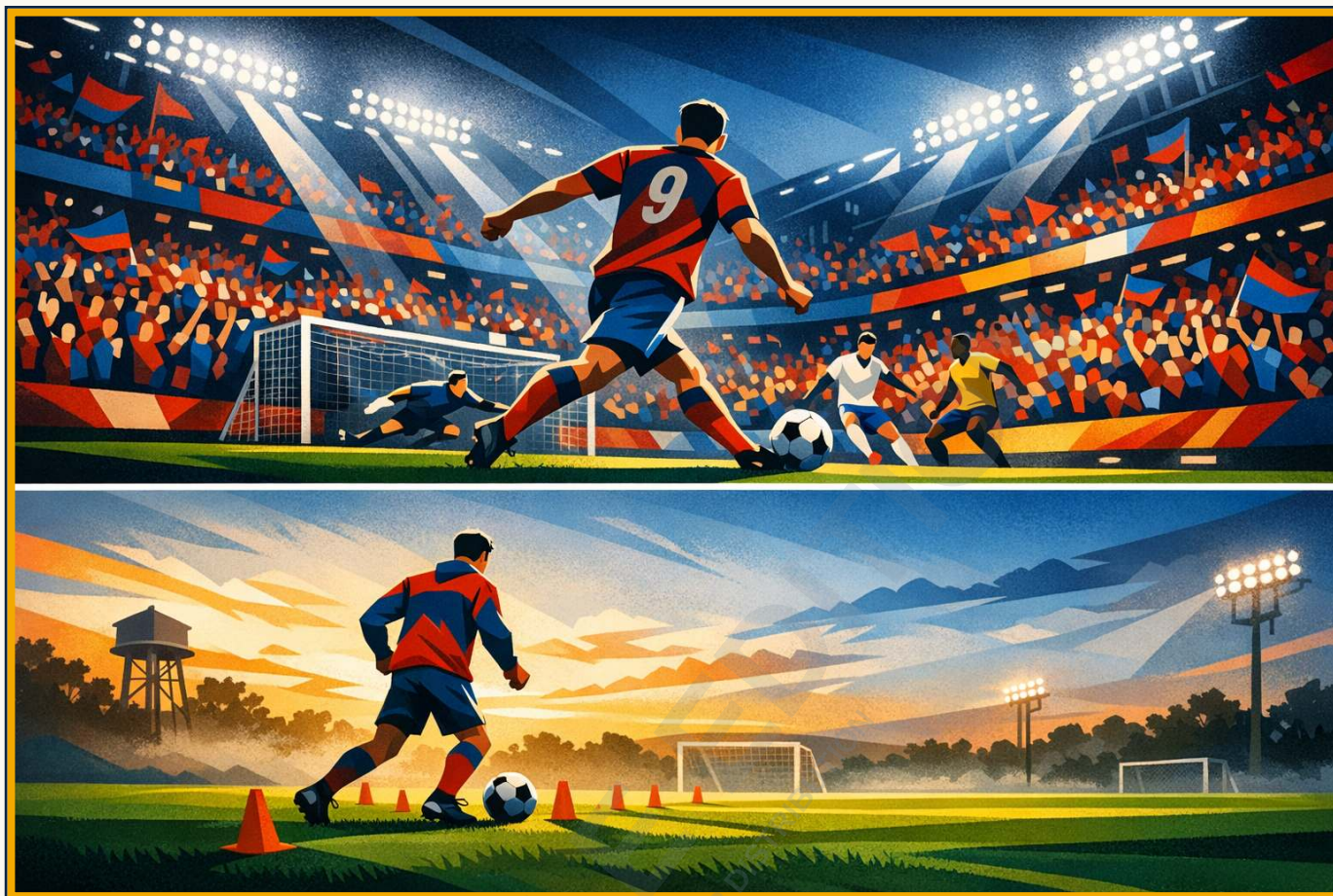
“I feel like I was placed in a system where I didn't have a voice.”

— Ada Hegerberg

This copy belongs to: Sample Reader

The Autumn Cup Final · Defeat & Bouncing Back

A few more from Defeat & Bouncing Back



And then you come again.

