

English for Football

Express Series

TEACHING NOTES

About the notes

The Teaching Notes for English for Football are designed to give additional help to teachers in an unfamiliar field. There are notes for each unit of *English for Football*. The notes are divided into three sections:

Background

This section contains some background information about the topic of the unit.

Jargon buster

This section gives definitions of some of the words and phrases used in the unit.

Activity assistant

This section provides follow-up activities that can be used during the unit.

Introduction – A note from the authors

We have taught English to some of the world's best footballers over the past ten years. Although we have both been assisted greatly by the fact that we have grown up as football fans, we were determined that this book should be accessible to all teachers.

Even within the Premier League, we have encountered teachers who work at clubs who have admitted that they have absolutely no interest in or knowledge of football. So from the outset, we have been writing with the understanding that some of the teachers who pick up this book will care little for football.

Even though some teachers are not football fans, they all realise the benefit of using football in the classroom. As well as engaging students in learning English, football also provides a very clear platform for many aspects of grammar – often more direct than in a standard textbook. To explain the distinction between the past simple and present perfect tenses, you can write two sentences on the board and then ask the students to discuss them:

- (i) Rooney scored 25 goals last season.
- (ii) Rooney has scored 15 goals this season.

When students discuss football, most of what they say is subjective. One statement from one student about his/her favourite team can lead to a ten-minute discussion. Even for teachers who may be huge fans of football, the key here is to oversee the discussion. Often, there is no right or wrong answer, only opinion.

Sometimes in class, our students will briefly discuss video games. We have never really played video games, but that doesn't stop us from using their interest in the subject to generate discussions and written pieces of work. We can still ask the following questions about video games: *What's it called? How do you play it? How does it compare to other games? How often do you play video games? Which games are your favourites? What is the worst game that you've played? What made it so bad? What type of video game would you like to create? Are video games too violent? Are video games better than television?* And so on.

To help teachers in this facilitating role, we have provided a *Jargon buster* and *Activity assistant* for each unit that should help teachers to manage the class smoothly.

The book is, naturally, suitable for professional footballers and it has certainly simplified our jobs, as we no longer need to carry around a great stack of printed sheets from class to class. However, we feel strongly that the greatest asset of the book is its ability to engage students of all ages, and academic and social backgrounds.

We sincerely hope that the book provides a great classroom experience for both students and teachers.

Alan Redmond and Sean Warren

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1 It's my club

Background

The first unit covers the basic language students need to talk about football. A teacher may find that the class becomes a little rowdy when the inevitable first question is asked – *Which team do you support?* – but it's important to overlook this momentary disorder and instead channel this burst of interest into getting all of the students speaking!

Many students will be used to reading interviews with football players and discussing football with their friends. A conversation will often start with one student saying: "Do you know [name of player]?" What follows is normally a brief description from this student of the player in question, typically something like: *He's from Germany, he's 22 years old, he's left footed, he's a striker.* This unit covers some of this basic description, which is then expanded upon in Unit 6.

This unit lets teachers make their students feel like professional players. Just as football can be an excellent subject for engaging students to begin with, seeming to elevate your students to the level of professional football players can be really beneficial to their learning.

Jargon buster

bench *n* seat/s where substitutes sit during a match

by-line *n* line that extends to the corners from each goal post. When a defending player touches the ball last before it crosses this line, a corner is awarded to the attacking team

central defender *n* (also **centre-back**, **centre-half**) player whose primary function is to prevent opposition players from attacking, and especially from scoring a goal

centre circle *n* ensures that opposition players keep a distance of at least ten yards from the ball at kick-off and restarts

corner *n* way of restarting the game in favour of the attacking team when a defending player touches the ball last before it crosses the goal line anywhere outside the posts, or above the crossbar

corner flag *n* there are four corner flags, used to demarcate the corners of the (rectangular) pitch

foul *n* unfair act committed by one player against an opponent which results in the offending player's team being penalised (also *v*).

