

THE TFOOTBALL GOAT

INDEPENDENT & UNOFFICIAL



WHO IS THE
GREATEST
OF ALL
TIME?

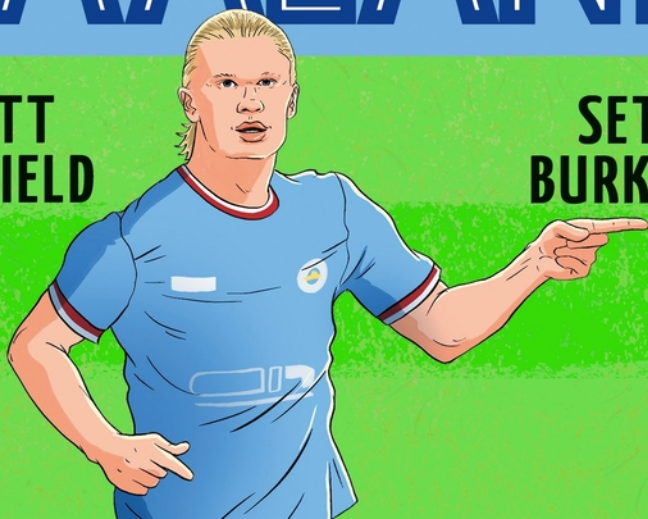
MBAPPÉ

V.

HAALAND

**MATT
OLDFIELD**

**SETH
BURKETT**



WHO IS THE
GREATEST
OF ALL
TIME?

For the gaffer: Nick Walters
M.O. & S.B.



Remember, our footballers are still playing and scoring goals.
All stats in this book are up to the end of 2024.

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WALKER
BOOKS



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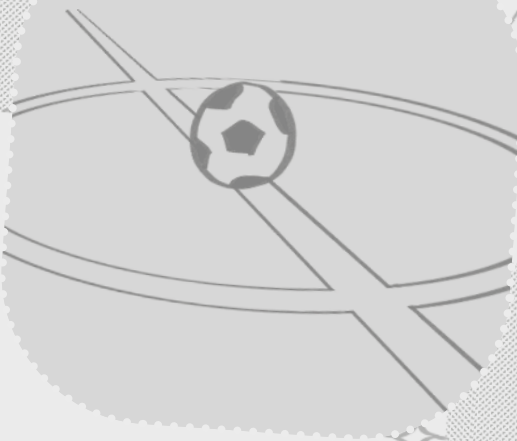
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KICK-OFF





WHAT IS A FOOTBALL GOAT?

Hi there, Matt and Seth here, getting ready to talk GOAT! People say the key to happiness is doing what you love, and so that's what we're doing: arguing with each other about football. *All the time.*

Matt**Seth****Matt**

My team's the best.

Seth

You support Southampton. We both know they're a long way from being the best.

**Matt**

Well, they're better than Peterborough United. You wouldn't beat us even if you had Mbappé AND Haaland.

Seth

We don't need them. We've got Kwame Poku.



But our number-one, favourite topic to fight over?
The FOOTBALL GOAT, of course!!!

We've said it before, and we'll say it again: these books are NOT about animals! The GOATs we're discussing are known for dribbling skills, not for climbing hills. That's because they're the ...

GREATEST OF ALL TIME.

Yes, we're talking about the smartest, the fastest and the most successful players to ever grace the beautiful game. We've argued about others: Messi v. Ronaldo, two football legends near the end of their incredible careers. This time we thought we'd look at two superstars of the present and the future...

IT'S MBAPPÉ V. HAALAND!



KYLIAN

MBAPPÉ



DATE OF BIRTH	20 December 1998
BIRTHPLACE	Bondy, France
POSITION	Right-wing/Left-wing/Striker
CLUBS	• Monaco (2015–17) • Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) (2017–24) • Real Madrid (2024–present)
NICKNAMES	• Kiki • 37 (kilometres per hour – his top speed) • Donatello (like the character from <i>Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles</i>) • Mbébé

ERLING

HAAALAND



DATE OF BIRTH	21 July 2000
BIRTHPLACE	Leeds, England
POSITION	Striker
CLUBS	• Bryne (2016–17) • Molde (2017–19) • Red Bull Salzburg (2019–20) • Borussia Dortmund (2020–22) • Manchester City (2022–present)
NICKNAMES	• The Terminator • The Striking Viking • Daemon (after the character from <i>House of the Dragon</i>) • The Man-Child

So, go on then... Who is the number one, the best of the new generation, the future football GOAT?