“All the time the question came pounding in: ‘Why me, why did I survive?’”

— Bobby Charlton

“It is better to fail aiming high than to succeed aiming low. And we of Spurs have set our sights very high, so high in fact that even failure will have in it an echo of glory.”

— Bill Nicholson

“I have won many trophies in my time, but nothing will ever top helping win the battle for peace in my country.”

— Didier Drogba

THEME 4 OF 7

Joy & Love of the Game

The barefoot beginning of everything — playing because playing is the point.



Before the contracts and the cameras there was a ball, a street, and the best hour of the day.

Joy & Love of the Game — in the game, in life

Ask any professional where it started and the answer is never a stadium. It is a street, a dusty yard, a beach at low tide — jumpers for goalposts, no referee, and one more game before dark that somehow lasted three. Joy is soccer's first language, and everything else the game becomes — the contracts, the tactics, the cameras — is built on top of that original delight or it is built on nothing. You can hear it in the way the greats talk about the ball itself, like an old friendship: the sound of it, the feel of the first touch in the morning, the pleasure of a pass that goes exactly where it was imagined. The players who last longest are rarely the ones with the most talent; they are the ones who protect the barefoot feeling from everything the adult game piles on top of it, who still, on the worst professional day, would play for free somewhere unglamorous. There is a life rule hiding in plain sight here: the energy for the hard seasons comes from the play you refuse to give up. Duty is a good engine but a terrible fuel. Whatever your version of street soccer is — the guitar, the garden, the Saturday ride, the kitchen full of noise — guard it like the professionals guard their love of the ball. Do it badly, do it laughing, do it after dark, and let nobody convince you it is childish. The day the game stops being play, you have not grown up. You have only stopped remembering why you started.

“I stayed behind at the stadium longer than the other lads doing interviews, and when I went back to the hotel, it wasn't with bodyguards, but in the kit man's van. It just didn't feel the done thing to go over the top with our celebrations.”

— Dino Zoff

Joy & Love of the Game

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

"I see football as art. Today most people see it as a competition, a confrontation, a war between two polar opposites, but to start with, it is a great form of art."

— Sócrates

"The history of soccer is a sad voyage from beauty to duty. When the sport became an industry, the beauty that blossoms from the joy of play got torn out by its very roots."

— Eduardo Galeano

"It's amazing, this passion. You cannot find it anywhere else — it only exists in Algeria. I think the Algerian people deserved that win and the joy it brought."

— Riyad Mahrez

"That moment was magical. To win the World Cup and have the chance to score the winning goal, there's no way to describe it. To finish it the way I did was a dream."

— Andrés Iniesta

"For any kid who loves football, the dream is to get to the World Cup final."

— Néstor Pitana

"That was always going to be my biggest goal, no matter what came after, because it touched so many lives and brought joy to so many people."

— Siphiwe Tshabalala

"Winning was important, aye, but it was the way we have won that has filled me with satisfaction. We did it by playing football. Pure, beautiful, inventive football."

— Jock Stein

"I am proud to be a role model for young referees, and it's great to show girls that it is possible to be involved at a big tournament like the Women's EURO."

— Stéphanie Frappart

Joy & Love of the Game

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“I want all Egyptian people to follow my way to improve themselves. I want everyone to dream and feel they can do something.”

— Mohamed Salah

“It was heavy, at least 40 kilos, but I was so pumped that I raised it above my head as if it were a feather.”

— Neil Tovey

“I can't believe it. I can't believe it. Football, bloody hell.”

— Alex Ferguson

“I like heavy metal more. I always want it loud.”

— Jürgen Klopp

“It's a bit like when they say you're going to die and you see your own life. I returned to see when I began to play football as a child.”

— Marco Tardelli

“The history of soccer is a sad voyage from beauty to duty.”

— Eduardo Galeano

“Momentary insanity, nothing more, nothing less. I wasn't thinking about anything. I thought, this is the greatest moment of my life on the soccer field.”

— Brandi Chastain

“In leftist football we don't play solely to win, but to improve, to feel joy, to experience a celebration, to grow as human beings.”

