Footballers

Meet the best in the field!

Jean-Michel Billioud & Almasty

WIDE EYED EDITIONS

Mad About Football

Who are the 40 greatest players in football history? It's a difficult question to answer because there are so many criteria involved in selecting the best players.

For example, you could base the selection just on technical skills, or on players who have scored the most goals – or who have conceded the least. You could also choose players who have won individual awards or those who have won titles with their club or national team. There's no perfect selection method... apart from the one in this book of course!

Over the pages in this book, you can find out about legendary players such as Pelé, the King of Football, and attacking midfielder Zinédine Zidane. Their studs have left an indelible mark on the beautiful game. But you can also read about today's stars, like Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, as well as rising talents such as Antoine Griezmann, Paul Pogba and Eden Hazard. It's also very important to include the top female players. For over a century, women's teams and star players like Mia Hamm, Marta and Nadine Angerer have been part of the football world, but they have only recently been properly recognised.

The players in this book create an amazing line-up. It would be almost impossible for a coach to choose the 11 best players from this impressive selection. Some very talented players would be left on the bench!

Contents

1 ALFREDO DI STÉFANO

2 FERENC PUSKÁS

3 LEV YASHIN

4 GARRINCHA

5 PELÉ

6 FRANZ BECKENBAUER

7 GEORGE BEST

8 JOHAN CRUYFF

9 CHA BUM-KUN

10 MICHEL PLATINI

11 DIEGO MARADONA

12 EUSÉBIO

13 MARCO VAN BASTEN

14 GEORGE WEAH

15 PAOLO MALDINI

16 ZINÉDINE ZIDANE

17 DAVID BECKHAM

18 DIDIER DROGBA

19 GIANLUIGI BUFFON

20 ZHENG ZHI

21 SAMUEL ETO'O

22 ZLATAN IBRAHIMOVIC

23 LANDON DONOVAN

24 RONALDO

25 ANDRÉS INIESTA

26 CRISTIANO RONALDO

27 MANUEL NEUER

28 SERGIO RAMOS

29 LIONEL MESSI

30 SERGIO AGÜERO

31 TONI KROOS

32 PAUL POGBA

33 ANTOINE GRIEZMANN

34 EDEN HAZARD

35 NEYMAR

36 MARCO VERRATTI

37 MIA HAMM

38 NADINE ANGERER

39 MARTA

40 AMANDINE HENRY

Alfredo Di Stéfano

The biggest star at the triumphant Real Madrid of the 1950s, King Pelé himself considers Alfredo Di Stéfano to be the greatest footballer of all time. A charismatic leader, he was a playmaker as well as a prolific centre forward, notching up the highest number of goals in three different championships. He always chose to use his amazing skills to help his teammates rather than show off. Under the guidance of their maestro, The Whites – Real Madrid's nickname – reigned supreme over European football and become the best club in the world.

WHAT NEXT

Alfredo Di Stéfano went on to coach at a series of top clubs, including Boca Juniors, Valence CF, River Plate and Real Madrid.

Di Stéfano scored **307** goals with Real

HONOURS

Copa America (1947)

Argentinian Championship (1945, 1947)

Colombian Championship (1949, 1951, 1952)

Spanish Championship (1954, 1955, 1957, 1958, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964)

European Champion Clubs' Cup (1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960)

THE KILLER COMPLIMENT

"I don't know if I was a better player than Pelé, but Di Stéfano was definitely better than him." Diégo Maradona.

THE HIGHPOINT

In 1960, when Alfredo Di Stéfano played in one of his most glorious finals, scoring a hat-trick against German team Eintracht Frankfurt. Real won the match 7-3!

