

His family name is Edson Arantes do Nascimento, but people call him “Pelé.” He is the number one player in the story of soccer. In 1,363 games, he scored 1,264 goals. With Brazil, he won the World Cup\* three times. He visited eighty-eight countries, and his picture was in every newspaper.

But Pelé is not only a famous soccer player. He knows Spanish, Italian, English, and French. He writes music, and he works for the Brazilian government.

Today, Pelé is famous. In 1950, he was a boy of ten with no shoes. This is his story.

### **Early Years**

Edson Arantes do Nascimento came into the world on the night of October 23, 1940. His family called him Dico. They lived in a small house in Três Corações, Brazil.

“Dico has soccer player’s legs,” his father said.

“He’s going to be a doctor, not a soccer player,” Dico’s mother, Celeste, said. Celeste was angry. Dondinho, Dico’s father, was a soccer player, but he didn’t make much money.

Dondinho smiled. There were problems in the

\* World Cup: A lot of countries play soccer games in the World Cup championship every four years.



*Dico has soccer players legs.*

family about soccer, but there was a lot of love in the house, too.

In 1944 the manager of *Bauri Atlético*, a big soccer club, talked to Dondinho. "We want a good soccer player," the man said. "It's not much money, but there's work in the town, too. Do you want the job?"

Dondinho said yes, and the family moved to Bauri.

The manager was wrong about one thing. There was no work for Dondinho in the town. He only played soccer, and the family had the same money problems.

But Dico was happy in Bauru with his new friends. They played their first game of soccer in *Rua Rubens Arruda*, a street near Dico's house. Their "football" was an old newspaper.

Little Dico played a lot of soccer. Celeste wasn't happy about this. "There's no money in the game," she said.

Dico smiled. His mother was right. He loved soccer, but he didn't want to be a soccer player. He wanted to work at the airport. He often went there and looked at the airplanes.

But Dico's first job wasn't in a soccer stadium or an airport. It was at Bauru station, in 1948. He cleaned shoes. In that year, things were difficult for the family. But then, Dondinho started work in a doctor's office. He cleaned the building and answered the telephone. In the afternoons, Dico often visited his father.

"In ten years, you're going to be a young man," Dondinho said one day. "What do you want to do?"

"I want to work with airplanes," Dico said.

"OK. But school is important for that," said his father.

Later that year, Dico started school. He wasn't a good student. He only stayed in school because he wanted a job at the airport. But one day, an airplane came down near the school. Dico and his friends went to the doctor's office and looked in one of the windows. The man from the airplane was dead. Dico never talked about a job with airplanes again.

## A New Name

The important thing for Dico now was soccer. Evenings and weekends, he played with his friends. In the afternoons, he was with Dondinho. Dondinho was his soccer teacher, and Dico was a very good student.

After two years, Dico was the number one young player in Bauru. His friends started to call him "Pelé."

"Where does the name come from?" people often ask. Pelé doesn't know.

In 1951, Pelé started a club, *September 7*, with his friends. People called them "the team with no shoes." They wanted to play in *Bauru Atlético's* championship for young teams, but the shoes were a problem.

One day, a father of one of the players came with shoes for the team. "Today, I'm giving you a new name—*Ameriquinho*," he said. "Now, they can't call you 'the team with no shoes.'"

*Ameriquinho* played very well and won the championship. After the final, Dondinho looked at his son and smiled. "You played a beautiful game, Dico," he said.

## Valdemar de Brito

*Bauru Atlético* liked Pelé's "beautiful game," too. They wanted him for the club's new team of young

players, *Baquinho*. The team manager was Valdemar de Brito, a famous man in Brazilian soccer. Pelé was very happy.

Valdemar was a good manager and a good teacher. In 1953, *Baquinho* won the Bauru young team championship. After this, Valdemar moved away. Pelé was very sorry.

One year later, Pelé finished school and started to work in a shoe factory. At weekends, he played for *Baquinho*, but he didn't like the new manager. 1954 was a bad year.

In the winter of the new year, Valdemar came to Pelé's house. He wanted to talk to the family.

"Your son is fifteen now," he said. "He's a very good soccer player. He can try for a job with *Santos*."

Dondinho and Pelé were happy. *Santos* was a very famous club in Brazil. Celeste didn't like it, but she said yes. Some days later, Dondinho and Pelé went to Santos on the train.

"The *Santos* players aren't going to like me," Pelé said.

But there was no problem. Pelé played well, and the club was happy with its new player. Pelé was happy, too. After some weeks, he had a good friend on the team. His name was Zito.

Pelé wasn't in the first team. But one day, a first team player, Vasconcelos, had an injury.



*Young Pele*

"Let's put young Pelé in the first team," the manager said.