— César Luis Menotti

Joy & Love of the Game

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“I’m looking forward to seeing some sexy football.”

— Ruud Gullit

“I spent a lot of money on booze, birds and fast cars. The rest I just squandered.”

— George Best

“I think it gave me something that was special, in a way that I am free whenever I’m on the pitch. That’s where I can express myself.”

— Jay-Jay Okocha

“Interesting. Very interesting. Look at his face, just look at his face!”

— Barry Davies

“As a striker, I’m always the optimist. You have to hope that the ball lands in your area.”

— Ole Gunnar Solskjær

“It was about those that have come before, you know, that had this dream of winning the [WAFCON], that had this dream of qualifying for the World Cup. And I think through that, everybody’s dreams have been realised.”

— Desiree Ellis

“Only three people have silenced the Maracanã: the Pope, Frank Sinatra, and me.”

— Alcides Ghiggia

“It made me realise that what I did was bigger than me, bigger than all of us, because of the impact it had on the lives of many South Africans. It united people, we were one country celebrating, one human race.”

— Siphiwe Tshabalala

THE AUTUMN CUP FINAL

More from Joy & Love of the Game



Why anyone starts.

“My best trophy is seeing a child happy after undergoing a successful heart surgery.”

— Nwankwo Kanu

A few more from Joy & Love of the Game



The part nobody has to be told to love.

“And here comes Hurst! He's got... some people are on the pitch, they think it's all over! It is now, it's four!”

— Kenneth Wolstenholme

“The ball laughs, radiant, in the air.”

— Eduardo Galeano

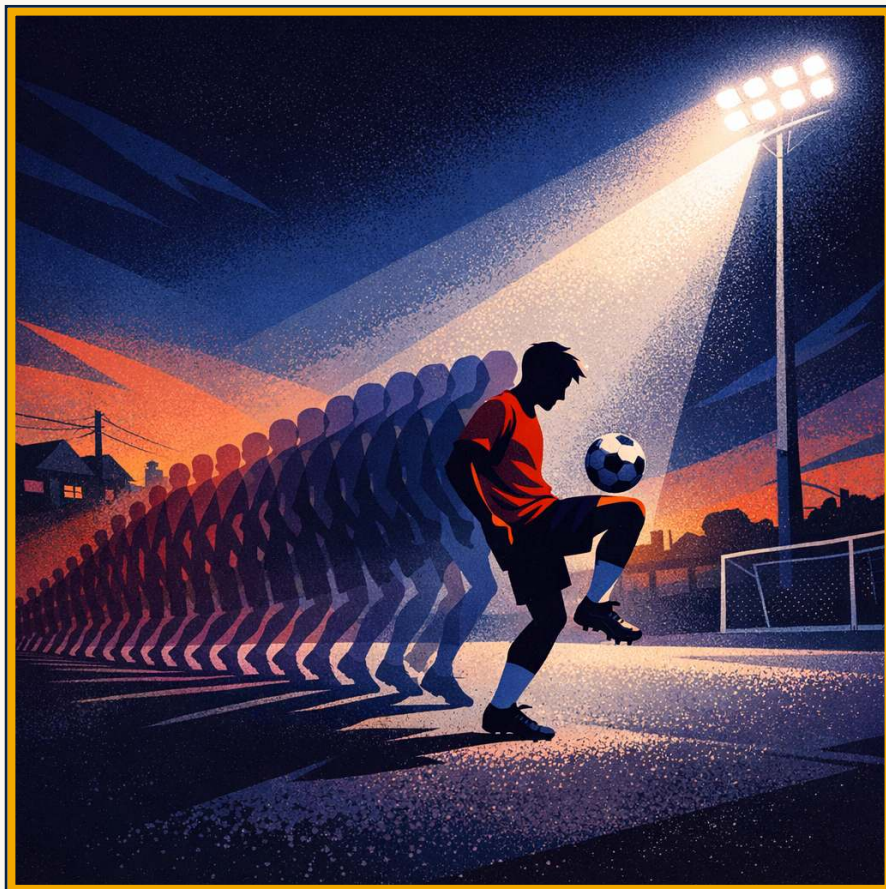
“There was the title with Leicester, the African Cup of Nations with Algeria, and with City. All have a different taste, a different emotion. I cannot say I prefer one or the other.”

