

Top Ten Football Players  
Ever

TOP  
TEN

OF  
ALL



TIME

BOOK 3 #

Connor Swift

Number One:

# Pele.

A World Cup winner in 1958, 1962 and 1970, Edson Arantes do Nascimento, to give him his full name, is generally regarded as the greatest soccer player of all time. Pele won multiple titles with Santos, with whom he played out the best years of his career, before joining the New York Cosmos for a brief spell. Scorer of 760 official goals, Pele was a superb striker and dribbler of the ball, but could also combine well with his teammates and feature prominently in the build up to goals.

Number Two:

## Lionel Messi.

It is not an exaggeration to say that The Atomic Flee is now challenging Pele for the crown of greatest ever Soccer player and will surely surpass the Brazilian if the remainder of his career is as fruitful as the opening years. Messi joined Barcelona when he was just 13, scored on his debut at 17 and now wows the Camp Nou faithful on a regular basis with his dribbling, passing and goalscoring exploits. He broke Gerd Muller's record for most goals in a calendar year when he scored an incredible 91 goals in 2012.

Number Three:

## Maradona.

Diego Armando Maradona is one of the greatest dribblers the game has ever seen. His 'Hand of God' goal against England at the 1986 World Cup and the stunning solo effort that followed sum up. This flawed genius did not always play by the rules, and confesses that his expulsion from the 1994 World Cup after testing positive for ephedrine is one of his saddest memories. But the Maradona that captained Argentina to the 1986 World Cup and helped unfashionable Napoli to Serie A titles in 1987 and 1990 was irreplaceable.

Number Four:

## Johan Cruyff.

The outspoken Dutchman excelled for Ajax and Barcelona in the 1960s and 1970s and is considered by many to be Europe's best player ever. His name was synonymous with Rinus Michels' "Total Football" movement whereby players interchanged positions. Cruyff was effective in both wide and central positions, and was famous for his ability to turn players. Winner of three Ballon D'Ors (European Player of the Year awards), Cruyff won eight Dutch titles and three European Cups with Ajax, and also made a controversial move to bitter rivals Feyenoord.

Number Five:

## Franz Beckenbauer.

"Der Kaiser is the only man to captain and manage his side to World Cup victory. In the early 1970s, the German revolutionised the game with his switch from central midfield to an attacking sweeper role where he could dictate play from the back by dribbling the ball out of defense and joining in his team's attacks. He enjoyed his best years with Bayern Munich, where he won five Bundesliga titles and three European Cups, but he also spent time with Pele at the New York Cosmos.

Number Six:

## Michel Platini

A star with Nancy, St-Etienne and Juventus, Platini was a European champion for club and country after winning the 1984 European Championship with France and the European Cup the following year with Juventus. One of the best passers in soccer history and an expert free-kick taker, the attacking midfielder scored nine goals in that 1984 triumph.

Number Seven

## Alfredo Di Stéfano

Di Stéfano's achievement of scoring in five consecutive European Cup finals is unlikely to ever be matched. Born in Argentina to Italian immigrants, but played internationally for three different teams, Di Stéfano's career was nothing if not cosmopolitan. A player of exceptional fitness levels, the Saeta rubia (blond arrow) was instrumental in Real Madrid's dominance in the 1950s although the history books could tell a very different story if he had joined Barcelona instead of the Merengues in 1943.



Number Eight:

## Ferenc Puskás

One of the best strikers ever, Puskás averaged nearly a goal a game at club and international level. He was a prominent member of the great Hungary team of the 1950s, known as the Mighty Magyars. Puskás was top league scorer with Real Madrid on four occasions, and scored seven goals in two European Cup finals. He won five league titles with Budapest Honvéd before moving to Real in 1958 and winning another five. The inside-left also boasts three European Cups.

Number Nine:

## Cristiano Ronaldo

The Portuguese wing wizard deserves his place among the pantheon of greats. His goalscoring record since joining Real Madrid from Manchester United is out of this world, and in January 2014 he notched his 400th career goal at the age of just 28. Ronaldo's performances in recent years have meant that alongside Messi, he is considered by some distance the best soccer player in the world. Pace, strength, control and finishing - Ronaldo has the complete repertoire.

Number Ten:

## Eusébio.

"The Black Panther" was considered Portugal's greatest ever soccer player until Ronaldo came along. Scorer of nine goals at the 1966 World Cup finals, Eusébio possessed explosive pace and deceptive ability. The forward turned out for a host of teams, but his best years were spent with Benfica where he averaged more than a goal a game. Eusébio told World Soccer magazine in 2010 that he signs photographs of himself every night to give to children the following day.

H·E·L·L·O There!

You may have read L. Jay's books in  
my class.

BOOK 4

Coming Soon!