Pelé played well and stayed in the first team. He scored his first goal for them on September 7, 1956. After that, he started to score a lot of goals. The team were very happy. In June, 1957, they played in the Maracanã Championship. Pelé scored eight goals. Suddenly, he was famous.

"Thank you, Valdemar," said Pelé.

### **The World Cup Games**

"*Pelé! Pelé! Pelé!*" called the Brazilian soccer fans.

The managers of the Brazilian team listened.

Late in 1957, the names of the new Brazilian World Cup team were on the radio: "... Castilho ... Gilmar ... Mazzola ... PELE!"

"Can that be right?" Pelé asked. "They want *me*?" He was only seventeen.

The 1958 World Cup games were in Sweden. Pelé played very well. Brazil won their first games with no problems. Then they beat Russia 2-0, but it was a difficult game. Wales were a strong team, too. But Pelé scored a goal, and Brazil won 1-0. The game with France wasn't difficult. Brazil won 5-2, and Pelé scored three goals. Now they were in the final with Sweden.

Brazil didn't start well, and Sweden scored first. But



*Now , Pele wasn't only Famous in Brazil .*



then, Brazil scored five goals. Two of those goals were Pelé's, and Brazil won 5-2.

Pelé scored six goals in his first World Cup. Brazil were the champions. Now, Pelé wasn't only famous in Brazil.

Pelé didn't play in the later games of the 1962 World Cup in Chile, because he had an injury. He watched his team, and they beat Czechoslovakia 3-1 in the final. Brazil were the champions again, and Pelé was very happy for the team.

The 1966 World Cup was in England. Pelé doesn't like remembering this championship. Usually, Brazil went to the games with twenty-two players. In England, they had forty-three. This was bad for the team, because there were new players in every game. In an early game, Portugal beat them 3-1. The day after that game, Brazil went home.

In 1970, the World Cup championship was in Mexico. Pelé was only twenty-nine, but he was the old man of the Brazilian team. They beat Czechoslovakia 4-1, then they played England, the world champions. It was a very interesting game, and Brazil won 1-0. After this, they beat Romania 3-2, and Pelé scored two goals. Then they played Peru in the Jalisco Stadium, and they won 4-2. Now, there was only one game, with Uruguay, before the final. It was difficult, but Brazil won 3-1. The team went to Mexico City and waited for the final with Italy.



*Pele quickly scored a very good goal .*

The 1970 World Cup final started in the Aztec Stadium on the afternoon of June 21, 1970. Pelé quickly scored a very good goal. There was a goal from Italy, but then Brazil scored three times. They won 4-1. After the game, Pelé said goodbye to World Cup soccer.

People were very sorry. "How many players in the world can say, 'I won three World Cups'?" they asked. There was only one answer. There was only one man. His name was Pelé.

### **A Difficult Girl**

It was a Saturday night in 1958. Pelé and Zito were in Santos again, after the World Cup.

"There's a girls' ball game in the stadium," Zito said. "Let's go and watch."

There was a young white girl at the ball game. She looked at Pelé many times, and he looked at her.

"You're the famous Pelé, and you play for Santos," she said, after the game.

"That's right," Pelé said. "Are you from the town?"

"Yes," the girl said. "But I don't like soccer." Then, she walked away.

"Who was that?" Zito asked.

Pelé smiled. "A difficult girl," he said.

Pelé liked the "difficult girl," but he didn't know her

name. He talked to her friends. "Her name's Rosemeri Cholby," they said. "She works in a music store."

That same week, Pelé went to the store. Rosemeri was there. They talked for some time, then Pelé asked, "Can you come out with me sometimes?"

"I'm sorry," Rosemeri said. "I'm only fourteen. I don't go out with boys. But come to my house one afternoon."

Pelé was a visitor at Rosemeri's house for seven years. Then, in February, 1965, they married. The "boy with no shoes" and the "difficult girl" were very happy.

### **Pelé's Years with Santos**

Pelé played for *Santos* from August, 1956 to October, 1974. In those years, they were the number one club in Brazil and the world. They won the Brazilian Championship in 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, and 1965. They won the South American Club Championship in 1962, 1963, and 1968. And they won the World Club Championship in the same years.

Pelé and the *Santos* team visited many countries and played a lot of games. Sometimes, this was difficult for Pelé. He didn't like staying in hotels all the time; he wanted to be home in Brazil with his family.

