

Creased up



Tickled pink



Gobsmacked

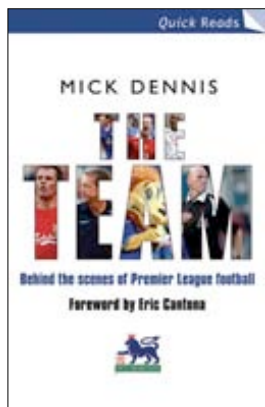


Swept away



Quick Reads

Get hooked on books.



The Team Mick Dennis and the Premier League



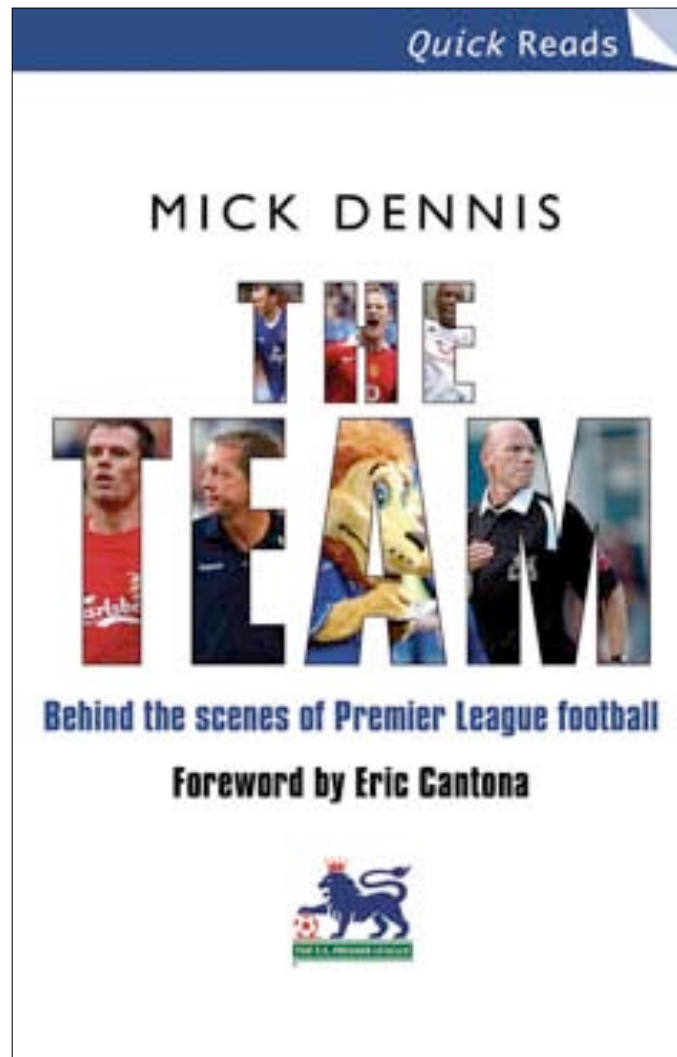
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Acknowledgement

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**The
Vital
Link**



Blurb

The behind-the-scenes story of Premiership football.

Synopsis

What does it really feel like to be a top football player, with thousands of people cheering your name, or a referee, with thousands of people booing? Sportswriter Mick Dennis spoke to 11 footballing people from all aspects of the sport – on and off the pitch – and paints a fascinating portrait of the beautiful game.

Readability

11/12 Entry 3

Mick Dennis

Mick Dennis is a freelance journalist and media consultant who has worked as the sports editor of the *Evening Standard* and the *Daily Express*'s football correspondent as well as writing regularly for the *Daily Mirror* and *The Sunday Times*.

In his spare time, he is a football referee, works as vice chair of a charitable trust, which manages local sports facilities and is a magistrate.

He lives in Hemel Hempstead.

Introduction taken from
www.booksattransworld.co.uk

My career as a Sunday footballer was summed up by a friend in four words: 'Could have been quicker.'

I was always very keen though. I spent hours learning to kick with both feet. I should have tried doing it one foot at a time, I suppose. OK, I lacked skill as well as pace, but I loved the game, and still do. I watch football every chance I get. I've coached teams, and for more than a decade I have refereed. Well, somebody has to.