gaffer *n* (also **boss**) term denoting respect that is used by players and staff when referring to or addressing the manager

goalkeeper *n* (also **keeper** or **goalie**) a player who represents the last line of defence between the opposing attacking players and his own team's goal; his main responsibility is to prevent the opposition scoring a goal; he is the only player who is allowed to control the ball with his hands in open play

goal line *n* line between the posts of the goal; when the ball crosses the goal line a goal is awarded

halfway line *n* line which divides the pitch into two (equal) halves

head *v* to voluntarily make contact with the ball with the head

kick *v* to strike the ball with the foot

left-back / right-back *n* traditionally players in holding wide positions in defence, though they are also expected to be involved in attacking moves in modern football

left-footed *adj* describes a player who predominantly uses his left foot to kick the ball, as opposed to his right

linesman *n* one of the referee's assistants in controlling a match; traditionally stands on the sideline

manager *n* person responsible for running a football club or a national team

Man on! instruction used to warn a player in possession of the ball that there is an approaching opposition player behind him

midfielder *n* playing position between a team's defenders and attacking players

nil *n* score of zero goals in a match

pass *v* to give the ball to a team-mate (also *n*)

penalty area *n* (also **eighteen-yard box**) area extending between the goal line and the lines extending eighteen yards from it; its main function is to show the area in which a goalkeeper can handle the ball (with his hands), and the area in which a foul or handball by a defender usually results in a penalty kick

penalty spot *n* spot located 12 yards (10.97m) from the goal line; penalties are taken from here when the defending team are penalised for an infringement such as a physical foul or handball inside the penalty area

pitch *n* rectangular field on which football is played

referee *n* person responsible for presiding over a football match

shin pads *n* item of protective equipment worn on the front of the player's shin, beneath the socks, to prevent injury to the player

shoot *v* to kick the ball in an attempt to score a goal

sideline *n* (also **touchline**) longer side of the rectangular pitch; when a player causes the ball to cross this line, a throw-in is awarded in favour of the opposing team

six-yard box *n* small box inside the penalty area from which goal kicks are taken

striker *n* attacking player whose main responsibility is to score goals. Most teams play with one, or two strikers; playing with three or more strikers is unusual

supporter *n* fan, or follower, of a team

tackle *v* means of dispossessing an opponent of the ball, or of preventing an opponent from gaining ground (also *n*)

Activity assistant

1. After the students have completed the table at the top of page 7, tell them to imagine that you are a journalist, they are professional footballers, and that you want to interview them. Use the categories from the table to form your questions. You can also add some more questions about the students' likes and dislikes in order that everybody has a chance to introduce themselves to the group.
2. Then ask the students to interview you about your football "career." This is a good opportunity for the students to open up and there is a good chance that the worse a footballer you tell them you are, the funnier the students will find this activity.
3. Explain the expression 'man on' to the students (*Did you know?* page 7). Then ask two students to come to the front of the class and stand a few feet apart. Explain to them that you want them to close their eyes and that you will walk towards one of them only but that you will not tell them which one. If one of the students senses that you are approaching him/her, he/she must shout "man on!" If the student is right, he/she can sit down again, and you can invite another student up. If the student guesses wrong, he/she must stay standing while the other student takes their seat again. Don't actually go any closer than a couple of feet to any of the students. It is a light-hearted game but students tend not to forget the term 'man on!' after this game.
4. Write a series of football scores on the board in the classroom. Ask the students to take turns reading the football results. Make sure that they pay attention to the information in the *Did you know?* box on page 8.
5. With reference to the image of Cristiano Ronaldo on page 11, ask the students to make two lists: one of the parts of the body they use when they play football, the other of parts they don't use when they play

football. Use follow-up questions to find out when they use each part of the body during the game, or why they don't use other parts.

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2 Defender

Background

The most essential and obvious function of a defender is to protect his goalkeeper from goal threats and to prevent opposition players getting forward with the ball. The most common defensive line-up is to have four defenders in a line in front of the goalkeeper: one right-back, two central defenders, and one left-back. The left-backs and right-backs are often referred to collectively as full backs.

In November 2012, in the lead up to a Premier League game between Manchester United and Arsenal, many ex-players and journalists voiced their concerns about Arsenal's selection of a particular left back for what was such a big game. The phrase that was used repeatedly was "defending is the worst part of his game." Fans on radio phone-ins were not so kind. "He can't defend" was the typical comment from the supporters. The player in question was in fact a Brazilian international left-back. Now, to become a Brazilian international is no mean feat so how could it be that this player's ability as a defender was questioned so much?

