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opening extract from

Stat Man

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Chapter 1

Meet Arnie

Ten Facts About Me

1. My real name is Arnold James Kean. (My friends and family call me Arnie.)
2. I was called Arnold after my mother's favourite film star, Arnold Schwarzenegger. He was in Terminator I, Terminator 2 and Terminator 3. (I am glad she did not call me Schwarzenegger because it is a very very hard word to spell.)
3. I am ten years, eight months, thirteen days, seven hours, four minutes and seven seconds old.
4. I am 1.5748 metres tall (without my shoes on)
5. I weigh 44.62 kilos. (without any clothes on!)
6. I have brown hair and green eyes.
7. I love football.
8. I do not like jelly.
9. My favourite football team is Real Madrid
10. My nickname is Stat Man.

People call me Stat Man, because I love stats – statistics, facts and figures about football.

I can tell you which country won the first ever World Cup and when (Uruguay, 1930).

I can tell you the maximum length of a football pitch (130 yards or 118.872 metres)

I know which player has scored the most goals for England (Bobby Charlton, 49).

I know the nickname of Forfar Athletic (The Loons!).

I know what Bury's ground is called (Gigg Lane).

Some people do not think these things are very important to know. Sometimes, when I tell my mum one of my football facts, she says, "Arnie, I don't think I need to know that." Sometimes my big sister Ellie says, "Arnie, do I look like I care?"

My teacher, Mrs Moody-Brown, once said to me: "I wish you put as much effort into your work as you do into football trivia."

She does not understand. This *is* my work. It is not trivia. It is history, maths, geography, sport and lots more.

Knowing stuff about football has helped me to speak French too. I can say "Jules Rimet". Jules Rimet is the name of a famous Frenchman who invented the World Cup. The Jules Rimet trophy is what the World Cup trophy used to be called. Brazil were allowed to keep it when they won it for the third time in 1970. They beat Italy 4 –1. Pele scored one of the goals. He was the best player in the world ever (my dad says). His real name is … much too difficult to spell! (It is even harder than Schwarzenegger!)

As you can see, I know lots and lots of facts about football. If you could win football matches by knowing lots of stats then my team would always win. But that isn't how you win football matches. You win them by being good at football. That is my problem. I am very good at stats, but not very good at football.

That is why I will not be on the pitch, when my team, Lime Green Rovers, plays in the Cup Final on Saturday. I will be on the sideline. Some people play striker, some play midfield, some play in defence. My position is substitute.

My manager, Bernie Norris, says substitute is a very important position. "You know what happened with Manchester United in the European Champions League Final," he said to me after we won the semi-final.
"But I never come on," I said.
"Ah, one day, Arnie, one day," Bernie said. "Your time will come."
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But will it come on Saturday?

My top five sub stats:

1. Keith Peacock was the first ever substitute to play in the English League when he came on for Charlton Athletic against Bolton in August 1965. Before that season, substitutes were not allowed.

2. David Fairclough, who played for Liverpool from 1975 – 1983, was nicknamed "Super Sub” because he came off the bench to score so often.

3. In 1979 Italian club Lazio’s substitute Ammoniaci was sent off in a Serie A game against Roma before he’d even touched the ball!

4. Hungary's Laszlo Kiss is the only substitute to have scored a hat-trick in the Wolrd Cup finals. He did it against El Salvador in 1982, when he scored after 70, 74 and 77 minutes. – the fastest hat0trick in World Cup history.

5. Manchester United beat Bayern Munich 2 –1 to win the European Champions League Final in 1999. Their two goals were both scored by subs: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and Teddy Sheringham.