I have also been lucky enough to make my living by writing about football. I've done so for five national newspapers. So when the idea of this book was put to me I jumped at it – which was a bit like how I used to tackle. It gave me the chance to talk to eleven football folk, all very different people doing different jobs.

They range from the bloke who knocked down the Liverpool Kop stand to a girl who dresses up as a big blue lion. There's one current footballer, a lad who hopes to be a top player, and a man coming to terms with the end of his career.

There's also a manager, a referee, a famous fan, a man who has been in your living room (via TV), and a chief exec who seldom goes to his own home. By talking to them all, and glimpsing their lives, I was able to look at football from eleven different and revealing angles. I had a ball.

So I must thank Phil French who, before he left the Premier League, helped set up the project, and Chris Hurst, who drove the whole book along for the Premier League. Doug Young at Transworld was a huge help as well. But most of all I thank the people in this book for letting me, and you, peer into their lives. They were very patient. Not one of them looked at his or her watch after our meeting and said, 'Could have been quicker.'

Activity 1

'Reading is simply a way of listening to what others have to say.' (Eric Cantona)

<p>Purpose</p>	<p>→ To engage readers with non-fiction text.</p> <p>→ To explore the meaning of 'reading for pleasure'.</p>
<p>Resources</p>	<p>Copies of the foreword to <i>The Team</i>, or Handout 1 Pens, paper, pencils</p>
<p>Activity</p>	<p>Mick Dennis is passionate about football and has written this book to share his passion with others.</p> <p>By his own admission, he is a 'Sunday footballer'. He has also 'been lucky enough to make my living by writing about football. I've done so for five national newspapers. So when the idea of this book was put to me I jumped at it... It gave me the chance to talk to eleven football folk, all very different people doing different jobs.'</p> <p>Ask members of the group to suggest the range of people whom they think might be interviewed for this book. Start the activity in pairs and then share the findings with the rest of the group. Which would be the most interesting jobs to read about, and why?</p> <p>As they read through the book, they will be able to check their list against Mick Dennis' choices and see if they have missed any. Any extras can be saved for the development section of Activity 2.</p>
<p>Reflection</p>	<p>Eric Cantona is also passionate, but in his case it is about reading. In his foreword to the book, Eric Cantona suggests many reasons for reading. Invite the group to read through Handout 1 or the foreword in the book. Ask the group if they agree with Eric Cantona's suggestions.</p> <p>Invite them to identify their own individual reasons for reading and what sort of material they read most.</p> <p>It may be helpful to explain that reading for pleasure is not just about reading fiction, but reading for any purpose the reader enjoys. For example, it is possible to read cookery books for pleasure, without trying the recipes!</p>

Development	<p>Ask the group who Eric Cantona is, and what are his claims to fame. Why do they think he was chosen to write the foreword? (Someone may know that, as well as being an iconic football star, he writes poetry and has appeared in a number of films.)</p> <p>Invite readers to think of well-known sports figures who have had other major interests. This could initiate a discussion about whether one can be good at both physical and intellectual pursuits.</p> <p>Possible figures to discuss could include George Weah, the African footballer, who stood for political office in Liberia in 2005, and a number of team managers who have university degrees.</p>
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Activity 2

Mascot

Purpose	→ To identify how the writer draws readers into a story so they want to know read on.
Resources	Copies of Handout 2: Extract from <i>The Team</i> Chapter 5 Copy of <i>The Team</i> Pens, paper Highlighter pens
Activity	<p>Throughout the book, the author draws the reader into each chapter with a series of small surprise comments or information.</p> <p>Ask readers to read through Handout 2 (extract from <i>The Mascot</i>) in pairs and highlight places in the text where they are surprised or amused by something as they read. Readers can then share their observations with the rest of the group.</p> <p>Ask readers as a group to comment on things which engaged them immediately, e.g. colloquial language; short, snappy sentences and direct speech; switching between past and present tense; introducing the main character through a story; building up from small surprises: this is about a lion; a lion that has forgotten its shorts – a blue lion – a woman).</p> <p>How did these factors draw them in to the story? Did they want to know more?</p> <p>After they have read the complete chapter, ask again whether their initial curiosity was satisfied and their interest was sustained to the end.</p>
Reflection	<p>Mick Dennis includes a wide range of people in the book. Try the activity with the openings of other chapters, and see whether the pattern is similar in each. As a group, make a list of the different techniques the author uses to grab the reader's attention.</p> <p>What effect do these techniques serve? Do the readers feel they know more about the characters he introduces or about Mick Dennis himself?</p>

