

David Beckham

by Bernard Smith

(Adapted book. Beginner level)

‘Who is a famous English footballer?’ Ask people this question and they usually answer, ‘David Beckham!’ People in every country know his name. Manchester United’s Number 7, the captain of England, and now Real Madrid’s Number 23 ... David Beckham is always in the newspapers and on television. The stories aren’t only about football. In Britain there is a new story every day about his family, his advertisements, his money, his cars or his hair. Many people love him; some people don’t. But David Beckham is a very famous footballer.

Chapter 1. Good Days and Bad Days

It is October 2001. England is playing Greece in the World Cup. The England fans are very quiet. They are unhappy because Greece is winning. The score is Greece 2 - England 1.

Suddenly the referee stops the game. England have a kick. The Greek players stand in front of their goal. A tall young England player takes the kick. The ball goes up and to the right. Then it goes down and to the left - and the ball is in the goal. The score is England 2 - Greece 2. England are going to the World Cup finals! The England fans are very happy. Now they are shouting for that young player, David Beckham.

Every newspaper has the same story: ‘David Beckham does it again!’ It is a very good day for him.

But David Beckham remembers a day in 1998. He is twenty-three years old. He is in France and the game is against' Argentina. Again, he is playing for England in the World Cup. But that day is going to be a very bad day for him.

An Argentinian player suddenly runs into him and he falls down. The Argentinian, Simeone, stands near him. He is smiling. David is young and he is angry. He kicks Simeone lightly with his right foot.

The referee conies quickly. He has a red card in his hand. It is the end of the game for David Beckham. Now England only have ten players. The ten men play well, but Argentina win.

That was David's first red card, but the newspapers all had the same story: 'England can't win the World Cup now, because David Beckham is an angry little boy.' It was a very unhappy day for David. He doesn't like remembering it.

But it was an important day too. Now he knows. An angry player is not a clever player. These days David plays well and he doesn't often get angry.

Chapter 2. The Schoolboy Footballer

On 2 May 1975, David Beckham came into the world in Leytonstone, in London. His father and mother, Ted and Sandra Beckham, were big football fans. Every Christmas little David had a new football and a new football shirt from his father. It was always a Manchester United shirt. The family lived in London, but his father was a very big fan of 'the reds'.

David wasn't very good at school. Schoolwork wasn't interesting or important to him. But he liked playing football. He played with a ball every weekend and every evening after school, usually with friends or with his father. His father played football too and he was a good teacher.

David was small and thin then, but his legs were strong. He liked running very quickly with the ball at his feet. He did long kicks and short kicks, again and again, every day.

In 1986 he was eleven years old and he was a good little footballer.

One day there was an advertisement on television for a competition. It was a football competition for schoolboys at the Bobby Charlton Football School. 'Can I try the competition?' David asked his father. 'You're very young,' his father said. 'The boys in this competition are usually big and strong, and fifteen or sixteen years old. But you can try. Why not?'

His father went with David to the football school. The people there smiled because David was small and thin. But then they started the competition — long kicks, short kicks, running with the ball. And David won. Then those people asked, ‘Who is that boy?’

‘His name’s David Beckham,’ David’s father smiled. ‘And one day he’s going to play football for Manchester United and England.’

Chapter 3. The Red Shirt with the Number Seven

David played football at school. He also played football for Chingford and Essex, places near his home.

At thirteen he went to a football school for boys at Manchester United. He went there every summer holiday. At sixteen he stopped going to school and three months later, in July 1991, a man from Manchester United came to Ted Beckham’s house.

‘Your son is a good young player. We’d like him for Manchester United,’ he said.

At sixteen years old, David was a boy player for Manchester United. In 1992 the boys won an important competition, and in September that year David played his first game for Manchester United against Brighton. He was seventeen.

In the early years with Manchester United, David was young and he was sometimes angry. But after the red card in the game against Argentina, he stopped getting angry. Today newspapers and fans sometimes say bad things about him or about Victoria and his children. Then he gets angry. But not often in a game.

In September 1996, David played for England for the first time. After that he played for his country many times and in November 2000, in a friendly game against Italy, he was the new captain.

He played well for Manchester United too, and in 1999 they won three big competitions. The first two were English football competitions. Then they beat Bayern Munich and won the European Cup. It was a very good year for ‘the reds’.

