

Handout #11 Soccer Champions

Pelé

Edson Arantes do Nascimento, more widely admired by the world as “Pelé”, was born on October 23, 1940, in a small village in Brazil. His father, João Ramos do Nascimento, or Dondinho, as he was known in the soccer world, was also a professional player. He was well-known as one of the best-heading players in his time. He was a center forward for Fluminense until an injury kept him from playing. When he was a child, Pelé and his family moved to Baurú, in the interior of the Brazilian state of São Paulo, where he learned to master the art of futebol.



Pelé’s first job was shining shoes. But he had always dreamed of playing soccer. His career started early. He played with a few amateur teams and, at the age of 11, while playing for an uncoached team called Ameriquinha, he was discovered by a former Brazilian World Cup player named Waldemar de Brito. De Brito recognized Pelé’s skills and invited him to join a new team he was organizing. In 1956, when Pelé was fifteen, de Brito took him to the city of São Paulo to try out for the professional club called Santos Futebol Clube (SFC). That day, de Brito told the team directors that “This boy will be the greatest soccer player in the world.”



Pelé’s first show came on September 7, 1956, when he played in place of the center forward Del Vecchio. He came into the game to score the sixth of the seven goals in the 7-1 Santos victory. From there, the trip to the summit was fast. In his first league game with Santos, he scored four goals. The next season, he was a regular starter and became the scoring leader of the São Paulo state league, with 32 goals.

Not long after Pelé’s first season with SFC, Sylvio Pirilo, Brazil’s national coach at the time, called Pelé to his squad. When Pelé was sixteen, on July 7th, 1957, he played for the first time for the Brazilian national team against Argentina’s squad, and scored the one goal for Brazil in their 2-1 loss.

Pelé eventually played in four World Cups: Sweden 1958, Chile 1962, England 1966, and Mexico 1970. He scored 12 goals in 14 World Cup matches.

Pelé was a man who could move masses. In the late 1960’s, when he and his team, Santos, went to Nigeria to play a few friendly matches, the ongoing civil war stopped for the duration of his visit. When he came to the United States to play for the New York Cosmos he brought thousands to the stadium all by himself.

In 1993, Pelé was inducted to the United States Soccer Hall of Fame. After a trip to Lima, Peru, to play a game, an inscription was placed on the stadium wall: “Here played Pelé”.

Pelé scored 1,281 goals in 1,363 professional games, which is probably the all-time record in soccer. That’s a lifetime goal average of 0.93 goals per game. In 1959 he established the Paulist (São Paulo) league goal-scoring record for one season - 126 goals. On November 21, 1964, he scored eight goals in one game against Botafogo



of Rio de Janeiro. On November 19, 1969, he scored his famous 1,000th goal from a penalty kick on the

34th minute of the game against Vasco da Gama and dedicated it “...para as criancinhas pobres do Brazil...” (to the poor little children of Brazil) and to the elderly and suffering peoples of Brazil.

Pelé defined the role of the playmaker/midfielder type. He led some of the greatest Brazilian players of all time - Vavá, Didi, Garrincha, and others. Many said Pelé would have been the best in any position he played. Pelé once insisted to the manager of Santos that he play goalkeeper. On January 19, 1964, he substituted Santos goalkeeper Gilmar, who had been ejected, in the semi-final game of the Brazil Cup. For five minutes, after

scoring three goals, Pelé played with the number one jersey and made two spectacular saves that saved Santos the spot in the finals.

“Aos 21 minutos de jogo, quando Pelé, inesperadamente, pegou a bola com as mãos, ajoelhou-se no meio do gramado e ergueu os braços, a torcida que estava em Vila Belmiro não pôde negar-se a um momento de surpresa. Mas, foi apenas um momento. Logo, ela compreendeu que Pelé estava determinando o final de sua carreira de maior jogador de futebol de todos os tempos.”