The answer is that the typical English idea of a full back differs greatly from the classic South American idea of the same position. In Brazil, for example, a full back is required to receive the ball and run at the other team. He does also have defensive responsibilities but there is an understanding that other players will cover his area of the pitch because he is so frequently out of position. So it's clear that for teams to be strong defensively, they need a defensive system in which players work together, rather than relying on the individual quality of each player.

Jargon buster

away game *n* a game played on the opposing team's pitch

clear *v* to kick or head the ball away from the goal in a situation in which there is a danger of the opposing team scoring (and **clearance** *n*)

five-a-side game *n* game featuring five players on each side, as opposed to eleven

goal kick *n* method of restarting play once the ball has come off an attacking player and crossed the byline; it is usually taken by the goalkeeper and is taken from inside the six-yard box.

home game *n* game played on your team's pitch

mark *v* to prevent an opposing player from controlling the ball or getting to the ball; players shadow or **pick up** opposing players

nutmeg *n* when a player kicks the ball between an opposing player's legs. This is a prestigious 'trick', often regarded as a humiliation of an opponent

penalty *n* (also **penalty kick**, or **spot kick**) type of direct free kick taken from the penalty spot, 12 yards (10.79m) from the goal

set-piece *n* situation in which the ball is returned to open play following a stoppage; penalties, goal kicks, free-kicks, corners and throw-ins are set-pieces

throw-in *n* means of restarting play when the ball has exited the side of the field of play; the throw-in is taken from the point where the ball crossed the sideline

training *n* team's preparation for games, concentrating mainly on skills, fitness, tactics, organization and discipline; teams prepare at the **training ground** *n*

warm up *v* to warm and stretch the muscles before playing a game (and *n*)

Activity assistant

- 1) Ask the students why defenders are important. Use this as a speaking activity to get the students to speak about what a defender does, using the present simple tense.
- 2) Ask the students about their routine before they play a game. What do they eat before a game? Do they go to bed early before a game?
- 3) Ask the students to write two sentences using each of the adverbs of frequency (page 17) to talk about the role of football in their lives: *I sometimes go to the stadium. I often watch football on TV.*
- 4) Explain to the students that the verb *take* is very important in football. When play stops in a football match due to the ball going out of play or a foul occurring, it always restarts with a player 'taking' something: a corner, a throw-in, a penalty, a free-kick, a goal-kick.
- 5) Ask the students to think of their favourite goal, and then write a TV commentator's commentary of the goal, using the present simple tense. If possible, use the Internet to find famous goals and, after turning down the volume, ask your students to take turns being the commentator.

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3 Midfielder

Background

This unit could potentially pose a number of problems for a teacher who is not a football fan. There are many different types of midfielder and it can be a little confusing. However, the one thing that doesn't change is the part of the pitch that these players occupy: the area between the defenders and the strikers.

Different midfielders have different strengths. Some midfielders are better at defending so they often stay just in front of the defenders. Other midfielders like to go forward and are good at scoring and creating goals.

Amongst midfielders, most of the glory tends to go to the creative, goal-scoring variety. The great French player, Eric Cantona, once described his countryman, defensive midfielder Didier Deschamps, as a "water carrier." Many people interpreted this as an insult, with the implication being that Deschamps was incapable of creativity and could only perform routine tasks on the pitch. But the truth is that, without these "water carriers", most successful teams would not have achieved their success.

In 1998, a year after Cantona retired having played 45 times for France, Didier Deschamps captained France to the World Cup title. He retired in 2001, having represented France 103 times and having also captained France to victory in the 2000 European Championships. Not bad for a water carrier!

Jargon buster

additional time *n* time allowed by the referee (the official timekeeper of the match) outside the full 90 minutes; this time may be allowed for substitutions, injured players requiring attention, and other stoppages (also **added time** *n*, **injury time** *n* or **stoppage time** *n*)

attacking midfielder *n* player deployed in an offensive position (usually behind the striker/s), often involved in passing moves leading to goal-scoring opportunities; examples of such players include Juan Mata of Spain and Chelsea, and Mario Götze of Germany and Borussia Dortmund

central midfielder *n* often the creative or playmaking position, alternating between attacking and spreading the ball around the midfield. These players often exert the

most control over a match, largely because much of the play takes place in their area of the pitch; examples of players in this role include Paul Scholes and Xavi

chance *n* opportunity to score a goal (also **create a chance** *v*)