Chapter 4. 'Posh and Becks'

The year 1999 was very happy for David too. That year he married Victoria.

In 1996 and 1997, the number one girl singers in Britain were the 'Spice Girls'. There were five of them. They sang and they danced. They were famous in many countries.

One day some Manchester United players watched the Spice Girls on television. One of them said, 'There's the girl for you, David. The girl with the yellow hair.'

'No,' he said. 'The dark girl with the long legs, that's the girl for me.'

And he was right. Her name was Victoria Addams, or 'Posh Spice'.

At about the same time, one of the Spice Girls had some cards with photos of footballers on them. She and Victoria looked at the cards.

'Who do you like?' she asked.

Victoria looked at the pictures again.

'This man,' she said. 'I like this man.'

Her friends remembered. It was a photo of David Beckham.

One day Victoria went to a Manchester United game in London and there was David Beckham. Later they talked, but David didn't say much to her. He wanted to be her friend, but she was very famous. He wasn't. He was only a footballer. A month later they talked again after a game in Manchester, and then he telephoned her.

After that they were good friends - and after six months they were in love.

But there was a problem. They often went away for their work. David played football and the Spice Girls sang in many countries of the world.

One day Victoria said, 'I'm sorry but we're going to be away from Britain for a year. We're going to visit thirty countries.'

It wasn't a happy time for them. David telephoned Victoria every day, sometimes five or six times.

In July 1999 he married her. It was the big story in the newspapers: ‘Football star marries singing star’. After that ‘Posh and Becks’ were always in the newspapers.

Chapter 5. The World Cup 2002: Bekkamu! Bekkamu!

In 2002 the final games of the World Cup were in Japan and Korea. England won their early games with no problems.

The England players arrived in Tokyo before die final games and went to their hotel in a bus. There were a lot of England fans in the streets. They were Japanese people.

‘Look,’ David said to his friend. ‘We’ve got a lot of fans in Japan. I didn’t know.’

‘Not us,’ his friend smiled. ‘It’s you. Look at the number seven on their shirts. And listen.’

The people in the streets shouted, ‘Bekkamu! Bekkamu!’

‘What are they saying?’ David asked.

‘It’s your name,’ his friend smiled. ‘It’s your name in Japanese.’

For David the big day was 7 June 2002. England beat Argentina 1-0, a famous win. David scored the only goal. After that goal the newspapers never talked about the red card in 1998 again (or not very often!).

The World Cup in 2002 was a very good and interesting competition. England didn’t win. Brazil beat Germany in the final game. But England played well.

Chapter 6. A Family Man

David loves children, all children. He gives a lot of time and money to ill children. He writes to them. Sometimes he and Victoria visit them.

In March 1999 Victoria had Brooklyn, their first son. David was a father. Then in September 2002, Brooklyn had a little brother. His name

is Romeo. At two years old Brooklyn had his first little red Manchester United shirt with his name on it. He can kick a football too.

David and Victoria come from good, happy families. Their fathers and mothers always loved them. David and Victoria give their children the same love.

‘Posh and Becks’ make a lot of money. They don’t put all of it in the bank. They buy a lot of things, expensive things. David likes buying things for Victoria and his little boys. He loves cars too. He has three Mercedes and two Ferraris. The Beckhams live in some very big houses.

David’s photo is always in the newspapers and on television. People see him in this coat, in those shoes, with that telephone, and then they want to have those things too. He makes a lot of money every year from advertisements.

Victoria makes a lot of money too, from her music, but the big money comes from David now.

Chapter 7. Goodbye to the Reds

The year 2003 was a very important year for David Beckham. First, Manchester United won a big competition. Then, in the summer, there was a new story in every newspaper: ‘Real Madrid buys Beckham for £25,000,000’. After twelve years with Manchester United, David moved to Spain. His father was unhappy, but the move was good for David. Real Madrid and its players - Zidane, Ronaldo, Roberto Carlos, Raul, Figo - are famous in every country in the world.

Now David has a new white shirt for Real Madrid. He has a new number, 23. But he is the same David Beckham.

People like reading about him, his family, his houses, his hair. Children in many countries know his name. They play football in his shirt. They want to be famous. They want to be David Beckham.

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