continued →

Development	<p>The only female character in this book is the mascot. Is this representative of women's role in football? Ask readers to think of more important roles that women have taken on, e.g. journalists, executives. Why are so many women interested in football?</p> <p>Ask members of the group to plan a new book about a 'second eleven' team. Who might they include and why? An interesting suggestion could be an 'alternative' eleven, composed entirely of women. Would this give a different perspective on football?</p>
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Activity 3

Who would you interview?

<p>Purpose</p>	<p>→ To reflect on what readers have learned from the book.</p> <p>→ To encourage readers to develop their own creative writing skills.</p>
<p>Resources</p>	<p>Copies of <i>The Team</i> Pens Paper</p>
<p>Activity</p>	<p>Mick Dennis interviewed a wide range of people linked to football. Good interviewing is a great skill; interviewers need to have a good idea of exactly what they want to know before they think of the questions that will help get this information.</p> <p>Which are the most useful style of questions for an interviewer, closed (obtaining simple response yes/no) or open (requiring response with views/opinions/facts)? When would an interviewer employ each style?</p> <p>In pairs, ask readers to agree on a sports figure they would like to interview and to compile a list of questions they would like to ask. Compare the suggested questions among the whole group. Has everyone asked for the same information? How did they decide on what questions to ask? Are the questions framed in similar or different ways?</p> <p>Jointly rewrite the questions to make them most effective.</p>
<p>Reflection</p>	<p>Ask readers to consider what other factors, apart from careful construction of questions, contribute to conducting a successful interview with someone, e.g. readers may identify good rapport, background knowledge, comfortable surroundings, prior briefing of interviewee or trust.</p> <p>Ask readers to identify a few interviewers from TV or radio (e.g. Jeremy Paxman, Jonathan Ross, Gary Lineker, Sue Barker) and then to compare their styles of interviewing. Make a list of well-known interviewers on a flipchart.</p> <p><i>continued</i> →</p>

Reflection	<p>Ask members of the group to individually rank them and give reasons for their choice. Compare results; are they similar?</p> <p>Based on the above findings, do the group think there is one 'best' way to interview in all situations? Do all interview subjects require the same approach and style?</p>
Development	<p>Is it always necessary to know a great deal about the subject of an interview in order to be good at it? Ask members of the group to identify some recent sports figures who are now interviewing for the media. Are they as good talking about other sports as they are at performing their own? What are the advantages of using former sports figures as interviewers? This discussion could link to the issues introduced in Activity 1 about communicating and sharing one's passion about something.</p>

Handout 1

Extract from the Foreword by Eric Cantona

... it is also important to know why we are reading, who we are, and what the meaning of our existence is. Reading in order to quote extracts from what one has read is not, it seems to me, a good reason for reading. Reading for inspiration without losing oneself in the process is a good reason for reading. Reading in order to enrich one's life without losing oneself in the process is another. Reading to stay informed. Reading to escape reality by entering into a world created by the author. Reading for the love of suspense. Reading to discover. To laugh. To cry. To relax. To give birth, because passion can be born from reading.

Handout 2

Extract from Chapter 5, 'Mascot'

IT IS SATURDAY AFTERNOON, an hour before kick-off. Plenty of fans are already in their seats, looking at their watches every few minutes. Down in the tunnel, one of the stars opens a changing-room door and calls over a security guard.

'Can you just check that I've got all my kit on, please?' The guard, who goes through this routine with the star before every game, agrees.

Boots? Check.
Socks? Check.
Shorts? Check.
Shirt? Check.
Tail? Check.

Then Stamford The Lion jogs out onto the Chelsea pitch.

'I have to get a guard to check every week that I have got everything on,' Stamford explained. 'Because one week I forgot my shorts. I was out on the pitch and I was all excited. I was doing my job, you know, waving at the kids and signing things for them. Then, when I was halfway round the pitch, a little kid said, "Stamford! Where are your shorts?"'