cut inside *v* when a winger, or wide player, leaves the wing to run inside during an attack

defensive midfielder *n* primarily a defensive role, the defensive midfielder is usually stationed in front of the defence; his role is largely to break up the opposing team's attacks, as well as to serve as a buffer; some defensive midfielders are 'end to end' players, energetically linking defence and attack as Patrick Vieira used to do for France and Arsenal; Sergio Busquets of Spain and Barcelona is a good example of a defensive midfielder today

drop deep *v* to return from attack to a more defensive position inside your own half of the pitch

far post *n* the goalpost that is furthest away from an attacking player at the time of attempting to score a goal

formation *n* how the players of a team are positioned on the pitch, depending on how ambitious the team's attacking intentions are; typical formations include 4-4-2, 4-2-3-1, and 4-3-3; these formations refer to the **outfield players** *n* (that is to say the ten players of a team excluding the goalkeeper)

long ball *n* attempt to send the ball a long way down the pitch in the hope of creating a goal-scoring opportunity; this often means a high ball to the head of a tall striker, rather than an attempt to play the ball to a player's feet; many people associate this tactic with teams from the north of Europe

near post *n* the goalpost that is nearest to the attacking player at the time of attempting to score a goal

number 10 *n* essentially a position (as opposed to a shirt number) between the midfielders and striker/s; number 10s don't necessarily score many goals, but they traditionally have a playmaking role; famous number 10s include Zinedine Zidane, Roberto Baggio and Juan Riquelme

la roulette *n* trick by which a player turns often whilst moving and dragging the ball from one foot to another (also **360 turn** *n* or **the Maradona** *n*); famously associated with Diego Maradona and Zinedine Zidane

through ball *n* type of pass played either across the ground or in the air which cuts through a defence for a team-mate to run onto

track back *v* to run back in order to help your defence, or to follow your marker back into your own half of the pitch; often this is when a winger, or wide midfielder, runs back to help a full back

winger *n* wide player who plays near the sideline; in many countries wingers are considered forward players whilst in England they are traditionally classed as part of the midfield; not all teams deploy wingers, and some successful teams such as Milan have opted for a midfield diamond or 'Christmas tree' formation instead; famous wingers today include Pedro of Spain and Barcelona, Frank Ribery of France and Bayern Munich, and Arjen Robben of the Netherlands and Bayern Munich

Activity assistant

- 1) Ask the students about the importance of having creative players in a team. Find out who their favourite creative players are and ask what attributes these players have.
- 2) Present continuous practice: Use football magazines or images of football matches taken from the computer. Give one or two of these images to each student and then ask the question: What is happening in this picture?
- 3) Find upcoming football fixtures on the Internet or in the newspaper. Give the students a copy of the fixture list. Practise questions and answers using the present continuous tense: *Who are Inter Milan playing against on the 25th of April? Inter Milan are playing against Sampdoria.*

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4 Striker

Background

Due to the glory associated with scoring a goal, most of the world's most famous players are strikers, and most of the names on the backs of children's replica shirts similarly belong to strikers. A striker's job is to score goals and to help create goals for their team-mates. The rewards for top strikers are enormous although the pressure to stay at the top is immense, as a run of games without a goal can spell the end for a striker at a top club.

Many times over the course of a football season, a striker will walk off the pitch after a game and be presented with a bottle of champagne for being named the game's 'man of the match'. In some cases, the striker may have spurned several good opportunities during the game and may not, in fact, have played that well. But he may have scored a goal to win the game and, in the eyes of many fans and journalists, that's all that matters.

A coach may, however, be more pleased by the performance of his defensive midfielder who made a lot of crucial tackles and passed the ball well for 90 minutes. The coach may well call into question parts of the striker's performance: was he aware of his team-mates when he was in possession? Did he help his side defensively? Did he give the ball away a lot? But the next day's headlines will usually focus only on the goal-scorer and there's no escaping the fact that, across the world, the striker is the hero of the team.

