

JAVIER CÁCERES

# PICTURE-PERFECT GOALS

Javier Cáceres was born in 1970 in Chile and has worked as a journalist for the Süddeutsche Zeitung since 2002, serving as a correspondent in Madrid and Brussels. In 2006, he published the book Fútbol: Spaniens Leidenschaft. He now lives in Berlin.

INSEL

# PICTURE-PERFECT GOALS

**JAVIER CÁCERES**

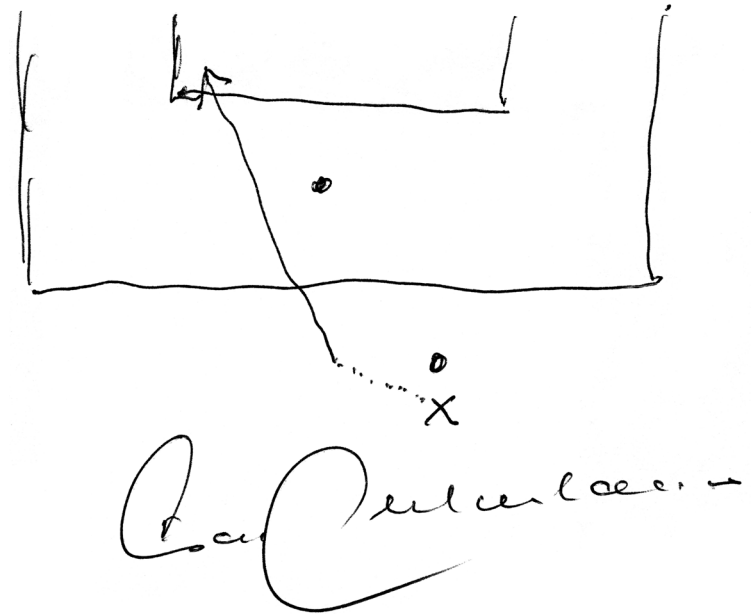
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Sample translation by Joel Scott

# FRANZ BECKENBAUER



I had already scored a few goals at the 1966 World Cup. Two against Switzerland and one against Uruguay. But against the Soviet Union, in our 2:1 win, I managed to score the goal that put us two-nil up, and it's a goal I look back on particularly fondly. Not just because it was a beautiful goal – a long-range shot with my left foot – but because it made me proud on multiple levels. It took us into the final at Wembley. And I had scored against a man who was already a living legend at the time: Lev Yashin!”



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**1966 World Cup**  
**Semi-final, 25/7/1966**  
**Goodison Park, Liverpool, England**  
**Germany – Soviet Union 2:1**

# MARCO VAN BASTEN

“

It just happened. Everything came together, I didn't really think about it too much. When the cross came over from Arnold Mühren, I thought: 'How on earth am I going to hit this ball?' I was tired, and the cross was difficult to take. Instead of wasting energy, I just gave it a go – and shot. I didn't really have any idea where I was standing, where my marker was, or where the keeper, Rinat Dasayev, was. And then the ball flew at a perfect angle in the perfect direction. I knew straight away that it was a beautiful goal. But at that moment, that wasn't important to me. The important thing was winning the Netherlands' first ever major title. The crazy thing was that I might not have hit the ball so perfectly if I hadn't been injured. I'd had two operations on my ankle. In 1986, I'd had an operation on my left ankle to fix an injury known in the ballet scene as "dancer's heel". In autumn of 1987, the right one had to go under the knife, not long after I started with AC Milan. It turned out I had torn a ligament, and it hadn't been properly diagnosed, which led to misalignments, and then to avulsion fractures and cartilage damage.

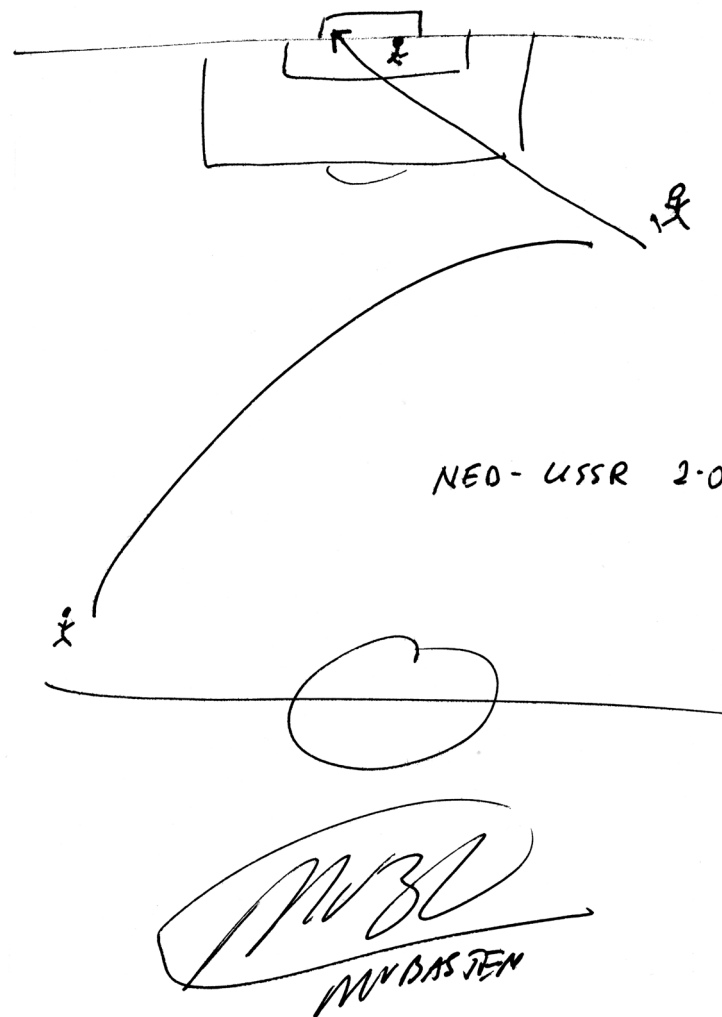
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**1988 Euros**

**Final, 25/6/1988**

**Olympiastadion, Munich, Germany**

**Netherlands – Soviet Union 2:0**



It wasn't until just before the Euros that I got fit again. Fit enough to play, that is. And to score."