Because my head is so big, I can't look down. But I felt my legs and he was right. I hadn't got my shorts on. I thought "NO!" and I had to run off the pitch.

After that kid noticed, everyone else did, and they were all laughing at me. I didn't go out onto the pitch again that day.'

The story of the Lion, the Pitch and the Wardrobe Malfunction is not as bad as it sounds because, of course, Stamford does not have all the bits of a real lion. That afternoon, the tail was the only thing sticking out. And anyway, under all the fake blue fur was Natasha Egan. Tash to her friends.

Further development

Useful websites

www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk

www.readingthegame.org.uk

Other possible activities

Keep in touch with what is happening this summer in Germany on the official World Cup website. Set up a news and results board to keep others informed.

Readers may like to identify other Premier League players and research their interests, or whether they have written books or autobiographies, or had biographies written about them. Sources may include the Internet, magazines, journals or newspapers. A starting point for Internet research might be www.readingthegame.org.uk, an initiative of the National Literacy Trust, which works with professional football to promote literacy and to raise reading motivation for all ages.

If anyone is interested in finding out more about Eric Cantona, some unusual information can be found on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eric_Cantona

Send in a book review to First Choice
www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk

Individuals might like to use the interview questions devised by the group to conduct an interview of a local sportsperson. The interview could be either written up or taped and played to the group.

Write a short descriptive piece on the day of a match from the perspective of one of the people in the book.

More reading

March title	Author	ISBN
The Thief	Ruth Rendell	0091796865
Woman Walks into a Bar	Rowan Coleman	0099492288
Blackwater	Conn Iggulden	0091907039
Star Sullivan	Maeve Binchy	0752879545
Hell Island	Matthew Reilly	0330442325
The Book Boy	Joanna Trollope	0747582114
Don't make me Laugh	Patrick Augustus	1902934466
Someone Like Me	Tom Holt	1841494461
Screw It, Let's Do It	Richard Branson	0753510995
How to change your life in 7 steps	John Bird	0091907039
Chickenfeed	Minette Walters	0330440314
The Team	Mick Dennis with the Premier League	0552153729

May title	Author	ISBN
Danny Wallace and the Centre of the Universe	Danny Wallace	0091908949
Desert Claw	Damien Lewis	0099493535
Cleanskin	Val McDermid	0007216726
Name You Once Gave Me	Mike Phillips	0007216718
Grey Man	Andy McNab	0552154334
I Am a Dalek	Gareth Roberts/Dr Who	0563486481
Poison in the Blood	Tom Holland	0349119643
I Love Football	Hunter Davies	0755314700
Winner Takes All	John Francome	0755329481
The Dying Wish	Courtia Newland	0349119635
Secrets	Lynne Barrett-Lee	1905170300
The Corpse's Tale	Katherine John	1905170319

See www.quickreads.org.uk for information on these and future Quick Reads

See First Choice library booklist at www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk for mainstream books selected against criteria for their suitability for emergent readers

Audio version of the Quick Reads are available from W F Howes Ltd as part of their Clipper Emergent Reader programmes (www.wfhowes.co.uk/cerpt/)

Other publications for emergent readers include those from Sandstone Press (www.sandstonepress.com) and New Island's Open Door series (www.newisland.ie)

Adult Core Curriculum References

Activity 1

'Reading is simply a way of listening to what others have to say.'

SLr/E3.1-.6
SLlr/L1.1-.6
SLc/E3.1-.4
SLc/L1.1-.4
SLd/E3.1-.3
SLd/L1.1-.3
Rt/E3.1-3, 4, 7, 8
Rt/L1.1-.5

Activity 2

Mascot

SLr/E3.1-.6
SLlr/L1.1-.6
SLc/E3.1-.4
SLc/L1.1-.4
SLd/E3.1-.3
SLd/L1.1-.3
Rt/E3.1, .2, .4, .5, .7
Rt/L1.1-.5

Activity 3

Who would you interview?

SLr/E3.1-.6
SLlr/L1.1-.6
SLc/E3.1-.4
SLc/L1.1-.4
SLd/E3.1-.3
SLd/L1.1-.3