Jargon buster

back-heel *v* to kick the ball behind you, using your heel (also *n*)

close-range shot *n* an attempt to score from a short distance away from the opposing team's goal

concede *v* to allow the opposing team to score a goal; other expressions include: **concede a penalty**, **concede a free-kick**, **concede a throw-in**, **concede possession**

disallowed goal *n* goal that is ruled out by the referee, for example when an attacking player is deemed to be in an off-side position, or when the referee sees some other infringement

diving header *n* attempt at directing the ball with the head when the body is, to a greater or lesser degree, parallel to the ground in a forward lunge

draw *v* to score the same number of goals as the opposing team, and therefore share the points in a league game or group stage of a competition (also *n*)

hat-trick *n* three goals scored by the same player for the same team in a single game

hold the ball up *v* to protect the ball from an opposing player, often by putting your body between the ball and opponent, usually in order to give your team-mates time to get into better positions in which to receive a pass

long-range shot *n* attempt on goal from distance, usually from outside the penalty area

movement *n* player's ability to find space in which to receive the ball during attacks

overhead kick *n* strike of the ball in which one leg is high above the head (standing head height) in order to reach the ball, which is kicked over the head

pace *n* fast players have **pace**

volley *v* to strike the ball in the air without first letting it bounce on the pitch (also *n*)

Activity assistant

- 1) Give each student a newspaper match report from a recent game. Ask them to underline all of the verbs that are in the past simple tense. Ask them to note all of the irregular verbs in the article on a separate page.
- 2) Find some recent football results online or in the newspaper and use these results for speaking practice of the past simple tense: *United lost against Tottenham. Rooney scored two goals.* It's interesting to note that all of the possible outcomes of a football game are irregular: *win/won, lose/lost, draw/drew.*
- 3) Ask the students about their favourite memories of past World Cups. The teacher can start by choosing the year of the most recent World Cup. Then simply ask: *What happened in this World Cup?* This is effective for either speaking or writing practice but ideally, use it for both. After the students have written some thoughts, get them to speak about what they've written and compare memories with other students.
- 4) Ask a student to think of a very famous player but keep the identity of the player to him/herself. Then practise question words by getting the other students to ask questions about this mystery player: *Where is he from? Which position does he play?* etc.
- 5) Ask the students to think of their favourite goals (they can use the same goal chosen in Unit 2's teacher's notes.) They need to describe the goal using the past simple tense. Ask them follow-up questions using the past simple tense.

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5 Goalkeeper

Background

A goalkeeper has the most specialised position on the pitch. Apart from the obvious fact that he's the only player who can touch the ball with his hands, he often trains away from the main group of players and has his own coach.

We have said in the previous unit that strikers can often under-perform but steal the glory by scoring a goal at the right time. For goalkeepers, the opposite is the case. A good goalkeeper can make many good saves in a game and perform heroics for most of the 90 minutes, however a lapse in concentration or a misjudgement that leads to a goal from the opposition can result in the keeper being ridiculed and criticised by the media and fans.

An ex-professional goalkeeper once said that one of his club managers used to tell him at the start of every season: "I'll give you three mistakes this season. More than three and you're gone!" While the manager was quite blunt, teams get three points for winning a game in the league, and the manager's belief was that he couldn't afford to have a goalkeeper who cost his side more than nine points per season. In his mind, it was okay to concede goals but not okay if these goals resulted from goalkeeper error.

This illustrates the pressure facing modern goalkeepers and also highlights the mental strength and dedication that it takes to become a top goalkeeper.

Jargon buster

block *v* (also *n*) to prevent a goal, sometimes by using a part of the body other than the hands

clean sheet *n* when you finish a game without conceding a goal

distribute *v* to kick or throw the ball to team-mates around the pitch

goal kick *n* method of restarting play once the ball has come off an attacking player and crossed the byline; it is usually taken by the goalkeeper and is taken from inside the six-yard box.

keeper *n* goalkeeper

kick-out *n* method of restarting play, usually after the goalkeeper has made a save

narrow the angles *v* to come off your line in a one-on-one situation in order to limit the attacking player's view of the goal

one-on-one *n* situation in which a goalkeeper faces an attacking player who is closer to him than the last defender

save *v* to prevent a goal, often by diving to one side (also *n*)

shot stopper *n* goalkeeper who makes saves; some keepers are good shot stoppers, but are not seen as reliable goalkeepers if they have other weaknesses, such as an inability to deal with crosses

stay on your line *v* to remain on your goal-line rather than attempt to clear, or narrow the angles in a one-on-one situation