# GARY LINEKER

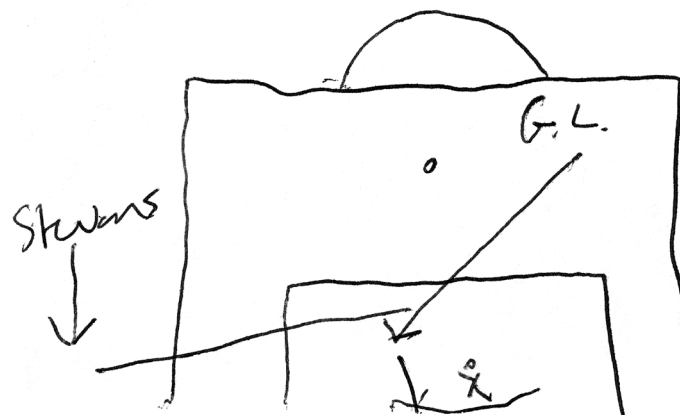


There's one goal that changed my life: my goal that put us one-nil up against Poland in the Mexico World Cup in 1986. Gary Stevens went down the left wing, crossed, and I just put the ball in the net, bosh! It was the most important goal of my career because I hadn't scored in the last five or so games for England. We lost our first match of the tournament against Portugal, and had a nil-all draw against Morocco. I was just about certain I wouldn't start against Poland. In the first two games I'd played up front with Mark Hateley, and I was sure the gaffer Bobby Robson would bring in Peter Beardsley and put me on the bench. Beardsley was a centre forward, like me, and we had never played with two centre forwards! But then he ended up playing both of us.

The first goal changed everything for me, because it shifted the whole dynamic of the tournament: a few minutes after my first goal I got the second one, and before half time was blown, I had my hat trick. Over the rest of the tournament, I scored another three goals, won the Golden Boot for the top goalscorer at the World Cup – and was suddenly transferred to FC Barcelona. Would all that have happened without that goal against Poland? I don't think so.”

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**1986 World Cup**  
**Group stage, Group F, 11/6/1986**  
**Estadio Tecnológico, Monterrey, Mexico**  
**England – Poland 3:0**



# GEORGE WEAH

“

I scored two great goals in my career. One against Bayern Munich in the Champions League for Paris Saint-Germain. And a historical goal for AC Milan in Serie A against Hellas Verona. ‘Coast to coast’, they called it. I got the ball in my own box from a corner – and then beat one player after the other. Covering some 85 metres in the process. Around the halfway line I had to do a pirouette because two defenders tried to foul me. But nobody could stop me. The goal showed how fast I was. That I never gave up. And how strong I was: the goal came at a point [the 85th minute] when everyone was already tired. And yes, it was a historical goal: it was the longest goal in history, and it was an African goal.”



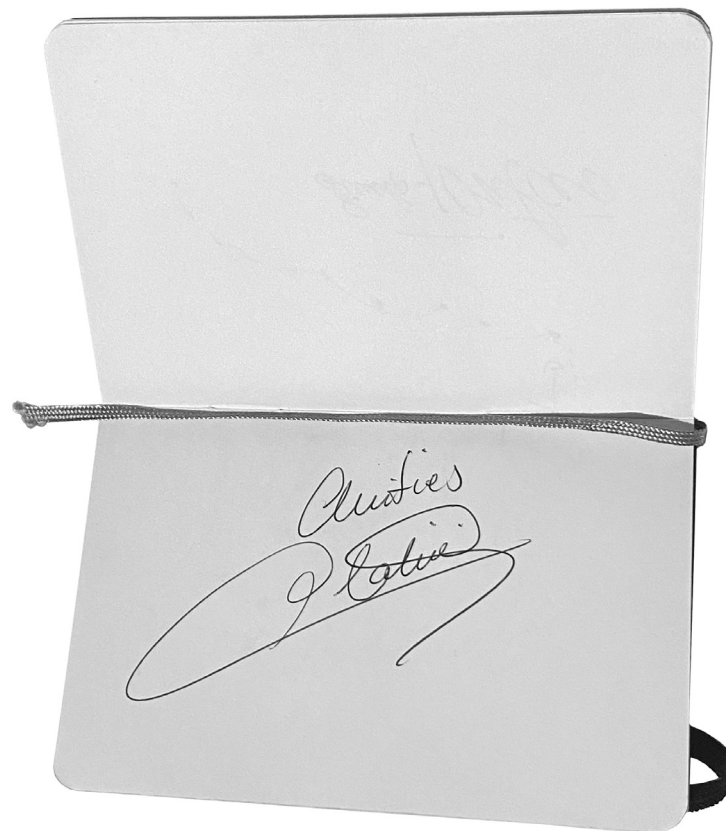
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**Serie A 1996/1997**  
**Round 1, 8/9/1996**  
**Stadio Giuseppe Meazza,**  
**“San Siro”, Milan, Italy**  
**AC Milan – Hellas Verona 4:1**