Seth

Mbappé. The end. That was easy. I think we're done —



Matt

Woah, woah, woah, my friend and sometimes football enemy — not so fast. I disagree (shock horror!), and I won't let you do Haaland dirty like that.



Seth

Why? Because he's big and strong, and scores lots of goals?



Matt

Well, yeah — those are pretty useful skills for a striker! Or would you rather have someone small, weak and rubbish at shooting?



Seth

No, I'd just rather have Mbappé instead.



Matt

OK. Well, why don't you give me your GOAT reasons, and then I'll give you mine?



Seth

What? You mean argue this out properly like actual adults?



Matt

Yes, that's exactly what I mean — at last, we agree on something.



Don't worry, it isn't just us who can't agree on the big question of the future football GOAT – that's why this book is all about helping *you* to answer it. We're going to compare Mbappé and Haaland – judging them head-to-head on a range of different qualities. Let's take a closer look at the categories...

✧✧ WHAT MAKES A FOOTBALL GOAT? ✧✧

THEIR CHARACTER

We'll look at the mental side of the game – personality, mindset and leadership.



THEIR SKILLS

We'll study the full football skill set – physical, technical and tactical skills. And then we'll give you a half-time break.

THEIR STATS

Next up, we'll analyse the numbers – the goals and assists, the individual awards and the team trophies.

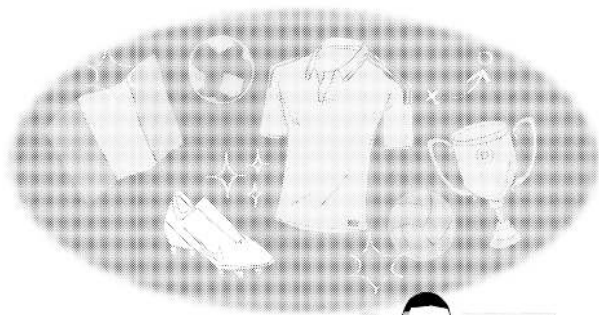


THEIR CONTRIBUTION

We'll end by looking at the bigger picture – how our GOATs have transformed their clubs, their countries and the beautiful game itself!



And who knows what might happen in extra time? Exciting, eh? But before we officially let the battle begin, it's time to learn all about the early lives and careers of our football GOATs...



ORIGIN STORIES: KYLIAN MBAPPÉ



“1998 was the greatest year for French football because France won the World Cup. But six months later, somebody arrived and said, ‘It’s not enough – I’m Kylian Mbappé and I want to do more.’”

ARSÈNE WENGER, FORMER ARSENAL MANAGER

Yes, even as a young kid growing up in Bondy, an area in northeast Paris, Kylian was full of confidence and full of dreams. “One day, I’m going to play for Real Madrid,” he told his parents, Wilfried and Fayza, just like his hero, Cristiano Ronaldo, whose posters covered his bedroom walls. “And I’m going to win the World Cup!” he said, just like his other hero, Zinedine Zidane.

Having big dreams was great, but could the boy

from Bondy really make them come true? Oh yes, Kylian was always certain that he would succeed.

From the very beginning, his life was all about football. He spent as much time as he could at his local club, AS Bondy, watching his dad coaching the youngsters. As soon as he was old enough, he started playing there, too!

- **Did you know?** Kylian has an adopted big brother
- called Jirès Kembo Ekoko. Jirès was a professional
- footballer who made his debut for French club
- Rennes in 2006, when Kylian was only eight years
- old. Kylian also has a younger brother, Ethan.

Coach Antonio Riccardi quickly saw that Kylian had a very special talent. Playing against other kids his own age? Way too easy – he was scoring goal after goal! By the age of eleven, he was already playing in teams two years above him. Kylian was being watched by scouts from big clubs like PSG, Monaco, Chelsea ... and Real Madrid!

Woah, was one of his big dreams about to come true already? No, Kylian and his family decided to take things one step at a time, starting with a stay at Clairefontaine, a Paris academy for the most

talented young players. When he started, Kylian struggled, but in his second year, he exploded, getting taller, faster, stronger and even better!

When it was time for Kylian to leave the academy, the big question was where he would go next. The mighty Real Madrid? No, his parents wanted him to stay and build his skills in France. Kylian went to Monaco, a club famous for developing top young players like Lilian Thuram, David Trezeguet and Thierry Henry – another of his heroes!

In November 2015, he got his first chance to play with the seniors. Monaco's star players were away on international duty, so Kylian was called up to train with the first-team squad. By the end of the session, he had already made a big impression on the manager, Leonardo Jardim. "This boy must not go back to the reserves," he said.