switch on *v* to concentrate, especially during set-pieces

Activity assistant

- 1) Ask the students if goalkeepers are braver than players in other positions. Ask them to explain their responses. This will be amusing if some of the students are, themselves, goalkeepers.
- 2) Speak to the students about nutrition. Ask them if they think professional footballers eat a lot of chocolates and fatty foods. Ask them to write down a normal meal plan for one day for themselves. Then ask them to write down what they think a professional goalkeeper eats over the course of a day. Discuss the results with the group.
- 3) Ask the students to write down, using the present perfect tense, sentences describing all of the positions they have played during the time they've played football.
- 4) Print out a list of all the previous winners of the World Cup. Practise questions and answers using the present perfect tense about countries that may or may not have won the World Cup. *Have England won the World Cup? Yes, they have won the World Cup.*
- 5) Develop the previous point and practise the distinction between past simple and present perfect tenses by asking the question *When?* after a student answers affirmatively that a particular country has won the World Cup.

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6 Scout

Background

Amidst all of the money generated within the football industry, it's somewhat of a surprise that such a relatively small amount of it goes to scouts. Many scouts do their jobs in return for expenses and a modest salary. It's only at the high end of the profession that scouts are very well paid and, even then, their salaries are small when compared to those of players, managers, agents, and chief executives. Even a scout that discovers a player that is eventually sold by the club for £20 million, is unlikely to receive any bonus on top of his regular salary.

Scouts are talent-finders and they exist at all levels of clubs. Some watch a lot of schools football and try to find the best young players before they are even teenagers. Other scouts work at first-team level and try to locate players who will go directly into the first-team squad. Scouts are also used to assess upcoming opponents and they often go to see an opponent play a few times and prepare a report for the manager on the strengths and weaknesses of this opposing team.

An ongoing argument in football circles revolves around the scouting of young players by big clubs. Many people feel that the most effective scouts are at lower league teams where a lack of funding means that it's a necessity to unearth new talent. At a big Premier League club, it's increasingly difficult for young players to emerge, as the manager often buys an already proven player when he needs one, rather than risking a young home-grown player.

Jargon buster

Copa Libertadores *n* South America's most prestigious continental club competition

Crujff turn *n* move made famous by Dutch legend Johan Crujff. You trick your marker into thinking you are going one way, before using a 180 degree turn to move the ball in the opposite direction

diving *n* (also **simulation** *n*) an attempt to gain an unfair advantage by seeking to convince the referee that a foul has been committed; it involves falling to the ground, and sometimes feigning an injury

dribble *v* (also *n*) to move the ball past a defender through short skilful kicks or taps; this is often done at speed, and in tight situations where the attacking player is

closely marked, especially on the wings; Brazilian legend Garrincha's dribbling skills stunned audiences at the 1958 World Cup; today, wingers Frank Ribery and Nani are among the players most renowned for their dribbling skills

FIFA Ballon d'Or *n* world football's most prestigious individual award, it is given to the most outstanding player from the previous season; it is awarded on the basis of votes by coaches, international team captains and journalists from around the world; the award is the result of the merger between the FIFA World Player of the Year award and France Football's Ballon d'Or in 2010

first touch *n* a player's initial control of the ball

keep possession *v* to keep hold of the ball by passing it from one team-mate to another, and thus denying the opposing team an attacking opportunity

UEFA Champions League *n* commonly referred to simply as the Champions League, this is an annual competition for European clubs, formerly known as the European Cup; many people consider this continental competition to be the world's most prestigious competition for clubs; Sir Alex Ferguson has often remarked that the Champions League today represents the highest level of football, higher even than the World Cup

Activity assistant

- 1) Give the students the following positions: Goalkeeper, Full Back, Central Defender, Winger, Midfielder, Striker. Then ask the students to write what they feel are the most important physical attributes for each position.
- 2) Ask the students to name two players who play in the same position. Then ask the student to write a short comparison between the two players, using comparative and superlative adjectives.
- 3) Ask the students what things they think are necessary to do to become a professional footballer. Ask them to write five sentences using *must / have to / should / shouldn't / mustn't*. Follow up with some questions using *Do you have to... / Should you ... ?*
- 4) Take some upcoming football fixtures from a newspaper or from the Internet. Ask the students to make predictions about who will win each game, using *will*.
- 5) Practise the first conditional tense by asking the students which player their favourite club should sign to improve their team. Then ask: *What will happen if your club sign this player?*

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7 Manager

Background

Managers often communicate in very different ways, depending on the circumstances. With the media, they have to explain their decisions and defend themselves and their team selection and tactics. Many of the best managers are quite guarded when they speak to the media. They try not to be too expressive and they try to stay calm.

