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Opening extract from

Charlie Merrick's Misfits in Fouls, Friends and My World Cup

Written by

Dave Cousins

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CHARLIE MERRICK'S MISFITS IN

BY DAVE COUSINS

FOULS, FRIENDS, & FOOTBALL



OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

WORLD CUP COMPETITION ENTRY FOR:

NORTH ★ GALAXY

UNDER–12s

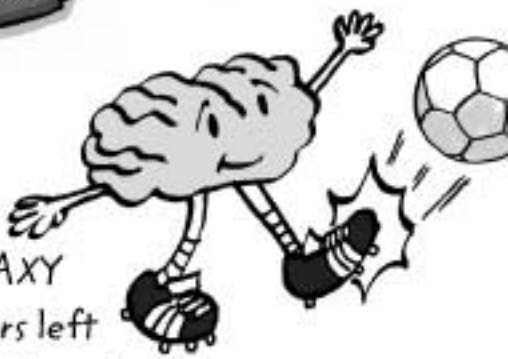
FOOTBALL—it's all I ever think about. I dream about it when I'm asleep. At school I'm always getting told off for doodling kits and formations. My art teacher says I've got REAL TALENT—I just need to widen my subject matter. So I drew all the away kits to go with the home ones. She wasn't impressed.



I wish my real talent was football. I can always see the pass or when to make a run into space. The PROBLEM comes when I get the ball. That's when my FEET need to take over. The trouble is, they're NOT QUITE AS GOOD



AT FOOTBALL as my BRAIN!



This is my first season as captain of NORTH STAR GALAXY UNDER-12s. All our best players left to join another club, so it's just the subs and the people nobody else wanted in the team now. My best mate Sam calls us CHARLIE MERRICK'S MISFITS—which is about right really!

I'm going to tell you everything that happens—the TRUTH—however painful that might be. I don't know how it's going to end. By the time I finish writing and you finish reading . . . we'll both know!

Charlie Merrick

(team captain)





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Factory

ONE DAY I FOUND THIS.

FAB'S FOOT

WHERE FUTURE FOOTBALL STARS

ABOUT • TRAINING ROOM • TACTICS



Hi, I'm FABRICE ROUX. Playing football was my life, my dream. When injury ended my playing career, I created FAB'S FOOTBALL FACTORY to help young players to train better, live a healthy life and enjoy their football.

MY HERO!

FAB'S FAB WORLD CUP COMPETITION!

IT'S TIME TO SEIZE THE MOMENT

BALL FACTORY

ARE CREATED

LOGIN / REGISTER

WORKSHOP • SKILLS WAREHOUSE • FACTS • SHOP



Do YOU PLAY youth football?
Would YOUR TEAM like to take part in a PRE-MATCH TOURNAMENT at this summer's WORLD CUP FINALS?
Tell us WHY YOUR TEAM DESERVES a place at the World Cup.

COMPETITION GUIDELINES:
Are your team record-holding world-beaters? Or have you battled against the odds to avoid relegation?
WE WANT YOUR FOOTBALL STORIES.
Send us a video, your club history, an account of a special game.
Be CREATIVE. Football is about PASSION, HEART & MAGIC!
Make us LOVE YOUR TEAM just as much as YOU DO!

PLEASE NOTE: TEAMS MUST BE BASED IN THE HOST COUNTRY.
CLICK HERE FOR FULL TERMS & CONDITIONS

I READ THAT . . .

AND STARTED THIS.

MATCH REPORT SHEET

NORTH ☆ GALAXY **V** CEDAR STREET WASPS



FINAL SCORE

0	11

HALF-TIME

0	7



POS LEAGUE TABLE PTS

9	LEIGH ROAD COSMOS	3
10	HOLCOMBE WAND	1
11	TORBAY TERRIERS	1
12	NORTH ☆ GALAXY	0

MATCH REPORT

A COMPLETE DISASTER!!!

NORTH ☆ SQUAD

GK	SAM	
D	MOLE	
D	MIKO	
W	CHARLIE (captain)	
DM	DONUT	
AM	NATHAN	
W	KASH	
S	OSCAR	
S	LUKAS	⇄
SUB	GERBIL	⇄

North Star Galaxy
v
Cedar Street Wasps

There's losing and then there's LOSING! Getting TROUNCED. BATTERED. HUMILIATED.

Five games. Five defeats. You'd think we'd be used to it by now . . .

'Eleven–nil!' said Donut. 'ELEVEN!'

'NIL!!' added Gerbil, in case he'd forgotten.

'Remember lads, football's not just about winning,' said Doug, our manager.

Sam scowled. 'I thought that was the whole point!'

'Well, that's certainly the aim.' Doug scratched his beard. 'I'd say the POINT is the pure pleasure of playing the beautiful game!'

If Doug thinks THAT was beautiful, he must have been watching with his eyes shut.

'How can anyone enjoy losing eleven–nil?' I muttered.

'You want to try being in goal!' said Sam. 'I've never lost count of how many I let in before.'

Jasmine laughed. 'Well, you have only got ten fingers!'

She's allowed to say stuff like that, because every week Jasmine stands on the touchline . . . and watches us lose.

'Right then lads, gather round,' said Doug.

Sam rolled his eyes. 'Here comes the speech.'





'Hang on, I just need my phone,' I said, digging into my bag.

Doug frowned. 'Do you have to record this, Charlie?'

'It's for the World Cup competition. I need to write down everything that happens. I'll have forgotten what you said by the time I get home!'



'You're not still planning to send that in are you?' said Donut. 'We'll never get picked to play at the World Cup if we get thrashed eleven–nil every week!'

'It was only nine last week,' said Gerbil.

Donut snorted.

'Anyway,' I said. 'The history of football is full of teams doing incredible things against the odds, so why not North Star?'