— Riyad Mahrez

THEME 5 OF 7

Mastery & Practice

The thousand quiet touches behind every effortless moment.



The crowd sees one touch of genius; the empty pitch saw the ten thousand that bought it.

Mastery & Practice — in the game, in life

What commentators call natural talent is almost always an optical illusion: you are watching the last repetition of a sequence that began in childhood and never stopped. The effortless first touch was purchased touch by touch, in the rain, against a wall, long after the session ended and long before anyone was filming. Soccer's masters are defined less by what they do in matches than by what they do between them — the weaker foot drilled until it stops being a secret, the same turn practised until it becomes a signature, the free kick struck two hundred times on a Tuesday so that it can be struck once, correctly, on a Saturday. Mastery is unglamorous and utterly democratic. The ball does not know who your parents are, what you are called, or what you did last season; it responds to attention, repetition and honest error, and to nothing else. That honesty is the mercy of the craft: unlike opinion, the ball never flatters you and never lies to you either. So does nearly everything in life worth being good at — the instrument, the language, the trade, the difficult art of being patient with people. Choose your craft and find your empty pitch: the hour nobody sees, the standard nobody demands of you but you. Keep a private count of your touches, because the crowd only counts the visible ones. And when someone one day calls you a natural, accept the compliment politely, knowing it is simply the name people give to work they did not witness.

“That tension — between beauty and cynicism, between what Brazilians call futebol d'arte and futebol de resultados — is a constant, perhaps because it is so fundamental, not merely to sport, but also to life: to win, or to play the game well?”

— Jonathan Wilson

Mastery & Practice

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“All I’m after is a few square metres to be myself. A space where I can continue to profess my creed: take the ball, give it to a team-mate, team-mate scores.”

— Andrea Pirlo

“I never realised that in order to become a jockey you have to have been a horse first.”

— Arrigo Sacchi

“Celtic jerseys are not for second best, they don’t shrink to fit inferior players.”

— Jock Stein

“My strength was the desire that I had to survive. The desire that I had to succeed, having to leave my family, having to go to a country where you don’t understand the language, you don’t understand the culture.”

— Jay-Jay Okocha

“The best moment to win the ball is immediately after your team just lost it. The opponent is still looking for orientation. He will have expended energy — and both make him vulnerable.”

— Jürgen Klopp

“Because you play football with your head, and your legs are there to help you. If you don’t use your head, using your feet won’t be enough.”

— Johan Cruyff

“Cruyff built the cathedral; our job is to maintain it and renovate it.”

— Pep Guardiola

“You have to say that’s magnificent.”

— Barry Davies

Mastery & Practice

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“A lot of hard work when no one is watching goes into moments like this.”

— Carli Lloyd

“I love my job, I respect it. You have to respect your job or it won't respect you in return.”

— Roger Milla

“The brain is the most important skill of all in defending. I was fast in the head.”

— Franco Baresi

“Think quickly, look for spaces. That's what I do: look for spaces. All day, all day.”

— Xavi Hernández

“Every match is difficult. If you ever think a match is going to be easy, you will lack concentration and your performance will suffer.”

— Pierluigi Collina

“That goal and that record showed the people who doubted me that I still had it in me, despite my age. Physically, I wasn't 100 per cent, but I still had my technique.”

— Roger Milla

“It is right — as a mere amusing paradox — to theorise that the perfect match is one that ends 0-0, since it involves defensive prowess at least equal to offensive achievements.”

— Gianni Brera

“You need to have the confidence to control people, step in, manage people.”

— Howard Webb

Mastery & Practice

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

"I am a Raumdeuter, an interpreter of space."

— Thomas Müller

"Their confidence, passion and courage is very impressive. I used to think that I was mature, but after I went to the USA I realised I was still a kid compared to some of my teammates."

— Sun Wen

"You can start out in the gutter, and still your name can be on their lips for a thousand years."