Things began to move very fast. In December 2015, Kylian became Monaco's youngest-ever first-team player, aged sixteen years and eleven months, breaking Henry's club record. And in February 2016, he became Monaco's youngest-ever goal-scorer, aged seventeen years and two months, breaking Henry's record again. France's

next superstar striker had arrived! “I knew it was just the start of the long story, the start of a great book,” Kylian later said.

To write the next chapter, however, he had to wait a little while. On 21 February 2017, he hit top form on European football’s biggest stage...

MBAPPÉ’S BREAKTHROUGH MOMENT

MANCHESTER CITY 5 | 3 MONACO

17 FEBRUARY 2017

His first Champions League start, away against the Premier League superstars – no problem! Kylian approached the game with full confidence and with zero fear, even when City took the lead. His strike partner, Radamel Falcao, scored the equalizer. Then, as

half-time approached, Fabinho launched a long ball forward... ZOOM! Kylian raced away from the City defenders to reach it first. Slowing down to steady himself, he struck a stunning shot into the top corner. Wow, what a way to score your first Champions League goal!

Although they lost the match, Monaco went on to win the tie and reach the Champions League semi-finals, as well as winning the French league title for the first time in seventeen years. And Kylian? Well, the rest is football history...

KICK-OFF

CHARACTER

SKILLS

HALF-TIME

STATS

CONTRIBUTION

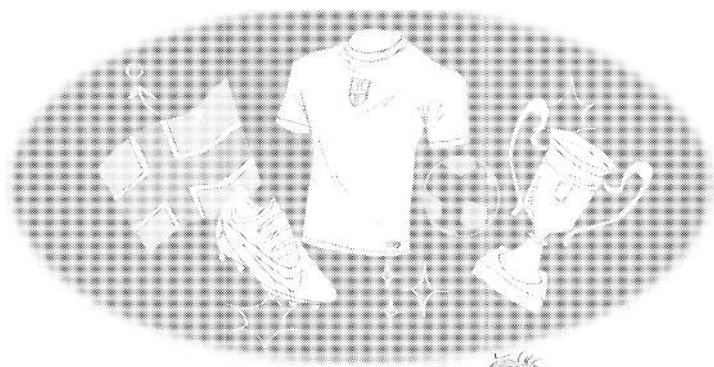
EXTRA TIME



MBAPPÉ'S CAREER TIMELINE

- 2017** His busy, breakout year continues: in March, Kylian makes his international debut for France, and in August, he signs for PSG for €180 million, becoming the most expensive teenager ever!
- 2018** Kylian lifts the first of six Ligue 1 titles with PSG and fulfils his childhood dreams by winning the World Cup with France. He scores four goals along the way.
- 2019** He finishes as Ligue 1's top goal-scorer – the first of six seasons in a row!
- 2020** Kylian becomes the youngest player to score twenty Champions League goals (a record that Erling Haaland would soon break) and helps PSG reach the final at last. Sadly, however, they are beaten 1–0 by Bayern Munich.
- 2021** He fires France to UEFA Nations League glory, grabbing an assist and the winning goal in the final against Spain.
- 2022** Kylian scores a hat-trick in the World Cup final, but unfortunately France still lose on penalties against Lionel Messi's Argentina.
- 2023** He becomes PSG's all-time record goal-scorer.
- 2024** Kylian finally fulfils his other childhood dream, signing for Spanish giants Real Madrid.





ORIGIN STORIES: ERLING HAALAND



These days he's a Norway international nicknamed "The Striking Viking", but Erling's story starts in England: he was born in Leeds, where his dad, Alf-Inge (Alfie) Haaland, was playing in the Premier League as a hard-working defensive midfielder. But when Alfie retired, the family moved back to his hometown of Bryne in Norway.

There, on the shores of Lake Frøylandsvatnet, young Erling began his sporting journey, trying handball, golf and athletics. He was inspired by his mother, Gry Marita Braut, who had been Norway's junior heptathlon champion.

Ultimately, Erling chose to follow in Alfie's footsteps. "I'm going to be a professional footballer," he was soon telling everyone at his local club, Bryne, "and I'm going to be even better than my dad!" Really? It was a big claim but Erling always believed in himself.

- **Did you know?** Erling still holds a world record for
- the longest standing jump ever recorded by a
- five-year-old – 1.63 metres!

One thing was for sure: he was definitely going to be a different kind of footballer from his father. Tough tackles and midfield battles? No thanks – he wanted to play further forward, getting goals and glory! So, Erling became a striker instead. As he was small and very skinny, he had to be speedy and smart, making clever runs at the right time, to avoid being outmuscled by big defenders.