THE PASSING OF TIME

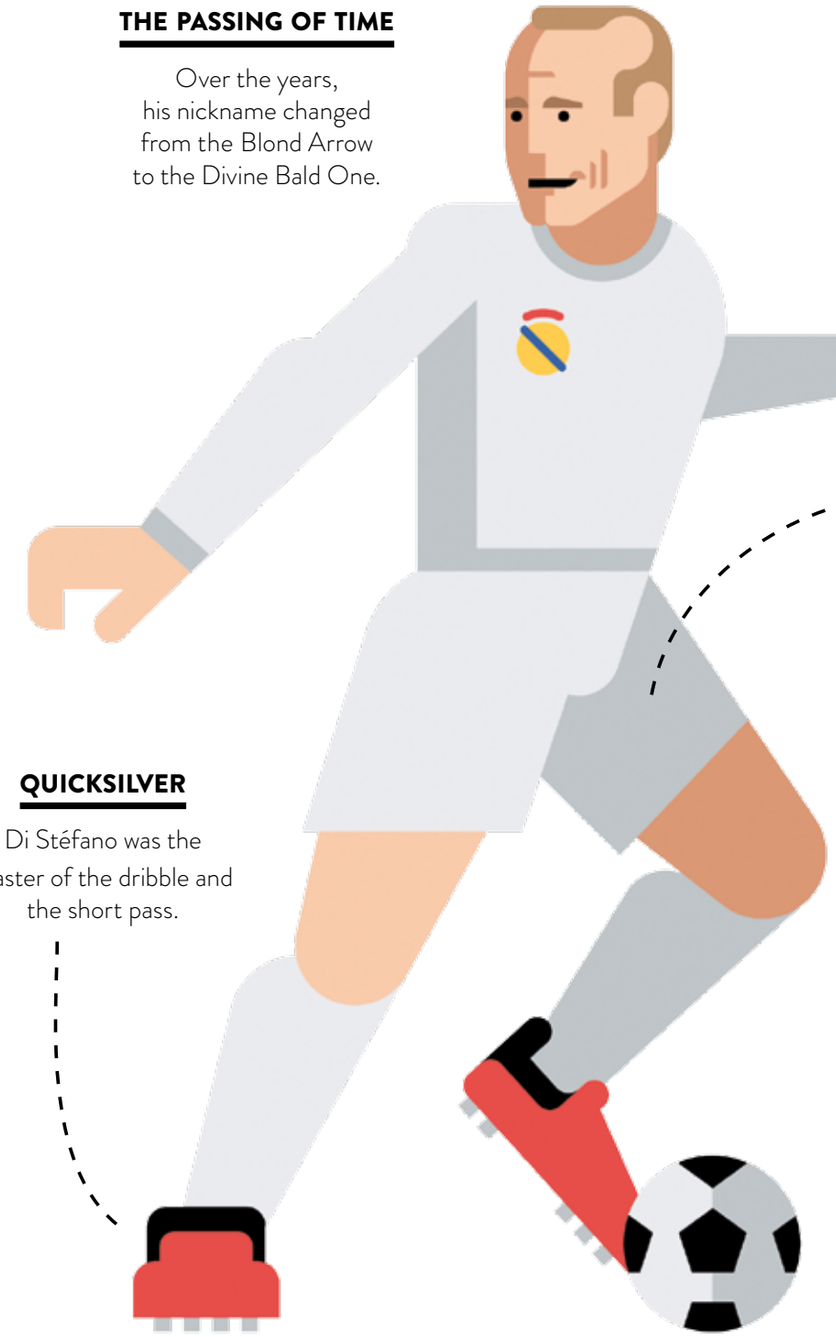
Over the years, his nickname changed from the Blond Arrow to the Divine Bald One.

ONLY REGRET

A torn groin muscle stopped him playing in the 1962 World Cup. He never took part in the biggest event in the football world.

QUICKSILVER

Di Stéfano was the master of the dribble and the short pass.



ARGENTINIAN THEN SPANISH

6 international games and 6 international goals for Argentina
31 international games and 23 goals for Spain

DATES

Born in 1926
Died in 2014

POSITION

Attacker

MAIN CLUB

Real Madrid

Undisputed leader

Ferenc Puskás

A key tactician for the Hungarian national team, who lost only one match between 1950 and 1956 – the World Cup final! – Ferenc Puskás was also a star player at Real Madrid at a time when they dominated European football. He formed a formidable double-act with Di Stéfano, the pair of them a constant goal-scoring threat. In 1960, Real won the European Champion Clubs' Cup against Eintracht Frankfurt with three goals from Di Stéfano and four from Puskás.

WHAT NEXT

Once he became a coach, he succeeded in getting the modest club Panathinaïkos to the final of the 1971 European Champion Clubs' Cup.

HONOURS

World Cup finalist (1954)

Olympic gold medal (1952)

European Champion Clubs' Cup (1959, 1960, 1966)

Hungarian Championship (1950, 1952, 1954, 1955)

Spanish Championship (1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965)

242

goals in 262 official matches with Real

PLAYER AND SOLDIER

At the start of his career, Puskás was the key player at Budapest Honvéd, the Hungarian Army's official club. This was when he acquired his nickname, the Galloping Major, in reference to the rank he was given.

DOUBLE VICTORY

On 25 November 1953, Hungary became the first team from continental Europe to beat England at home, with a historic match at Wembley Stadium. The Mighty Magyars won 6-3, with two goals from Puskás. Six months later, the English suffered a humiliating defeat in Budapest, losing 7-1.

AWARD

Puskás won the gold medal at the Helsinki Olympic Games.

WORLD CITIZEN

He also played four matches with the Spanish national team.

UNLUCKY

Playing with an ankle inury, Puskás lost the 1954 World Cup final against West Germany.

FORMIDABLE

Puskás had a dangerously accurate and ultra-powerful left foot.

HUNGARIAN THEN SPANISH

85 international games and 84 international goals for Hungary
4 international games for Spain

DATES

Born in 1927
Died in 2006

POSITION

Attacker

MAIN CLUBS

Budapest Honvéd, Real Madrid

The galloping major