

FOOTBALL DREAMS

Remarkable Football Stories
for Kids

How 13 Footballers
Overcame Challenges
and Became Legends

ages 9-12

EMILY JOHNSON

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” **Some people want it to happen, some wish it would happen, others make it happen.**
MICHAEL JORDAN.

INTRODUCTION

Football is by far one of the most popular sports in the world, with one half of the world's population interested in the game and more than one billion people playing it.

'The beautiful game', as it is nicknamed, has the power to unite millions of people from across the globe, regardless of race, nationality or social status, all because they love football. Its power doesn't stop there. Football has the ability to transform our lives and means so much more than scoring a goal or winning a match.

So why does football have such a deep impact on us? Its physical, mental and social benefits are of course clear, but somehow this sport drives the people who play it to become the best version of themselves.

In this collection of 13 true stories about famous footballers past and present, we discover how they overcame hardships to achieve incredible things, yet each of them began life as a child with a dream. They prove to us that while their knowledge and skills are essential for success, it is their attitude which attains it and sets them apart. Their extraordinary skills, resilience, and charisma have captured the hearts of millions. Their stories go beyond the field, reminding us of the power of passion, dedication, and the universal language of football.





HARRY KANE

Harry Kane was only eight years old when he suffered the biggest disappointment of his life so far. “The boy is chubby and not very athletic.” Those were the words that led to young Harry being rejected by the Arsenal academy after just one season. A tough blow for anyone, but especially for a boy so young, yet this youngster went on to become one of the best strikers we have ever seen in world football.

He has captained England in the European and World Cup tournaments and he is Tottenham Hotspur’s all-time highest goal scorer with a whopping 280 competitive goals!

So how did Harry go from academy rejection to England selection and become a football legend?

It all began on 28th July 1993 in Walthamstow, England, when Kim and Patrick Kane welcomed their second baby boy into the world and named him Harry. Harry grew up



in London with his brother, Charlie, and went to Chingford Foundation School. Coincidentally this was the same school that former England captain, David Beckham had attended. Harry was passionate about his PE lessons at school and his teachers could see that he was always very dedicated and driven to succeed. He loved playing football, and whenever he played at school he always put his whole heart into it and scored an abundance of goals. He was a dedicated team player, clearly more technically gifted than some of the others but yet he didn't expect to be treated differently. He wasn't selfish on the pitch and he never tried to hog the ball if a pass was the best move. It didn't take long before Harry was spotted while playing for his local club, Ridgeway Rovers, and this is what led to him joining the Arsenal academy when he was eight years old.

We all know that to have your childhood dream come true is a humongous deal, and Harry could hardly believe it was actually happening. He was about to follow in the golden footsteps of his lifelong hero, David Beckham. Sadly though, Harry's sweet taste of success only lasted for one season. No sooner had Harry started to live his dream, than he realised that his fairytale football future might be booted right off the pitch. Harry's dad was the one who delivered the unwelcome news to him: the Arsenal managers had decided to let Harry go.

Harry had been rejected. He had been rejected because he wasn't good enough, because he was too chubby and not



athletic. The bleak reality of what had happened hit Harry hard. Rejected, faulty, turned down, declined... Harry wasn't old enough to fully understand the feeling of rejection, and his dad tried hard not to show any signs of disappointment.

He just put his arm around Harry and said: "We go again, and work even harder. Let's see where it takes us." And so that's exactly what Harry did. It could have been so easy to feel worthless and give up, so easy to walk away and never look back, but Harry's positive mindset enabled him to turn failure into opportunity.

Harry openly admits today that he had a chip on his shoulder after such a tough blow from the Arsenal managers. But looking back, he describes their decision as "The best thing that ever happened to me because it gave me a drive that wasn't there before." Harry bounced back from feelings of self-doubt, and he took the rejection and turned it into a driving force to succeed. He kept working hard, and at the age of 11 went to Watford on trial. He relished playing there and he did extremely well. So well, in fact, that they offered him a contract. Then, while playing a match against Tottenham Hotspur, Harry scored a hat-trick for Watford, and Tottenham offered him a contract too, almost on the spot! It was a tough decision for Harry but Tottenham were the bigger club at the time, so he took their offer and signed.

Harry was a fairly shy boy at Tottenham Hotspur academy. He hadn't had his growth spurt yet and he didn't know much about the importance of nutrition for young sports athletes



either. He was certainly not the quickest or the most agile of players, but he had good technical ability, a strong understanding of the game and huge hunger for success. Fortunately, the coaches there saw that he had potential. Harry worked hard at his shooting and put in lots of extra work on the training ground, as he always had.

When he was about 15, things started to change. Harry had a long-awaited growth spurt, he suddenly became bigger than his peers, and a new, more confident Harry emerged. As he grew bigger and stronger, he also grew mentally, and he started to make his mark at the academy. Finally, Harry's hard work ethic paid off and they offered him a full-time under-18 scholarship which he signed with Tottenham on his 16th birthday - the best birthday present Harry could ever have hoped for!