# MICHEL PLATINI

“

My best goal? In the final of the 1985 Intercontinental Cup in Tokyo, playing for Juventus against Argentinos Juniors. After a corner, the ball flew into the box, the Argentinians cleared it, but Massimo Bonini headed it back in. To me. I was standing 15 metres from the goal, took the ball on my chest, juggled it over my marker, and volleyed it into the top corner. Basically without moving a yard. An absolutely spectacular goal! But I can't draw it for you. Why not? Because the referee [Volker Roth from Germany] disallowed it for no reason!!!”



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**1985 Intercontinental Cup**

**Final, 8/12/1985**

**National Stadium, Tokyo, Japan**

**Juventus Turin – Argentinos Juniors 2:2 (4:2 pen.)**



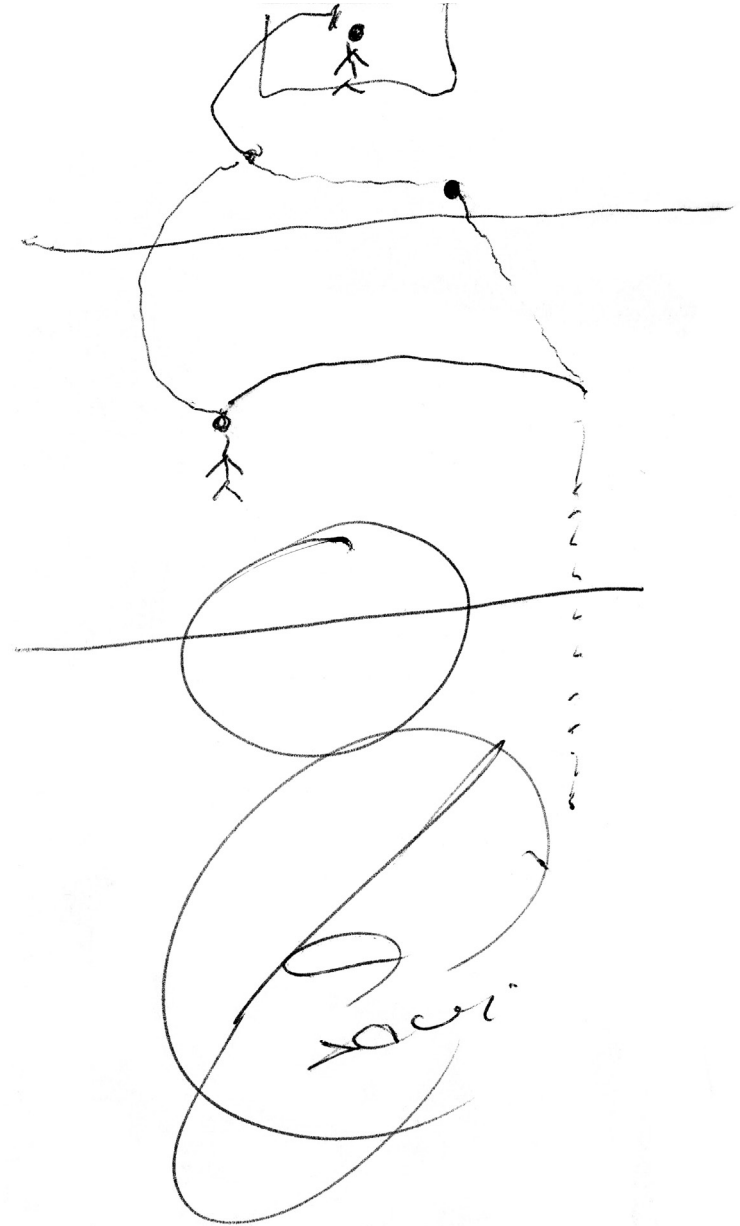
# XAVI HERNÁNDEZ



I had seen Ronaldinho in the middle of the field, and when I played him the ball, I did what I always did whenever Ronaldinho – or later on, Leo Messi – was on the ball: I headed towards the opposition penalty box. Because whenever Ronaldinho or Leo were on the ball, I knew something would happen... With the goal I'm talking about, Ronaldinho lobbed the ball into the box. Iker Casillas came out and tried to cut down the angle. But before he got close to me, I flicked the ball over his head. It really was a great goal. It was also the winner, 2:1 against Real Madrid, just a few minutes before the final whistle..."