— Victor Osimhen

"I would try to avoid the pressure in the first place. I would look at where an opponent was and what he was going to do and then I would find space."

— Franco Baresi

"Magisterial. Running like he's got a food mixer down his shorts and it's set to beat."

— Ray Hudson

"You get a very short honeymoon period when you start a new job — make it count."

— Carlo Ancelotti

"The best referee is not the one who hides. The best referee is the one who always makes a decision when it's needed."

— Pierluigi Collina

"A man with new ideas is a madman, until his ideas triumph."

— Marcelo Bielsa

THE AUTUMN CUP FINAL

More from Mastery & Practice



The thousandth repetition.

“I left Ghana in a Ronaldinho jersey, boots and without a jacket to chase my football dreams in Europe.”

— **Thomas Partey**

A few more from Mastery & Practice



Hard-won, quietly.

“You have to apply the laws of the game fearlessly and fairly.”

— Howard Webb

“It always looks impossible until somebody does it.”

— Pitso Mosimane

“If you want it to the extreme, you have to prepare that you have to sacrifice a lot.”

— Mohamed Salah

THEME 6 OF 7

Rivalry & Respect

The opponent who makes you better — and the handshake that makes it sport.



Ninety minutes of war, a lifetime of respect — rivals are just teammates in the bigger game of making each other better.

Rivalry & Respect — in the game, in life

A derby sharpens everything: the pressing is fiercer, the tackles braver, the goals sweeter, the silence after a loss deeper. Rivals do for us what friends cannot — they show us exactly where our edges are, and then they push on them, season after season, until the edges move. The history of the game is a history of pairs who made each other greater: clubs, cities, and players who publicly admitted they trained harder because a particular someone existed. Soccer at its best holds two truths in one stadium without dropping either. For ninety minutes, the other side is the obstacle to everything you want, and you are entitled to want it ferociously. At the whistle, they are the only people on earth who understand exactly what you have just been through — which is why the handshake matters more than the scoreline, and why the embrace between exhausted opponents is the game's most honest photograph. Contempt is cheap; respect is earned in the contest itself. Life gives everyone rivals, though we are often too polite to use the word: the colleague whose work makes ours look ordinary, the sister company, the old classmate whose progress needles us at midnight. Envy studies the rival's trophies; wisdom studies their training. Let the rivalry make you sharper and let the respect keep you decent, and refuse the modern habit of needing your opponent to be evil. Want harder. Play fairer. And when the whistle goes, look your rival in the eye and mean the handshake.

“You can feel the magnitude of the game through the comments you get in the street in the week leading up to it, and the week after. When you win, and if you score, it becomes local news.”

— Rio Ferdinand

Rivalry & Respect

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“My greatest challenge was knocking Liverpool right off their perch.”

— Alex Ferguson

“I'm not saying we're friends — I've never had dinner with him — but we are professional colleagues and we respect each other.”

— Cristiano Ronaldo

“You can say what you like, but Senegal's win over France is the greatest victory the tournament has ever seen.”

— El Hadji Diouf

“I'm sorry for the rest of the world, but we're going to be unbeatable for the next few years.”

— Franz Beckenbauer

“He is a top, top manager. It sticks in the craw a little bit because nobody likes Arsenal! Of course there's a Frenchman in charge, Wenger.”

— Brian Clough

“Puskás controlled the ball with his left foot better than I did with my hand.”

— Alfredo Di Stéfano

“A little with the head of Maradona, and a little with the hand of God.”

— Diego Maradona

“Yes — 90,000 of them, and 22 on the field.”

— Zlatan Ibrahimović

Rivalry & Respect

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“There's not a lot of satisfaction in winning in a way that's not fair, that's not in the spirit of the game.”

— Howard Webb

“I was going to just belt one of them. Fucking belt a Bluenose. Let Gerard [Houllier] know he is not dropping me for another derby. Ever.”

— Steven Gerrard

“It became a fact that I didn't like Liverpool Football Club, and didn't want them to win a game, never mind a trophy. Fixtures between the two clubs are always special.”