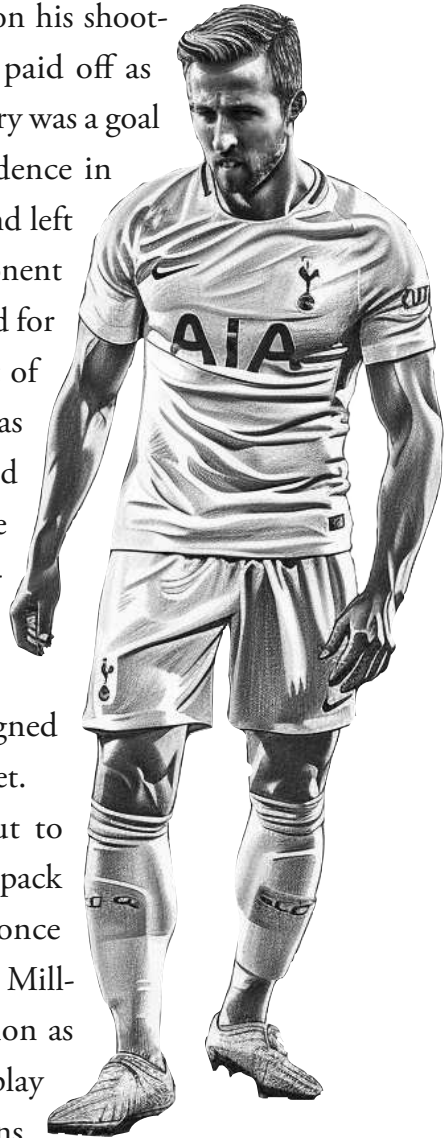
It wasn't plain sailing for Harry after signing though. Despite Harry scoring an epic number of goals during the next season, his career there still took some time to take off. Tottenham kept sending him out on loan to play for lower-division clubs to gain experience. This is always a challenging thing for Premier League players to deal with as the teams they are loaned out to are not usually as high-profile as their own clubs and the conditions are not normally as favourable. Often it can knock a young player's confidence and they return after the loan with an injured ego and less self-belief. Harry was only 17 when he went out on loan for the first time to Leyton Orient. Nonetheless, he kept his same mentality of



hard work over talent, putting in lots of extra hours after training, working relentlessly on his shooting. His determination soon paid off as everyone began to see that Harry was a goal machine. He displayed confidence in shooting with both his right and left feet and was a dangerous opponent in any position. He often aimed for the corner of the net, the trait of a world-class striker. Harry was proving what he was made of and his hard work and attitude were leading him to some well-deserved recognition.

Had Harry's big break come? Was he about to be signed up for Spurs' first team? Not yet.

Harry's resilience was put to the test again when he had to pack his bags and go out on loan once more. This time he was sent to Millwall, notorious for its reputation as one of the toughest places to play because of the harsh, volatile fans and how they treat the footballers. Players were often subjected to a great deal of criticism and lots of jeering and booing during matches. Harry had to



develop a thick skin as the fans did indeed give him a harsh time. Nevertheless, he eventually won them round through his dedicated work ethic and persistent striving. When the Young Player of the Year award was announced, it was 18-year-old Harry! He had shown them all that he could do it but the next question was - would he be called back to Tottenham after his success at Millwall?

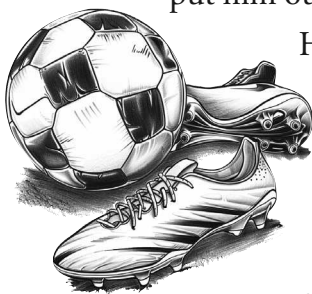
He did return to Tottenham but Harry's ultimate step into the Premier League was still to be a lengthy process. After Millwall, he was loaned out for spells to Leicester in the Championship and then to Norwich.

He was excited about the latter because it was a Premier League team. Unfortunately, luck was not on his side though as only two matches into the season, Harry suffered an injury, fracturing his foot. He unfortunately needed surgery which put him out of action for three whole months. Again,

Harry's positive attitude, hard work and perseverance ensured he had a successful recovery and he was able to put his football boots back on in record time.

The 2014-2015 season proved to be a winner for Harry's career as he became a

regular starter in the Tottenham line-up under the manager Mauricio Pochettino. Harry was given his chance to shine and he gave it everything he had, scoring a mass of goals, as well as his first professional hat-trick. He was blowing apart opposition just like a hurri-Kane and he had cemented



his place on the team!

Harry has been a player with unwavering confidence in his abilities, and his attitude throughout his career has been a large contributor to his success. He had to work tirelessly to get his scholarship, even harder to get his contract and harder still to get his shirt. Nothing was simply given to him. His sheer determination and endless effort have made him the legendary footballer and remarkable person that he is today. He has the drive to improve all the time. He always puts in extra work and never gives up.

In 2023, Harry was given the opportunity to explore new professional challenges and he took the tough decision to embrace it after 19 years of enormous success with Tottenham. On 12th August, Harry signed a €100 million transfer deal with German champions Bayern Munich. After experiencing a record-breaking start with his new team, he continues to this day to show his world-class talent both on and off the football pitch.