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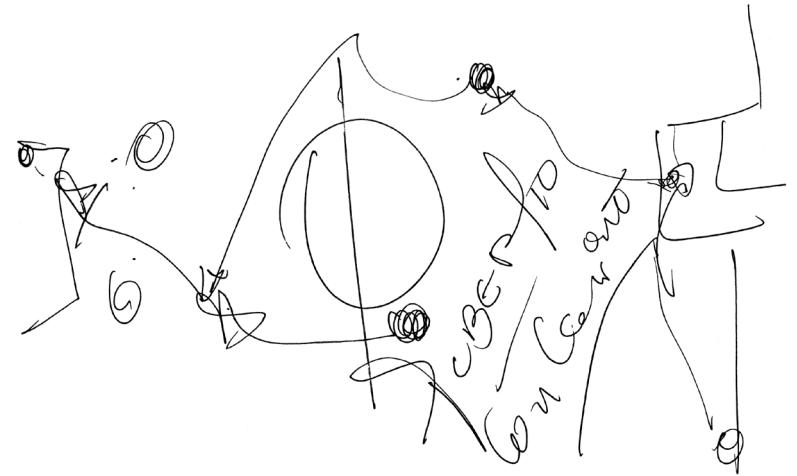
**La Liga 2003/04**  
**Round 18, 25/4/2004**  
**Estadio Santiago Bernabéu, Madrid**  
**Real Madrid – FC Barcelona 1:2**



# CARLOS VALDERRAMA



My World Cup goal against the UAE! Of course! It was the first time Colombia had made it to the World Cup in almost 30 years! We had defended a corner, and on the counterattack, I was standing out of position. Carlos ‘La Gambeta’ Estrada had seen me and played me a long ball. I had half the field in front of me. I got about halfway towards the goal and shot – low, into the bottom right corner.”



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**1990 World Cup**  
**Group stage, Group D, 9/6/1990**  
**Stadio Renato Dall'Ara, Bologna, Italy**  
**Colombia – United Arab Emirates 2:0**

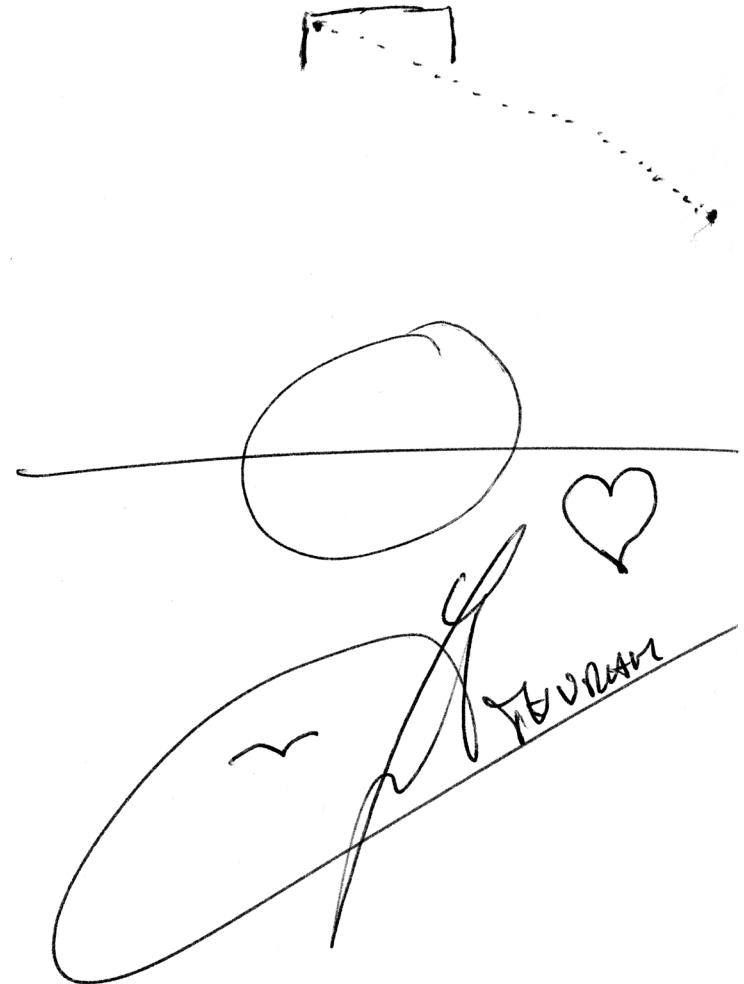
# LILIAN THURAM



Far and away my most famous goals were the ones I scored in the semi-final of the 1998 World Cup against Croatia on 8 July 1998. That date even ended up becoming the title of my biography. At the time, I celebrated the goals with a “Thinker” pose, placing my hand on my chin. People were sure I had done that deliberately. But I didn’t realise I had done it until later on, when I saw the pictures on TV. I never scored many goals. Why would I have come up with a celebration beforehand? My most important goal, however, was a different one. A goal I scored for Portugais de Fontainebleau, when I was 12 years old. Portugais is a very bourgeois club, a club for rich people, and the club president didn’t want to accept me. I lived in the banlieues. And for some reason I’d gotten it into my head that I wanted to play for this club. I went to a trial and wanted to show them that I could play there. In a training match, we won 5:4 against Moissy-Cramayel. And I scored four goals! With the fourth goal, the ball bounced just in front of me, I hit it sweetly, and it flew into the corner, just inside the far post. It was supposed to be a cross, actually. But I kept that to myself...