Under the expert coaching of Alf Ingve Berntsen, the goals flowed and, aged fifteen, he was invited to train with the Bryne first team. Many young players would have found that scary, but not Erling. Being a boy amongst men? Making a few mistakes? No, he wasn't afraid of anything, and a few months later, he made his senior debut!

He didn't score for Bryne but Erling did enough to catch the eye of the scouts. Soon lots of clubs were interested in signing him, including TSG 1899 Hoffenheim from Germany and Copenhagen from Denmark. In the end, however, Erling chose to stay in Norway and join Molde – the club managed by national legend and former Manchester United striker Ole Gunnar Solskjær. Much better – what a perfect place to learn!

Erling quickly got a lot better, and a lot bigger, too! Suddenly, he was tall and strong, as well as speedy and smart – he was now the striker who could do it all! By the summer of 2018, the “Man-Child”, as his teammates called him, was ready to shine for Molde. To prove it, he scored four goals in the first twenty minutes of a game against Brann!

Woah, the boy from Bryne was on fire! After scoring six more in his next eleven matches, he was soon on the move again. Big European clubs like Juventus and Manchester United were interested, but, no, Erling wasn't ready for that step yet. For now, he wanted to go somewhere he would get lots of gametime and develop as a player without too much pressure. So instead, he chose Austrian champions, Red Bull (RB) Salzburg.

At first, Erling struggled to settle in at a new club in a new country, but that all changed after a successful trip to the 2019 Under-20 World Cup in Poland, where he scored nine goals – yes, NINE! – for Norway in a single game against Honduras. Erling returned to Austria feeling full of confidence, and when the 2019–20 season kicked off, he was back with a BANG, scoring eleven goals in the first seven games, including two hat-tricks! Next up was the competition he had always dreamed of as a kid...

HAALAND'S BREAKTHROUGH MOMENT

RB SALZBURG 6 | 2 KRC GENK

17 SEPTEMBER 2019

On his Champions League debut, it took Erling just two minutes to score his first goal, then another 32 to score his second. Could he complete a hat-trick in his very first game? Oh, Erling could go one better than that – with a stretch of his long right leg and a poke of his big right boot, he completed his

hat-trick before the half-time whistle had even been blown!

At the end of the game, Erling walked off not only with the match ball but also a new Champions League record to go with it: he was the first player ever to score a first-half hat-trick on his Champions League debut.

Football's next superstar striker had officially arrived, and the rest is football history...



HAALAND'S CAREER TIMELINE

– 2019

Erling ends his busy, breakout year by signing for German giants Borussia Dortmund in December, for a fee of €20 million.

– 2020

He finishes the 2019–20 season as Dortmund's second highest scorer with sixteen goals, despite joining the club mid-season! He also scores his first senior goal for Norway against Austria.



– 2021

He wins the German Cup (known as "DFB-Pokal") with Dortmund, as well as the Bundesliga Player of the Season award, for smashing in 27 league goals in just 28 games.

– 2022

After two great years in Germany, Erling's on the move again. He joins Premier League champions, Manchester City, for a fee of €60 million.

– 2023

Erling ends his first season at City by winning the Treble: the Premier League, the FA Cup and the Champions League. He also wins a personal Treble: the Premier League Player of the Season award, the Premier League Young Player of the Season award and the Premier League Golden Boot, after scoring a record-breaking 36 league goals!



– 2024

Erling wins the Premier League title and the Golden Boot again.



OK, so now that we've got to know our GOATs a little better, it's time to get the battle underway! But first, a quick reminder of the rules:

- 1.** We're going to keep things calm.
- 2.** We're going to keep things clean.
- 3.** We're going to keep things clever.

The only weapons we need for *this* battle are our big football brains!



Matt

Yeah, Seth, no two-footed tackles!

Seth

But we're writing about football, *not* playing it!



Matt

Good point. I probably don't need to be wearing my boots right now, do I?



Seth

The full football kit feels a bit much, too!



Matt

Whatever, your face is a bit much.



Seth

Come on, mate – remember what we just said?



Matt

Sorry.



Let's kick off with Character...

CHARACTER



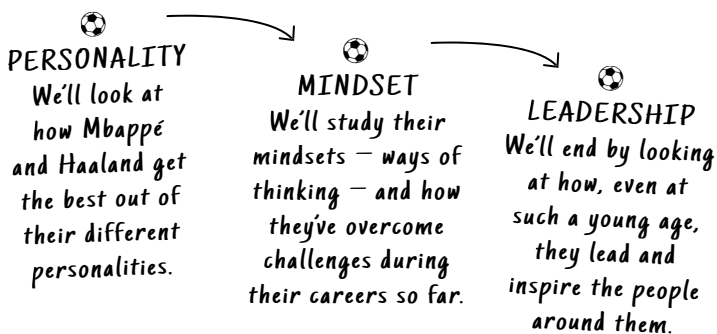


WHAT IS CHARACTER?

