



The Wizard: The Life of Stanley Matthews

Jon Henderson

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‘Stanley Matthews taught us the way football should be played’ Pelé

‘I couldn't believe he was just a man. He was the best player in the world’ Bobby Charlton

‘He told me that he used to play for just twenty pounds a week. Today he would be worth all the money in the Bank of England’ Gianfranco Zola

Stanley Matthews is one of the most famous footballers ever to play the beautiful game. Nicknamed ‘The Wizard of Dribble’ for his deadly skills, he made fools of defenders around the world. He played 84 matches for England in a career that spanned an extraordinary 33 years and such was his popularity that attendance for his club teams, Stoke City and Blackpool, more than doubled when he played. He was a global superstar decades before Beckham, Ronaldo or Messi, yet what do we really know about this legendary man?

This first full and objective biography looks beyond the public face of the ‘first gentleman of soccer’ to explore a life not without controversy. This was a player who clashed with his managers, who felt undervalued in the age of the maximum wage – leading to a charge of blackmarketeering – and who was criticised for his showmanship and perceived lack of team spirit. There were private dramas too – an unhappy first marriage that produced two beloved children, and a second, to the love of his life, a Czech with a dark secret even Matthews never knew and which acclaimed biographer Jon Henderson reveals for the first time.

Recreating the magic on the pitch and analyzing the key moments that made Matthews great, this is a meticulously researched story of a national hero and a fascinating insight into English football in the 20th century.

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