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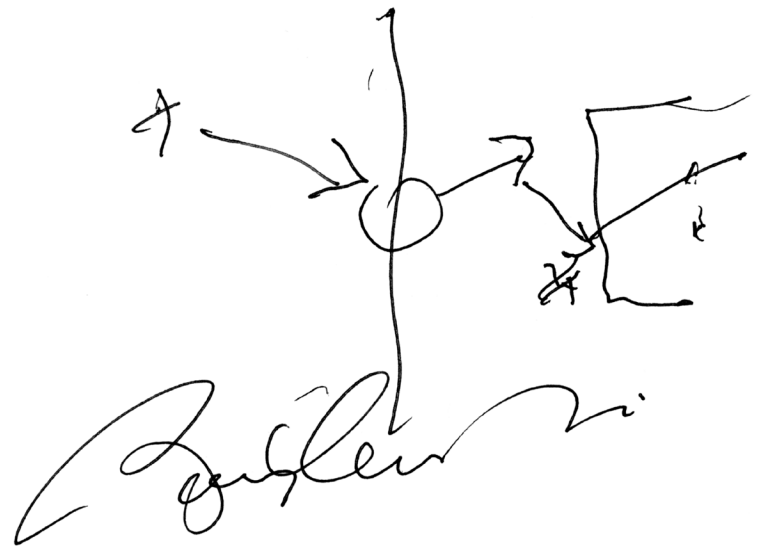
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# BOBBY CHARLTON



My most important goal had to have been the one that put us one-nil up against Mexico. It was our second game in the group stage of the 1966 World Cup at Wembley. In the first game, we'd drawn nil-all against Uruguay, and it felt like we hadn't scored for an eternity. And then I finally scored. We were the hosts. I got the ball 50 or 60 yards from the opposition goal, and scored with a beautiful, long-range shot. And with that, we'd broken the ice at the World Cup."



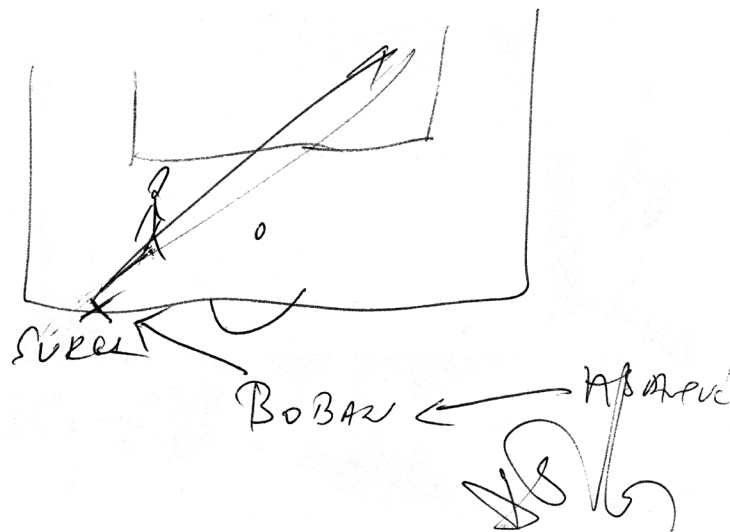
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**1966 World Cup**  
**Group stage, Group 1, 16/7/1966**  
**Old Wembley stadium, London**  
**England – Mexico 2:0**

# DAVOR ŠUKER



This goal was important and unforgettable for two reasons: It was the third-place play-off in Croatia's first World Cup appearance. And it was my sixth goal at the tournament, which won me the Golden Boot [for the top goalscorer of the tournament]. We broke on the counter: Asanović muscled his way through on the right, gave the ball to Boban, who then passed it on to me. Everyone thought I would take a touch, but I hit it first time, through the legs of Jaap Stam, just inside the far post. The keeper had no time to move at all."



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**1998 World Cup**  
**Third-place play-off, 11/7/1998**  
**Parc de Princes, Paris, France**  
**Netherlands – Croatia 1:2**

# PELÉ

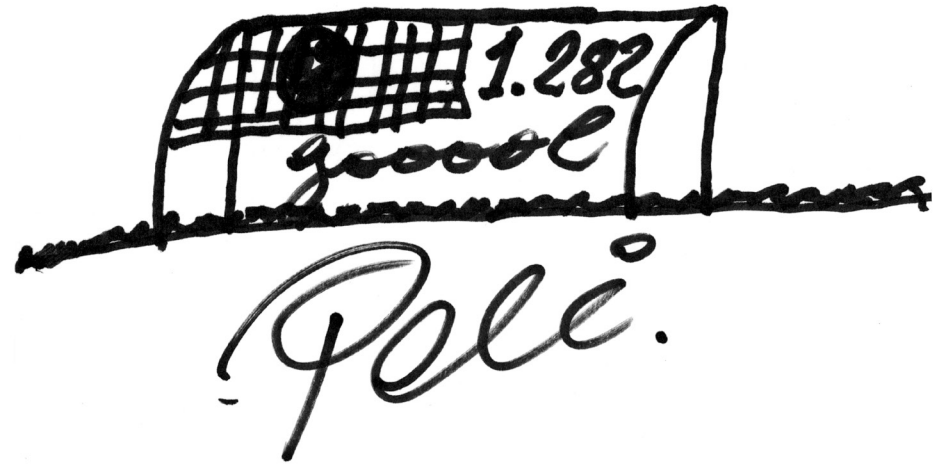
I interviewed Pelé at three separate World Cups, most recently at the 2006 tournament. I was sitting in Cologne when I got a call to ask whether I could be in Berlin the following day to meet him and speak with him. I could, and I invited an Argentinian colleague by the name of Andrés Prestileo to come along with me.

Pelé was at the World Cup promoting a credit card company that was handing out interview slots with him. Like a Hollywood star, you were allotted five to ten minutes in the presence of the great man. We got the last slot of the day, and because various appointments over the day had run overtime, there was essentially no time left. By the time we got to talking, Pelé was already running late for the airport. Nevertheless, we spoke long enough to turn the conversation into a full-page interview in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

Most importantly though, I had time to ask him one last question, after showing him my Moleskine notebook with the drawings by the other footballers: Which was his best and most important goal?