Pelé's final game for *Santos* was on October 2, 1974. The game was with *Ponte Preta*. After a short time, Pelé



*Pelé with Santos in 1969.*

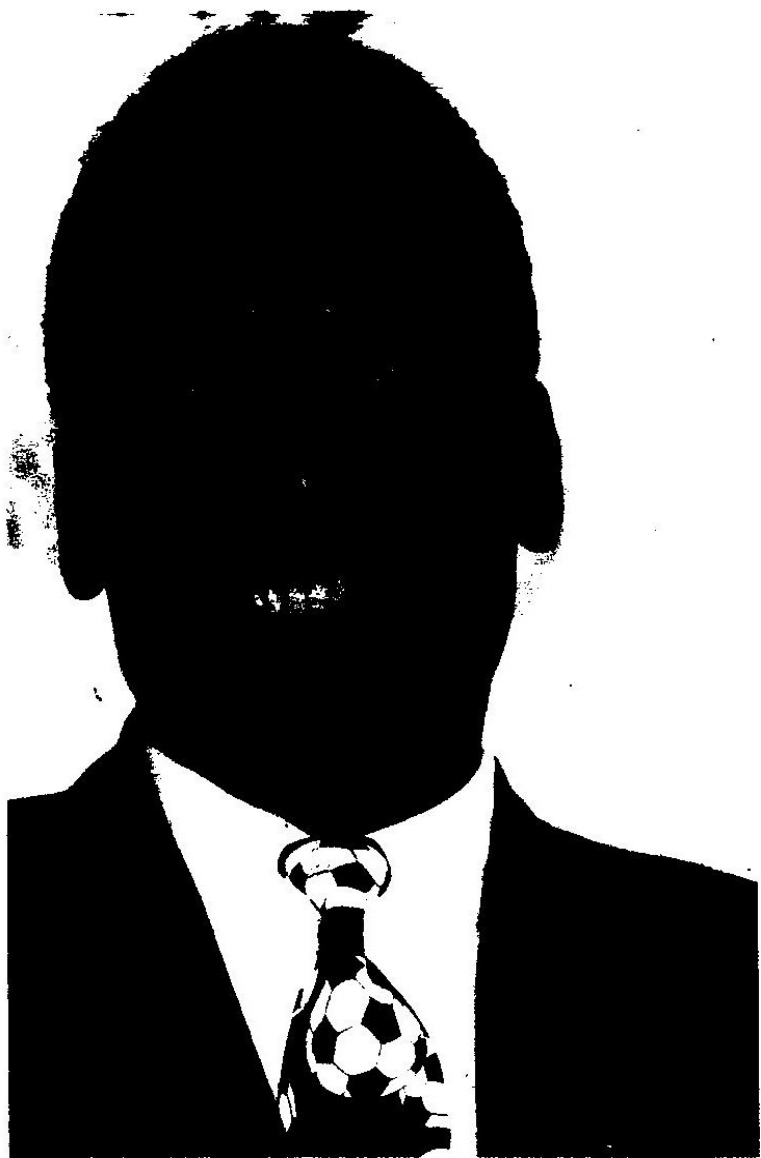
stopped playing. He had the ball in his hands and looked at the fans in the stadium.

“Thank you,” he said, and he walked away from the game.

“We love you,” called the fans.

After *Santos*, Pelé went to New York for a job with an American team, *New York Cosmos*. The job was for \$4,700,000. Many people in Brazil were unhappy about this. “Pelé is only going for the money,” they said.

But they were wrong. Pelé wanted to make soccer



*Thank You , Pele : Soccer Champion of the World .*

famous in the U.S. He did this, and his new team were very happy.

Pelé stayed with *New York Cosmos* for three years. His final game was on October 1, 1977. It was with his old club, *Santos*. Pelé played for his new team, and then for *Santos*. He scored a good goal and said goodbye to soccer

### **After Soccer**

Pelé didn't stop working. He wasn't only a good soccer player and teacher. He loved young people, too. He worked for UNICEF,\* and talked with governments about the problems of the world's children. Then, in 1995, he started to work for the Brazilian government. But the world's soccer fans remember him for his two good feet, and say: "Thank you, Pelé: Soccer Champion of the World."

\*UNICEF: Workers for UNICEF do good things for children with problems.

## ACTIVITIES

### *Before you read*

- 1 What do you know about Pelé?
  - a Which town and country is he from?
  - b What was his first job?
  - c What was the name of his first team?
- 2 Find these words in your dictionary. They are all in this book.  
Which words are not about *soccer*?  
*ball beat champion championship clean club*  
*factory fan final goal government injury manager*  
*marry score stadium team win world*

### *After you read*

- 3 Answer these questions about Pelé.
  - a Why did Pelé's family have problems in Bauru?
  - b How many goals did Pelé score in his first World Cup?
  - c When did Pelé play for two teams in the same game?
  - d Why was Rosemeri Cholby "a difficult girl?"
- 4 Talk about the problems of famous soccer players.

### **Writing**

- 5 You are Celeste, Pelé's mother. Your son is in Santos. You are unhappy about that, and you want to see him again. Write him a letter.
- 6 You work for a newspaper. Write the story of Pelé's first World Cup final goal.

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