— Gary Neville

“When I think about Fair Play, I think about situations where players have made a decision to do something that shows respect.”

— Howard Webb

“There was complete silence. The crowd was frozen still.”

— Alcides Ghiggia

“Please don't call me arrogant, but I'm European champion and I think I'm a special one.”

— José Mourinho

“Respect for the rival, respect for Italy.”

— Iker Casillas

“When the seagulls follow the trawler, it is because they think sardines will be thrown into the sea.”

— Eric Cantona

Rivalry & Respect

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

"I wouldn't say I was the best manager in the business. But I was in the top one."

— Brian Clough

"We didn't gift them a goal, we gave it back. The most difficult thing is not to distinguish between right or wrong, but to accept the consequences of doing what corresponds."

— Marcelo Bielsa

"He was with me for half my life, he was my best opponent. The ball always obeyed him, even at the highest speeds."

— Lothar Matthäus

"Listen, you will never have played in anything like this. It means everything to beat Liverpool, so you'd better make sure you're ready and understand exactly what this means."

— Sir Alex Ferguson

"Football is a simple game: twenty-two men chase a ball for 90 minutes and at the end, the Germans always win."

— Gary Lineker

"We're not friends because we've never really spent time together, but there's great respect between us. I admire him a lot and everything he's done in his career."

— Lionel Messi

"El Clásico is one of the most important games of this season and every season. Everyone wants to play in it, and that's fantastic for a manager."

— Xavi Hernández

"Let the others come after us. We welcome the chase. It is healthy for us."

— Bill Struth

THE AUTUMN CUP FINAL

More from Rivalry & Respect



Opponents, not enemies.

“I will love it if we beat them. Love it.”

— Kevin Keegan

A few more from Rivalry & Respect



Respect, earned the hard way.

“Our relationship was characterised by the greatest respect for one another.”

— Lothar Matthäus

“Sometimes you have a noisy neighbour and have to live with it.”

— Alex Ferguson

“We said to ourselves, 'Hey lads, we're lions, after all; we're not cockerels. How could a cockerel eat a lion?'”

— El Hadji Diouf

THEME 7 OF 7

Watching & Belonging

Why we gather, sing, suffer and stay — the tribe on the terraces.



Nobody remembers the score of the first match they were taken to — everybody remembers whose hand they were holding.

Watching & Belonging — in the game, in life

Watching is not the passive half of soccer; it is the half that gives the game its meaning. A goal scored in an empty stadium is just physics — it becomes joy because thousands of strangers agreed, years ago and for no defensible reason, to care together. Nobody remembers the score of the first match they were taken to; everybody remembers whose hand they were holding. That is the tell. Fandom looks like it is about the team, but it is mostly about each other — the parent and the child, the friends with the same seats for twenty years, the stranger you embraced at the equaliser and never saw again. Supporters teach a masterclass in belonging that the rest of modern life has largely forgotten. They turn up in the rain for a team that keeps losing, which is called loyalty. They pass devotion down like an heirloom, which is called family. They sing loudest at two-nil down, which is called hope, and they grieve together on the long walk to the car, which is called community. No algorithm assembled them and no result can disband them. In an age that keeps us efficiently apart, the terraces still dispense the old medicine: shared hope, shared heartbreak, a scarf that says you are one of us. So find your terraces, in sport and beyond — the choir, the parkrun, the book club, the congregation, the community hall. And remember the supporters' secret, which is the belonging paradox itself: you do not feel your way into joining. You join, you keep turning up, and the feeling follows.

“What is a club in any case? Not the buildings or the directors or the people who are paid to represent it. It's the noise, the passion, the feeling of belonging, the pride in your city. It's a small boy clambering up stadium steps for the very first time, gripping his father's hand, gawping at that hallowed stretch of turf beneath him and, without being able to do a thing about it, falling in love.”

— Bobby Robson

Watching & Belonging

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“To go to the match was to escape from the dark of despondency into the light of combat. Here, by association with the home team, positive identity could be claimed by muscle and in goals.”

— Arthur Hopcraft

“The whole of my life, what they wanted was honesty. They were not concerned with cultured football, but with triers who gave one hundred percent.”