The most important one was the goal against Wales in the 1958 World Cup, which got Brazil through to the semi-final with a 1:0 win.

The most beautiful one? The one where he lobbed the defender in the final against Sweden [5:2]. The hardest one, he said, was the penalty, his 1,000th goal. Then Pelé smiled, grabbed my notebook, waved away my biro and told one of his assistants to bring him a felt-tip pen. We were sitting across from one



another, and I couldn't see what he was drawing, completely silent, absorbed in the task. It took so long that his entourage began to grow nervous. And so did I. Nerves are infectious. He had to get on a plane, head to the next World Cup venue in another city, be Pelé somewhere else!

It may have been a matter of minutes in which we all sat there, looking at Pelé in silent fascination. Until he was finished, handed the open book back to me with a smile, and said simply: 'all my goals were important'

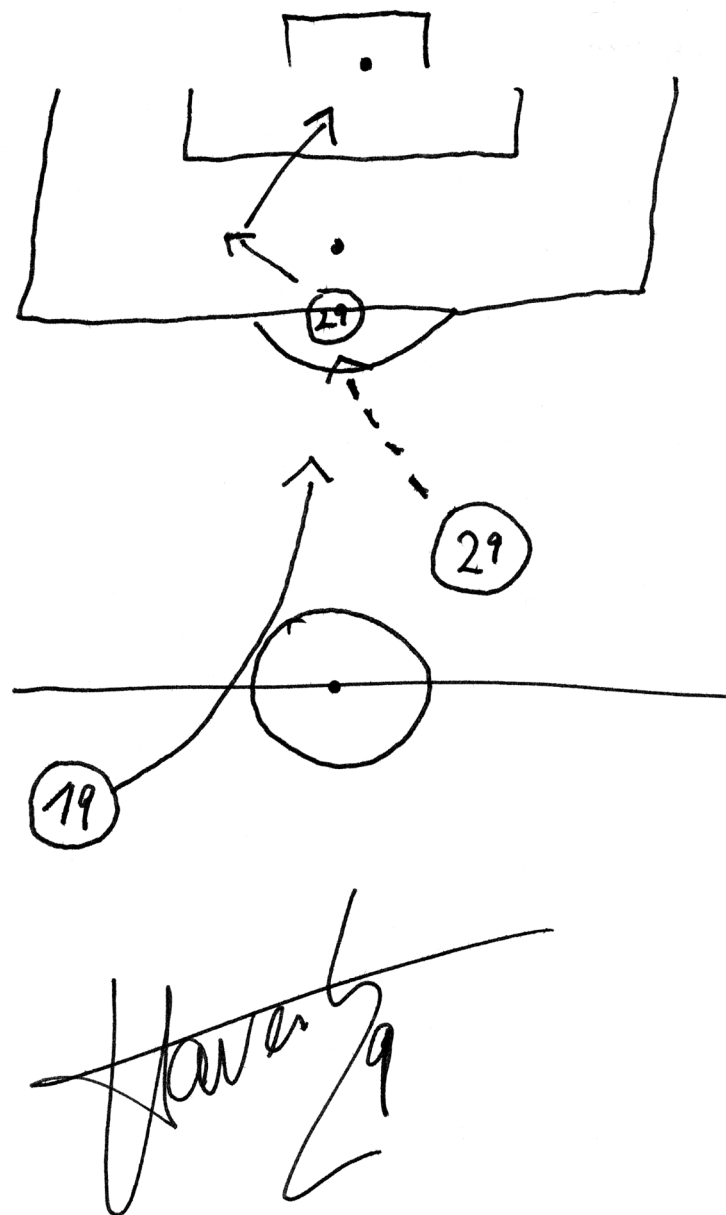
# KAI HAVERTZ



I had always wanted to win the Champions League. It's been my dream since I was a little boy. When you have that trophy in your hands, stand on the pitch with your family, you know that no matter what else happens, you'll be able to end your career a happy man. And that was the first thing I said to my brother after we'd beaten Manchester City 1:0. And I'd scored the winner.

Our keeper, Mendy, had played the ball to Ben Chilwell, who'd passed it on to Mason Mount, who'd spun around just before the halfway line and played a through ball in front of me. Ederson, City's keeper, came running out, and when I went to go around him, he got a hand on it. But not enough to stop it. And then I put the ball in the back of the net.

After that, lots of people started saying: he's scored a goal in the final of the Champions League, he should do this or that. And I know that some players have a hard time with a situation like that. And while my parents couldn't have known that I would become a pro footballer, they always told me to keep my feet on the ground. Which is why I always say: in the end, it's just a goal."