When managers speak to their players, they are very expressive, they are not calm and they speak almost exclusively using imperatives: *Pass the ball, get over here, shoot!* etc.

The job of a modern manager is a very difficult one. For example, if a manager signs an expensive player that doesn't perform well, he can be sacked, or if his team lose a few games, he can also be sacked. However, perhaps the greatest challenge facing modern managers is controlling a dressing room full of young confident professional footballers, some of whom have very large egos.

When we watch a game on television, we often see shots of the substitutes' bench. Sometimes the substitutes look unhappy to be there and it's safe to assume that all of the substitutes would rather be in the starting line-up. But what we don't see are the meetings between the unhappy player and the manager or the phone calls from an unhappy player's agent to the manager, or the phone calls from an unhappy player's agent to another club to come and rescue his player. All of this puts more pressure on the manager, making a difficult job even more difficult. Players are often selfish. They want to play every game. The manager, as well as coaching the team, buying and selling players, speaking to the media, watching opposition teams play, and coping with the pressure of results, must also perform the delicate art of keeping players feeling motivated and valued in order to maintain a happy dressing room.

Jargon buster

bend v to strike the ball with the outside of your foot, in such a way that it changes its trajectory in mid-air. This technique is normally reserved for free-kicks; a famous example is Roberto Carlos's phenomenal goal for Brazil against France in 1997

chip *v* a technique in which you get your foot under the ball whilst leaning forward when you kick it; players often try this when they spot the goalkeeper off his line, and try to measure the height of the ball so that it drops over the keeper's head and into the net (also *n*)

curl *v* another technique aimed at changing the direction of the ball in mid-air; it involves striking the ball with the inside of the foot; David Beckham perfected this technique, famously scoring for England against Greece in 2001 by curling the ball over the wall and into the top left-hand corner from 30 yards to ensure England's World Cup qualification; you can also use this technique to achieve **in-swinging corners** *n*

Don't lose your man! coaching instruction which means that a defensive player mustn't allow the opponent he is marking enough space and time to rid himself of his marker

Hit the target! coaching instruction which implores an attacking player not to waste a shooting opportunity; ideally, the attacking player has either to score, or at least force a save

lob *v* to strike the ball whilst it is in the air, often by side-footing it, usually with the aim of sending it over the head of the keeper and into the net

make a substitution *v* to replace a player on the pitch by **taking** him **off**, and **sending on** one of the players on the bench, so that the number of players on the pitch remains unaltered; players who rarely start a game, but who are brought on to make an impact, often by scoring a late goal, are commonly referred to as **super subs**; Ole Gunnar Solskjaer famously fulfilled the **super sub** role at Manchester United, and when he came on late in the 1999 Champions League Final, he managed to score the last-minute winning goal

man-management *n* ability to keep individual players happy within the group. It often involves making players feel wanted and valued, even when they are not selected to start games; such players need to feel confident, and integral to the collective, as they might be called upon to play at any time

promotion *n* when a team win a league, they are usually **promoted** to the next highest division the following season; in many leagues, the second and third teams are also promoted, or have the chance to gain promotion through play-off matches

protect a lead *v* to make a tactical change, normally by introducing an extra defender, especially when a team are winning in the final stages of the game, in order to defend an advantageous score-line to the end of the match

relegation *n* often when a team finish in the bottom three places in a league, they are automatically relegated to the next lowest division the following season; teams therefore fight to secure enough points to avoid slipping into the relegation zone

sign a player *v* to recruit a new player to the club by offering him a contract

squad rotation *n* managers who have enough players in the squad to do this, sometimes change the personnel in the starting eleven between games, so as to rest players, or increase competition for places; this is particularly common with big clubs who are involved in different competitions at the same time

Stay onside! coaching instruction which implores an attacking player to stay **onside** in accordance with the rules of the game; the **offside** rule is highly polemical, and is perhaps the most mystifying law of football to people who are not football fans; essentially, it means that an attacking player must not stray into a more advanced position than the last defender at the time the ball is struck by a team-mate; thus, he is offside when he is nearer to his opponent's goal than both the ball and the last defender (though not the goalkeeper)