— Bob Paisley

“They supported Liverpool. Now it is the turn of Liverpool Football Club to support them.”

— Kenny Dalglish

“Football without fans is nothing.”

— Jock Stein

“What happens on the football field matters, not in the way that food matters but as poetry does to some people and alcohol does to others: it engages the personality.”

— Arthur Hopcraft

“There you were, cheering together, thumping one another on the shoulders, swopping judgements like lords of the earth, having pushed your way through a turnstile into another and altogether more splendid kind of life.”

— J.B. Priestley

“Somebody said that football's a matter of life and death to you. I said, 'Listen, it's more important than that.'”

— Bill Shankly

“The Jungle made a major contribution to success at Celtic Park. The volume of support and the understanding and knowledge shown by the fans there is legendary.”

— Billy McNeill

Watching & Belonging

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“This club has been my life. I'd go out and sweep the street and be proud to do it for Liverpool FC if they asked me to.”

— Bob Paisley

“Discussing these themes in an environment such as football amplifies the range of the debate. It reaches people who have less information, because it is a working-class environment.”

— Sócrates

“Few of us have chosen our clubs, they have simply been presented to us.”

— Nick Hornby

“Now I've come to the original place, and it never stops feeling really special. It never stops creating goosebumps.”

— Jürgen Klopp

“There is nothing less empty than an empty stadium. There is nothing less mute than stands bereft of spectators.”

— Eduardo Galeano

“It is impossible to understand Barcelona without knowing what happened in Catalonia in the past.”

— Pep Guardiola

“A lot of squatters brought a skull and crossbones flag to the club as a joke, but it spread. It's a symbol: we, the poor, are against the rich - like pirates fighting for the poor against the rich.”

— Sven Brux

“You have to change from doubters to believers. Now.”

— Jürgen Klopp

Watching & Belonging

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“Part of the point of watching a World Cup is that almost everyone else is watching, too. Isolated people — the types at most risk of suicide — are suddenly welcomed into the national conversation.”

— Simon Kuper

“We do not lack imagination, nor have we had sad and barren lives; it is just that real life is paler, duller, and contains less potential for unexpected delirium.”

— Nick Hornby

“It's the only stadium that moves - as a footballer, you can feel it. La Bombonera is the most beautiful stadium in the world.”

— Juan Román Riquelme

“I want to become the idol of the poor children of Naples, because they are like I was when I lived in Buenos Aires.”

— Diego Maradona

“My dad took me to Rangers from an early age, yet he said, 'Son, the best place for you right now is at Celtic.' That never caused me any bother later on. You have to support someone when you're a kid.”

— Kenny Dalglish

“The best thing, apart from the happiness at what you have achieved, is to know how happy you have made people - how happy you have made Liverpool fans.”

— Xabi Alonso

“What is a club? It's not the buildings or the directors. It's the noise, the passion, the feeling of belonging, the pride in your city.”

— Bobby Robson

“As far as the football world is concerned, my career effectively began in this stadium.”

— Pelé

THE AUTUMN CUP FINAL

More from Watching & Belonging



Belonging, in the stands.

“I belong to Africa. I might live in Europe, but I sleep in Africa.”

— Samuel Eto'o

A few more from Watching & Belonging



The people who turn up.

“Listen, guys. Do you hear that? They still believe in us. We have to give them something back.”

— Steven Gerrard

“To be a Ranger is to sense the sacred trust of upholding all that such a name means in this shrine of football. They must be true in their conception of what the Ibrox tradition seeks from them. No true Ranger has ever failed in the tradition set him.”

— Bill Struth

“At a football club, there's a holy trinity - the players, the manager and the supporters. Directors don't come into it. They are only there to sign the cheques.”