At the 21st minute, when Pelé unexpectedly picked the ball up with both hands, knelt in the middle of the field, and raised his arms, the crowd at Vila Belmiro had a minute of surprise. But, it was only a minute. Soon the crowd understood that Pelé was determining the end of his career as the best soccer player of all time.

This was the end of Pelé’s career with the striped Santos jersey. After that the great Pelé was brought to the United States by the New York Cosmos in an attempt to popularize the sport in the country. And one thing Pelé could do perfectly was popularize anything he wanted with his grandness, talent, and universal



Michael Owen

Driving around his hometown, Hawarden, in his red Jaguar Convertible, adored by millions of fans, Michael Owen is an international soccer star. One would think that this 19 year-old was living a dream life. But is he? Does this dream life come with some sacrifices? Owen is one of the most promising players in England with a regular first team place on the Anfield team, yet he is unable to buy socks without causing a mob scene. The paparazzi not only follow him everywhere, but they also stalk his friends and family. "I knew things had changed for me when I got home from the World Cup and found hundreds of photographers outside my house waiting for me in the early hours of the morning," Owen said.



Success has come quickly for Owen, who began playing soccer in Liverpool's youth soccer system. In 1991, he broke England's joint goal-scoring record for under-15 and in October of 1996 he made his debut for the England under-18s and scored all four goals in the win over Northern Ireland. In December of that same year, he signed a professional contract with Liverpool and by February 2 of 1997 Owen had become the youngest England player in this century and on May 6 against Wimbledon he became Liverpool's youngest scorer ever. He was 18 years old. He has been named the PFA Young Player of the Year '98, FA Carling Player of the Year '98, and the BBC Sports Personality of the Year '98. After only two full years of play, Owen has scored a total of 37 goals in 68 Premier League appearances. If Owen continues to play with the skill and promise that are demonstrated by his record, a Premier League title is in the not too distant future of Liverpool.



It was in France at the 1998 World Cup, that Owen caught the attention and imagination of the world. The world of soccer suddenly came to a halt when the 18 year old scored what is now referred to as the best goal of France '98 and "arguably the finest by an Englishman in the history," against Argentina. Owen's coach, Glen Hoddle said, "for a young man coming into such a big tournament, he showed maturity, and the fact that he got himself on the scoresheet twice for someone at 18 years of age is tremendous. I said to him after the Argentina game that some players have

played in their last World Cup, but he has another three ahead of him," continuing, "he was superb both on and off the pitch. The lad has a massive future."

Owen, after the World Cup, received accolades from every direction. Football legend Pele lauded the 18-year-old as “the best player in the World Cup,” continuing, “football is always full of surprises and this World Cup has revealed Michael Owen to me.” Sir Bobby Charlton has already predicted that Owen will break his scoring record for England of 49 goals. Owen’s teammate Paul Merson said, “If I was a top Italian team I would write an open check in the hope of trying to sign him.” Owen recently signed a contract that will keep him at Anfield until the age of 24.



Does Owen mind making all of the sacrifices associated with this quick success? The answer is a definite resounding No. “If I had to workout from nine to five every day, I’d do it. I don’t see it as any great hardship. You are only a professional footballer for 10 to 15 years-if you’re lucky. I’m going to make the most of the chances I’ve been given.” He continues, “I am very grateful for what I have, not a day goes by when I don’t think about how fortunate I am to be in this position. “

“During the season we often have to play three games in eight days, so you tend to spend a lot of time traveling, which disrupts training. But I normally train two hours a day, five days a week. Sometimes I go to the gym or go back out on the training ground for additional work. Training and preparation are vital in football and that means being disciplined and having the right rest as well as enough physical exercise between games. We work hard, but I always dreamed of being a footballer, so I’d never complain.” Owen is a striker who moves and plays right along the forward line. He is quick to lose his markers and skillful with the ball at his feet, never thinking twice about taking on defenders in one on one situations. He has a great change of direction, vision, and above all tremendous self-confidence. He is a young player who possesses that special instinct that separates the legends from the merely good soccer players.