**Champions League 2021/22**

**Final, 29/5/2022**

**Estádio do Dragão, Porto, Portugal**

**Manchester City – FC Chelsea 0:1**



# NIA KÜNZER

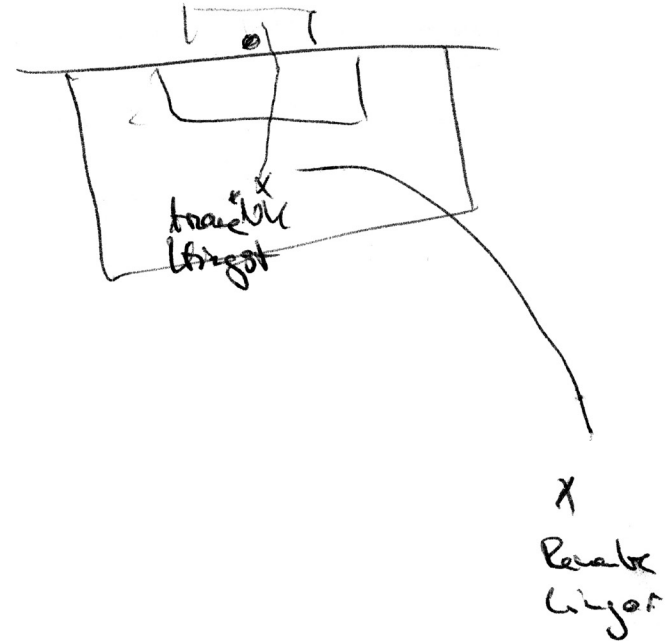


I was a defender, so I never scored so many goals. And most of them were set-piece goals, as it happens. I was always allowed up for corners and free kicks because I was good in the air. In the final of the DFB Pokal in 1999, when I won the cup with FFC Frankfurt for the first time against Duisburg, I also scored the winner. But the golden goal from the World Cup final of 2003, in the 98th minute, was just a little more special. The funny thing was that I was absolutely exhausted, even though I had only been subbed on in the 88th minute, ha ha. But seriously, it was tough to get into the game. It's not always an easy task. I think everyone was happy that I had ended the game.

How did it come about? We'd been awarded a free kick in their half which, if I'm honest, was a little soft, to put it lightly. Renate Lingor was our dead-ball specialist, because she was technically really impressive. What followed was fairly well rehearsed. Both at FFC and in the preparations for the World Cup with the national team. Renate crossed into the box, and I headed it into the back of the net. Not even particularly well placed – but with plenty of power. And the important thing was that Ariane Hingst was near me.

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**2003 World Cup  
Final, 12/10/2003  
StubHub Center, Carson, USA  
Germany – Sweden 2:1 (golden goal)**



She grabbed me and told me what I hadn't yet gotten my head around: that the game was over, and that we had won the World Cup!"

# ALFREDO DI STÉFANO



Football without goals is like days without sunshine. And I scored many goals. I scored one of my favourites in the first South American Championship of Champions in Santiago de Chile, playing for River Plate. After a kick off. It only took 10 seconds. ‘Are you game?’ [River legend Jose Manuel] asked Moreno, who everyone just called ‘El Charro’. I looked at the defence and said: ‘You bet I am!’ He sent me the ball long, a perfect pass behind the defence, and then I belted the thing first time.”

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**Campeonato Sudamericano  
de Campeones 1948  
9/3/1948**

**Estadio Nacional, Santiago de Chile  
River Plate – CD Litoral 5:1**



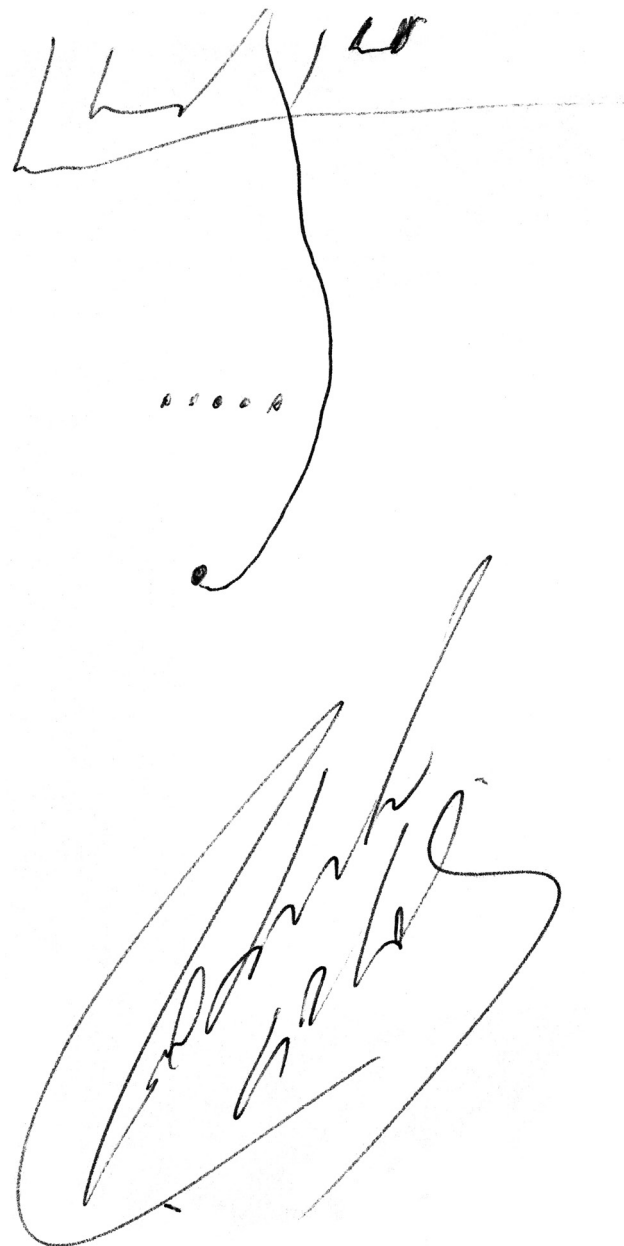
# ROBERTO CARLOS



It was a truly special goal from a free kick. There are even scientists who wrote about the curve that the ball took! While I was setting up for the shot, I hid behind the wall of the French team so that Barthez, the French keeper, couldn't guess what I was going to do – shoot, that is. I hit the ball so sweetly, using the 'three-toe' technique, with the outside of my left boot. But it was not just power. To the right of the goal was a bright piece of hoarding. I think it was advertising the French postal service. And that was my point of reference for the shot – not the goal! Barthez didn't react at all. I think he was positive the ball would go out for a goal kick"