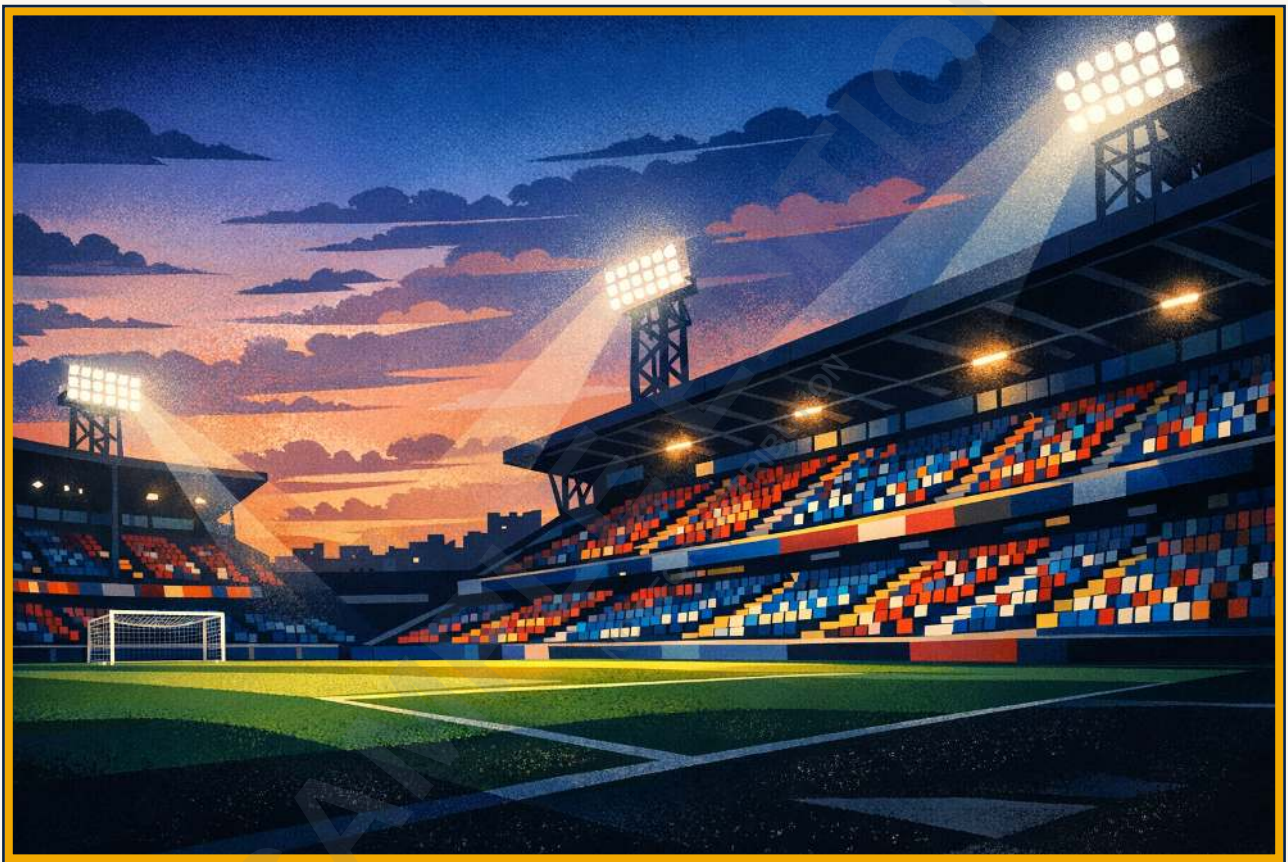
— Bill Shankly

About The Autumn Cup Final

Riverside United Football Club is a demonstration client, invented to show how a branded edition looks and reads. In a real edition this page carries your own history, your own words, and the details your people would want to keep.

Website: sportsmart4life.co.za

After the final whistle



Until the next one.

Between the Whistles

The final whistle is only ever half true. Somewhere a ball is already rolling — a street game starting, a training session ending, a child asking for one more match before dark. May the voices in this collection walk with you between the whistles of your own life.

SportSmart4Life is the intelligent spectator's toolkit — learn the games you love, watch them smarter, and let the wisdom of sport walk into your life. Explore the sports, SpectatorIQ and the Voices of the Game at sportsmart4life.co.za.

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eight tools that teach you the game itself — read the play, know the laws, follow the season's plots, and grow your Fan IQ match by match.

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