Activity assistant

- 1) Tell the students to imagine that they are managers. Ask them what they would say to a striker that had no confidence. Encourage the students to use imperatives.
- 2) Ask the students what they are going to do when they leave school. Ask them to write five sentences, using going to.
- 3) Ask the students to list what they think are the most important aspects of a manager's job. Ask them to explain their answers and discuss them with the group.
- 4) Tell the students to imagine that they are going to become managers of their favourite teams next season. Ask them what they are going to do to improve the team. Ask them to write five sentences using going to.
- 5) Ask the students what attributes are necessary in successful managers.

English for Football

Express Series

TEACHING NOTES

8 The Greatest

Background

The discussion about who is the greatest player in the history of football is one that will probably go on for as long as football itself exists. The most popular argument put forward is that Pelé is the greatest footballer of all time, although many people attempt to discredit this by pointing out that he didn't play outside of Brazil when he was in his prime and many of the teams he scored so many goals against were not of a high standard.

While this is perhaps harsh on Pelé, for those who are too young to have seen him play, it's very difficult to be sure that he was the greatest of all time. It's difficult for modern football fans to watch Lionel Messi play and imagine that there could possibly have been anybody better than him. For a young fan, watching predominantly black and white footage of Pelé in action is far less desirable than watching Messi in full colour with cameras dotted around the pitch capturing his every movement.

The contentious nature of this topic is a perfect classroom discussion tool for teachers. The question itself (*Who is the greatest player of all time?*) can even elicit robust argument from some normally reserved students.

Jargon buster

final pass *n* final pass to a team-mate that leads to a goal; the team-mate who makes the final pass is normally credited with an **assist**; in the 2011-12 Barclays Premier League season, the top scorer was Robin Van Persie with 30 goals, but he was credited with a further 9 assists, making a contribution of 39 goals to Arsenal's season total of 74 goals; goalscorers who also assist their team-mates in finding the net are not only a great asset to a team, but are usually very popular within the group

fourth official *n* fourth member of the refereeing team who stands near the sideline (or touchline) between the **technical areas** of the two team managers or coaches during a game; his main responsibilities include assisting the referee in his administrative duties, checking players' equipment (i.e. ensuring they are not wearing jewellery etc.), informing teams and supporters of time allowances and so

on, overseeing substitutions, and acting as intermediary between match officials, stadium security and team officials

sweeper *n* (also **libero** *n*) defensive position situated between the goalkeeper and defensive line, more flexible than the traditional central defender role; the main function of the role is to 'sweep up' the ball before it crosses the line for a goal; this position has gone out of fashion, but was highly successful in Italy up to the 1990s, and German legend Franz Beckenbauer famously developed a more offensive component to the role to great effect when captaining his national team to the World Cup in 1974

zonal marking *n* tactical system of defence made famous by former Italy and Milan coach Arrigo Sacchi in the late 1980s / early 1990s; each defender covers an area of the pitch, rather than marking a particular opponent

Activity assistant

- 1) Perform a tense review with the students by asking them three questions:
 - (i) *Who are the best players in the world at the moment and what are their achievements?*
 - (ii) *Who were the best players from the past and what were their achievements?*
 - (iii) *Which players are going to be the most important players of the next ten years and what will they achieve?*
- 2) With reference to the Franz Beckenbauer reading exercise on page 65, emphasise the fact that Beckenbauer won the World Cup as a player (he was the captain when West Germany won the 1974 World Cup) and as a manager (Beckenbauer won the World Cup as a manager in 1990.) Ask the students to choose five modern players that would make good managers and ask them to explain why they chose these players.
- 3) Ask the students to choose the best eleven of all time, using only players from their home countries. Each student should write his eleven players and the reasons for choosing each of the players.
- 4) Review comparative and superlative adjectives by asking the students to compare the physical and technical attributes of each player in their 'best eleven' with players chosen by another student. *Who is taller? Who is more skilful?* etc.
- 5) Ask the students how they feel about referees. The initial reaction of students towards referees is often negative. Ask the students whether they think the referee has an easy job or a difficult job. Then ask the students if they would like to referee or not, and ask them to provide reasons for their answer.