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**Tournoi de France 1997**  
**Round 1, 3/6/1997**  
**Stade de Gerland, Lyon, France**  
**France – Brazil 1:1**



# JOSEP GUARDIOLA

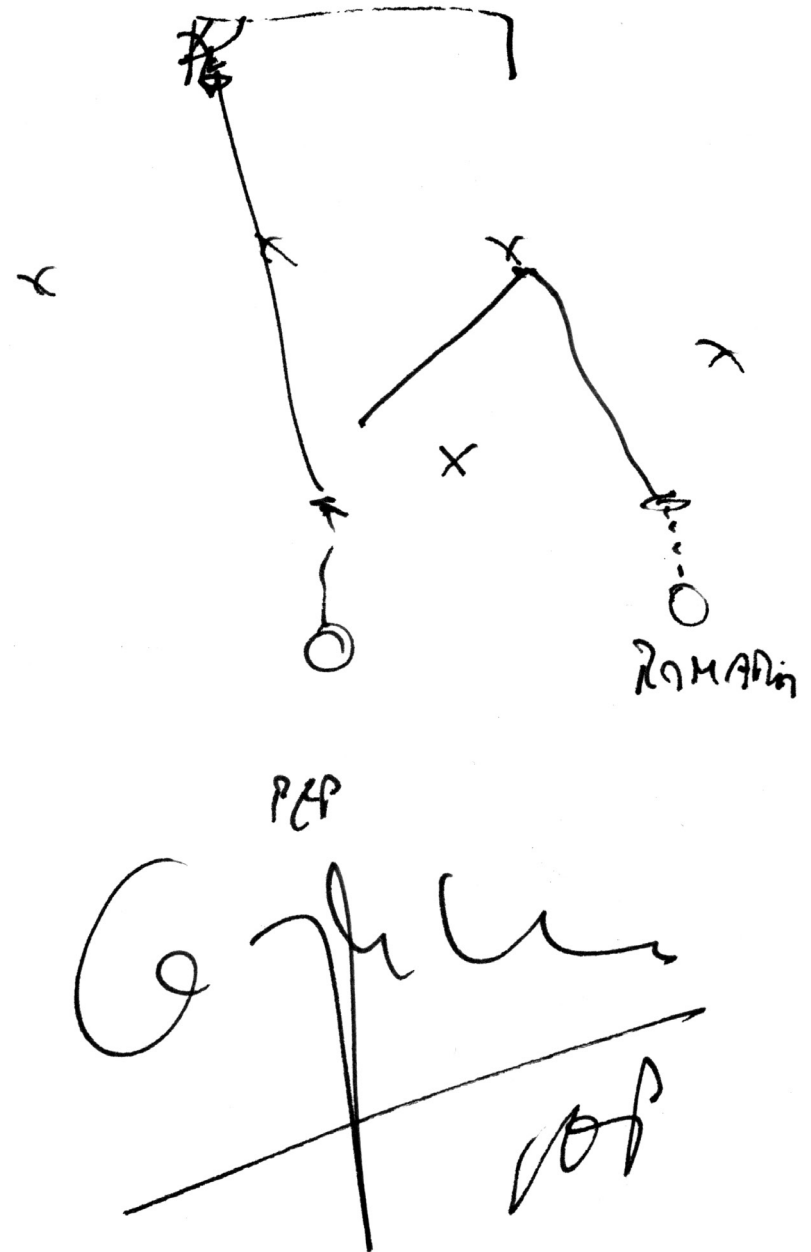
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I didn't score that many goals. But the majority of them were really beautiful. The most spectacular of them all had to be that free kick I scored in 1996 at Deportivo La Coruña, not long after Johann Cruyff was sacked as the coach of FC Barcelona. It was a free kick from miles out, just sneaking under the bar. I was actually a very good free kick taker. It's just that I rarely got the chance to take them, because Ronald Koeman was always the first to grab the ball, followed by Hristo Stoichkov...

The goal that had the most meaning for me was my first one for the first team at FC Barcelona. Against Atlético Madrid in La Liga, at Camp Nou, where I had once been a ballboy. And it was anything but easy. Romário had gone down the right, and his shot was blocked on the edge of the box, and it rolled in front of my feet. I still remember that the ball had some sidespin on it, and I was just trying to make sure I kept my body position right, so that I could connect cleanly and hit it with the right amount of force. Especially since it was on my left foot. I think it's only really since I started playing golf that I can say I understand what I did: I tried to make a fluid motion with my leg and to follow through right

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**La Liga 1994/95**  
**Round 6, 8/10/1994**  
**Camp Nou, Barcelona, Spain**  
**FC Barcelona – Atlético Madrid 4:3**



to the end. Like a golf swing. And when the ball flew into the top corner, I couldn't believe it. I was just trying to get it on target! I held my hands in front of my face, because I thought: "bueno, what have you done here?!" But you know what really fascinates me? That I can see this scene so clearly. It's so clear that I could repeat every gesture in the exact same way if this scene were to materialise again right now. And I'm positive that I would be able to take the shot in the exact same way – and hit the ball right into the corner again."