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## PREMIER LEAGUE FOOTBALLERS BOOK IN FOR 'READING STARS' 2008

**Embargoed to 29<sup>th</sup> March 2008**

Premier League Reading Stars, the innovative project that uses Barclays Premier League players to encourage families to pick up a book and read more often, has kicked off its sixth season.

This year's list throws up some interesting milestones. For the first time ever a Premier League player has been involved in the writing of one of the books as Middlesbrough goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer co-wrote his choice, the children's book *Megs and the Vootball Kids*. And England keeper David James keeps up his 'clean sheet', appearing as a Reading Champion in all six seasons for three different clubs – the only player to do so.

Other big name internationals such as Matthew Upson, Dirk Kuyt and Jermaine Jenas are among the twenty players who have chosen their favourite books. Their choices range from classic novels such as John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*; sports biographies like Joe Lovejoy's chronicle of the life of George Best, *Bestie: A Portrait of a Legend*; and children's favourites like Roald Dahl's *James and the Giant Peach*.

Premier League Reading Stars has a simple central premise. Each of the twenty Barclays Premier League clubs nominates a player as their 'Reading Champion' and they select their favourite children or adult's book to create a twenty-strong book list. All clubs have adopted at least one library, who receive free copies of all the recommended titles. Families who take part in sessions at the library have the chance to meet their Reading Champion, a local author and get involved in a series of football-based literacy games throughout the initiative.

*(Arsenal's Manuel Almunia – one of a record nine goalkeepers in this year's list – summed up why reading is important when he said:*

*"Reading is one of the ways I help keep myself calm and concentrated; it allows me quiet time and really helps keep long journeys interesting. I've chosen The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas as it is a book for all ages and a very good read. While written for children, I feel that the older generation would also get a lot out of reading this story.")*

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Results from last year's project indicate that Premier League Reading Stars is working, with 97% of children who took part saying that they will read more regularly as a result and 90% of parents said they would go to a library more often.

The scheme has been developed as part of a partnership between the National Literacy Trust, Arts Council England, Football Foundation and the Premier League, and will be supported by a series of family reading groups at libraries across the country.

Sir Dave Richards, Chairman of the Premier League and the Football Foundation, said:

"With Premier League Reading Stars, we hope to be able to use footballers' favourite book choices as a way of inspiring families to read together. It gives players the opportunity to act as positive role models and shows that by using the power of football we can successfully change people's attitudes to reading."

Jonathan Douglas, Director of the National Literacy Trust, said:

"Parental involvement in reading has more of an influence on children's achievement than many other factors – including how rich or well educated their parents are. Football has the power to capture the imagination of parents and children alike, so it's fantastic to see such great support for reading from players and clubs."

## NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. A full list of book choices selected by the Reading Champions is below.
2. All player quotes and pictures are available from Tim Vine at the Premier League (contact below).
3. The Football Foundation is dedicated to revitalising the grass roots of the game, constructing modern football facilities, developing football as a force for social cohesion and as a vehicle for education in communities throughout the country. Funded by the Premier League, the FA and the Government, the Football Foundation is the nation's largest sports charity, having already funded more than 5,000 projects worth over £600 million. [www.footballfoundation.org.uk](http://www.footballfoundation.org.uk)
4. The National Literacy Trust is an independent charity that changes lives through literacy. It links home, school and the wider community to inspire learners and create opportunities for everyone. [www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk)

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The National Literacy Trust and The Reading Agency are leading a consortium of organisations committed to promoting reading to manage the 2008 National Year of Reading (NYR) on behalf of the Department for Children, Schools and Families. The NYR will run from January to December 2008. [www.yearofreading.org.uk](http://www.yearofreading.org.uk)

5. Reading The Game (RTG) is an initiative of the National Literacy Trust which works with professional football to promote literacy and uses the motivational power of football to encourage reading for all ages. RTG is largely funded by the Football Foundation and works in partnership with the Premier League, the PFA, the FA, the Football League, Football in the Community, and the Department for Children, Schools and Families initiative Playing for Success. [www.readingthegame.org.uk](http://www.readingthegame.org.uk)
6. The Premier League and its clubs are involved in a wide range of projects that use the power of football to raise educational standards, tackle social exclusion and promote community involvement. As well as being one of the main funding partners of the Football Foundation, the Premier League supports a number of other programmes including *Playing for Success* and *The Prince's Trust Football Initiative* [www.premierleague.com](http://www.premierleague.com).

## **PREMIER LEAGUE READING STARS 2008**

CLUB	PLAYER	BOOK CHOICE	AUTHOR
Arsenal	Manuel Almunia	<i>The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas</i>	John Boyne
Aston Villa	Scott Carson	<i>Charlie And The Chocolate Factory</i>	Roald Dahl
Birmingham City	Stephen Kelly	<i>Winter's Heart</i>	Robert Jordan
Blackburn Rovers	Brad Friedel	<i>The Gruffalo</i>	Julia Donaldson
Bolton Wanderers	Jussi Jaaskelainen	<i>Every Second Counts</i>	Lance Armstrong
Chelsea	Ricardo Carvalho	<i>Man of the Match</i>	Sophie Smiley
Derby County	Andy Todd	<i>The Da Vinci Code</i>	Dan Brown
Everton	Leon Osman	<i>How do Dinosaurs Say Goodnight?</i>	Jane Yolen and Mark Teague
Fulham	Elliot Omozusi	<i>Vieira: My Autobiography</i>	Patrick Vieira
Liverpool	Dirk Kuyt	<i>The Day of the Jackal</i>	Frederick Forsyth

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Manchester City	Michael Ball	<i>James and the Giant Peach</i>	Roald Dahl
Manchester United	Edwin Van Der Sar	<i>Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times</i>	Hugh McIlvaney
Middlesbrough	Mark Schwarzer	<i>Megs and the Vootball Kids</i>	Wallace and Schwarzer
Newcastle United	Steven Taylor	<i>The Penalty</i>	Mal Peet
Portsmouth	David James	<i>Why is Snot Green?</i>	Glenn Murphy
Reading	Marcus Hahnemann	<i>Sacred Stone</i>	Clive Cussler
Sunderland	Darren Ward	<i>You're a Bad Man Mr Gum</i>	Andy Stanton
Tottenham Hotspur	Jermaine Jenas	<i>The Damned United</i>	David Peace
West Ham United	Matthew Upson	<i>Of Mice and Men</i>	John Steinbeck
Wigan Athletic	Kevin Kilbane	<i>Bestie: A Portrait of A Legend</i>	Joe Lovejoy

**For more information please contact:**

**The Premier League press office on 020 7864 9179 or visit [www.premierleague.com](http://www.premierleague.com)**

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