As for long-term goals, Owen just wants to accomplish as much as he possibly can and go as far as his abilities let him. “I want to get better and achieve all my ambitions,” he said, “if it comes down to a lack of ability in the final reckoning, then at least I will know that I have given it my best shot. If it means making personal sacrifices along the way, then so be it. But I don’t see any of it as a real sacrifice because it’s something I’ve always wanted to do.”

When the World Cup rolls around again in 2002, Owen will only be 22 years old and he could possibly be England’s answer to the victory that has eluded them since 1966. Michael Owen is a name that will be interwoven with English soccer for years to come.

Mia Hamm

“One of Mia’s best qualities is her sense of team,” says U.S. national coach Tony DiCicco. “So she’s uncomfortable with the label Best Woman Soccer Player in the World. But when she’s on her game, I would agree with that label.”

Mia Hamm is a shy and soft spoken person who has a huge impact over young soccer players all over the world. Recognition of her skill has come by winning the female athlete award 5 times in a row (94, 95, 96, 97, and 98). This is something no other female athlete has done before.

Mia was born in Selma, Alabama on March 17, 1972. She grew up as what they call a “military brat,” Mia specifically was an Air Force brat. Her childhood was spent on different bases throughout the world including California, Texas, Virginia and Italy along with her five siblings and parents, Colonel Bill and Stephanie Hamm. Her father fell in love with soccer while in Italy and urged Mia to play, but she played whatever was in season. “You moved to a new base and had new friends as soon as you joined a team,” she says. Eventually Mia “adapted” to soccer as it was her older brother Garretts favorite pastime, and he played very well.



When she was only fourteen Mia dominated girls school soccer in Texas and this attracted attention. A coach in Waco named John Cossaboon called a friend of his, Anson Dorrance and said he had to come see this girl. Dorrance who had coached the University of North Carolina women since 1979 and was the U.S. national team coach from 1985 to '94, was familiar with calls like the one from John Cossaboon and was skeptical, but he went to Texas anyway, just in case coach Cossaboon had found a winner. Sure enough, he did.

Mia joined the American national team at 15, becoming its youngest member ever. She followed Dorrance to Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where during her years at UNC, she led the Tar Heels in four national championships, while earning all America honors three years and finishing as the ACC’s all-time leading scorer. Then the pair also went to China, where the U.S. won the inaugural women’s World Cup in 1991.

Mia was also a member of the World Cup champion USA team in 1999. Mia, however, is more than just soccer. She has created the Mia Hamm Foundation which will be dedicated to raising funds and awareness for two very personal issues for Hamm: research for bone marrow diseases and the encouragement and empowerment of young female athletes.

The creation of the Foundation has long been a dream and goal for the five-time recipient of the U.S.

Soccer Female Athlete of the Year award. The Mia Hamm Foundation will support two major causes very close to Hamm and her family. Following her brother Garrett's death in 1996 from aplastic anemia, Hamm pledged to make a difference by helping others who suffer from the illness. The Mia Hamm Foundation plans to raise funds and make charitable grants to organizations dedicated to battling bone marrow diseases.

Following the 1996 Olympic Games, Hamm quickly became one of the most identifiable female athletes in the world. Her dedication, skill and love of the sport of soccer is apparent every time she steps onto the field. Recognizing how fortunate she is to have had the opportunity to play soccer, and the tremendous impact it has had on her life, the second objective of the Mia Hamm Foundation will be to further the development of programs and initiatives for young women in sports.

Meanwhile, Hamm is still smarting from the tearful loss to Norway in the gold medal game at the Sydney Olympics in 2000. Her United States team rallied to tie in the final seconds of regulation, but lost in overtime.

“I’m not over it,” Hamm said. “It’s one of those things that hurts when you think about it. You can’t change it, you just have to move on.”