Don't worry, we are going to learn all about how Mbappé and Haaland perform on the football pitch: their skills and strengths, their goals and glory moments. But before we get into all that, we're going to find out about their characters.

Why? Well, you could have the speed of a cheetah, the power of an elephant and the top tekkers of Messi and Ronaldo combined, but if you can't perform at your best under pressure in front of thousands of people? Forget about it! To reach that GOAT status like Mbappé and Haaland, you need to have character super powers, too.

In this section, we're going to look at ...



PERSONALITY

When it comes to personality, Mbappé and Haaland share some similarities – drive, determination, close family relationships, an obsessive love of football (duh!) – but in other ways, they're very different. That's what makes the world of football GOATs so interesting.

KYLIAN MBAPPÉ



So, what do we know about Mbappé? The answer is quite a lot, actually, because he's a world-famous superstar in the age of social media.

- **What he drives?** Despite having a huge collection
- of luxury cars, Kylian can't drive any of them
- because he doesn't have a licence!
-

- ⋮ **His favourite foods?** Super-healthy athlete fuel like
- ⋮ pasta, salmon and avocado, apparently.
- ⋮
- ⋮ **His favourite video games?** *FIFA* (now *EA Sports FC*)
- ⋮ and *NBA 2K*.
- ⋮

But we're not here to tell you stuff like what watch Mbappé prefers to wear (the Hublot Big Bang) – we're here to delve deeper into his personality...

HE'S AMBITIOUS

Even as a little kid, Kylian always had a grand plan for his future. He was six when he learned the French national anthem – to practise for when he was older and singing it loud and proud as part of the France national football team!

When he was asked about his football dream, aged fourteen, his answer was: "To play for Real Madrid. It is better to target the Moon. That way, if you fail, you get to the clouds." Now, that's ambition, and it's worked for Kylian! Fast-forward eleven years, and he has made that dream come true.

HE'S CONFIDENT

When you grow up with Cristiano Ronaldo as your football idol, there's a good chance you're

going to become a confident character, and Kylian is certainly that. “Every time I step on the pitch, I tell myself I am the best,” he once said in an interview. And when asked who his favourite superhero was, his answer was simple: “Me!”

WHAT THE DOUBTERS SAY



“Mbappé is arrogant! He acts like he’s better than everyone else, but he’s not.”



WRONG!

When you are arrogant, you believe that you are already the best you can be. But *confident* people understand that they can be better if they ask for help. When he was younger, Kylian’s strong self-belief did sometimes get him into trouble, but coaches have also described him as a hard worker, a good listener and a fast learner.

That confidence is also a super power that has pushed Kylian to keep improving his game. “He was so sure he’d succeed,” says family friend and lower league manager, Alain Mboma. “We could see he had quality, but only he believed he’d go as far as he has.”

HE'S MATURE

"We must always set the bar high, otherwise we do not progress" – no, those aren't the words of a wise old politician; they are the words of Kylian ... aged eighteen!

And a year later, after winning the World Cup, he was shaking hands and sharing his opinions with the French president, Emmanuel Macron. The young Kylian has been described as speaking like a 40-year-old. Unlike many professional footballers, he seems to act like one, too. You won't find many footballers more dedicated than Kylian, and he's been like that for years.

When he won the 2016 UEFA European Under-19 Championship with France, his teammates went out partying, but Kylian? No, he went home and moved straight on to his next goal: breaking into the Monaco first team.

A year later, when Monaco won the Ligue 1 title, his teammates went out partying, but Kylian? No, he went home to prepare for the last match of the season, even though it didn't really matter.

ERLING HAALAND



Moving on to Haaland, what do we know about him? While Kylian loves to speak, Erling prefers to stay quiet, especially in front of the cameras. During an awkward interview in 2019, he was asked, "On a scale from 1 to 10, how bored are you right now?" Erling's reply? "9.9!"

Despite his one-word answers, however, we still know lots about him.

- ⋮ **What he drives?** As well as having a huge collection
- ⋮ of luxury cars, Erling can also drive a tractor!
- ⋮

KICK-OFF

CHARACTER

SKILLS

HALF-TIME

STATS

CONTRIBUTION

EXTRA TIME