



BEING A FOOTBALL PLAYER

My parents always said I was born to be a sportsman. They said that even when I was in nappies, I wasn't happy unless I was kicking or throwing a ball. My first memory is of Dad and me playing football in our back garden. I recall my mum sitting down on the grass under the summer sun cheering me on as I clumsily kicked a football into the goal net my dad was 'defending'. The sense of achievement when I scored my first goal stuck with me, and my life has revolved around football ever since.

As I grew up, I dreamed of becoming a football player. During class, I tried to stay focused on my studies; I knew that few people became professional sportsmen and it was crucial to get a good education. But I devoted every spare time to my passion. At break time, I could be found in the playground practising ball skills, and almost as soon as the bell rang at the end of the school day, was playing games at the local playing fields. I knew that if I wanted to become a success, I would have to put all my energy into the game.

My big break came when I was 18. Leicester City FC offered me a place in the squad. It was there that I learned the true value of teamwork. I played with a fantastic group of guys there and we worked toward one common goal - to win. I learned that every person has their own individual talent, and a great team brings the talents together.

We enjoyed great success at Leicester, and I was lucky enough to become one of the UK's top scorers, I was transferred to Everton and, while I was sad to leave my fellow team-mates, I was excited about working with new people and making new friends. My time at Everton was an outstanding thing. While I was there, I scored 38 goals in 52 games. It wasn't long until I was on a new journey, this time across the sea to Spain to play for FC Barcelona. I was nervous at first, but it turned out that there was no reason to panic.

I felt great pride when I stepped into the stadium and onto the pitch in Barcelona. Many footballers dream of playing for such a glorious team. It was a wonderful time for me. Not only did we beat our rivals, Real Madrid, but we also fought our way through to the UEFA finals where we defeated Sampdoria and became European Champions.

As you can imagine, the proudest I felt was when played for my country, England, in the World Cup. The tournament raises the level of competitiveness for every player. Not only do you have to be prepared in your brain, but you have to be at the peak of shape' - so, as you can imagine, it didn't help that I had to play the tournament with my left arm heavily strapped up. But I was determined not to let one injury to stop me and played anyway! Because we were a strong team, we got to the quarter finals and I scored six goals during the entire competition and won the 'Golden Boot' award!

Football has taken me around the world, from England to Spain and to Japan! I have become fluent in two other languages and have experienced other cultures. Since retiring, I have worked as a sports commentator and as a writer. I've even done some TV advertisements, but I'm not quite an Oscar winner! I've become quite the all-round sportsman - I've even played for Leicester Cricket Club. My career provided me with many happy memories that I wouldn't change for the world.

1. What is the writer's first memory?

- A throwing a ball with his father
- B running around his garden in his nappy
- C scoring his first goal
- D sitting in the garden with his mother



2. What was the writer's attitude towards his education?

- A He believed it was important to get a good education.
- B He didn't like concentrating on his studies.
- C He would rather have practised his ball skills.
- D He wanted to put all his energy into the game.

3. What did the writer learn at Leicester City FC?

- A that the only thing that matters to him is to win
- B the importance of working as part of a team
- C how to show people his individual talents
- D that it was his big break in football

4. How did the writer feel about his time at Everton?

- A He was sad there and missed his old team-mates.
- B He always felt nervous when he was playing.
- C He found it to be a wonderful experience.
- D He would have preferred to play for Barcelona.

5. What two things are required of a World Cup player?

- A competitiveness and physical fitness
- B determination and physical fitness
- C determination and mental fitness
- D physical and mental fitness

6. What impression do we get of the writer's attitude towards his acting skills?

- A He thinks he is good enough to win an Oscar.
- B He doesn't think he is very good at acting.
- C He expects them to improve.
- D He thinks he might win an Oscar.

7. How does the writer seem to feel by the end of the text?

- A He has some regrets, but he is mainly happy
- B He is very happy that he can speak two other languages fluently.
- C He is happy he can play more cricket and try new things.
- D He believes that he has had many great experiences in his life and has no regrets.

