

The #1 New York Times Best-Selling Series



# Who Is Pelé?



by James Buckley Jr.

# Who Is Pelé?



by James Buckley Jr.

illustrated by Andrew Thomson

Penguin Workshop

To everyone who loves the “beautiful game”—JB

For Rhia—AT

PENGUIN WORKSHOP  
An Imprint of Penguin Random House LLC, New York



Penguin supports copyright. Copyright fuels creativity, encourages diverse voices, promotes free speech, and creates a vibrant culture. Thank you for buying an authorized edition of this book and for complying with copyright laws by not reproducing, scanning, or distributing any part of it in any form without permission. You are supporting writers and allowing Penguin to continue to publish books for every reader.

Text copyright © 2018 by James Buckley Jr. Illustrations copyright © 2018 by Penguin Random House LLC. All rights reserved. Published by Penguin Workshop, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC, New York. PENGUIN and PENGUIN WORKSHOP are trademarks of Penguin Books Ltd. WHO HQ & Design is a registered trademark of Penguin Random House LLC. Printed in the USA.

Visit us online at [www.penguinrandomhouse.com](http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com).

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018012956

ISBN 9780399542619 (paperback)  
ISBN 9780399542626 (library binding)  
ISBN 9780399542671 (ebook)

Version\_2

# Contents

[Title Page](#)

[Dedication](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Who Is Pelé?](#)

[The Boy Who Loved Soccer](#)

[September 7 Team](#)

[Young Star](#)

[World Cup Glory](#)

[A Busy Time](#)

[The World of Pelé](#)

[One More Championship](#)

[Pelé's Triumphs Continue](#)

[Timelines](#)

[Bibliography](#)



---

## Who Is Pelé?

---

In the summer of 1956, Pelé was homesick.

Pelé (say: PEH-lay) had arrived in the city of Santos, Brazil, just weeks earlier. He had grown up in Bauru, a tiny town to the west, but his incredible skills on the soccer field got him noticed by a team called Santos. He was only fifteen, and moving to the city had been a major decision for Pelé.

Without soccer, he might still be shining shoes or working in a field. Most of his friends on his hometown team could never dream of leaving Bauru. Now, on the Santos team, Pelé would earn enough money to support his family. And he could make his dream of becoming a soccer star come true.

At just over five feet tall, Pelé was small for his age. He was an amazing player who could dribble well, and he was very quick. On his new team, though, he was playing against older, larger adults. He was worried he would not succeed. He was also living away from home for the first time. And Santos was a strange place. Then he missed an easy penalty shot during a game that cost his team a victory. He was embarrassed and sad. Pelé

had had enough of life in the big city. *That's it, he thought, I'm quitting.*



Early in the morning, he packed his bag and tiptoed out of his room. He had just enough money for a bus ticket back to Bauru. But as he walked quietly through the players' dormitory, he was stopped by a man who worked for the team. Big Sabu helped the players with their gear and watched over the young players. In his many years with Santos, he had seen other teens like Pelé. They were young, scared, and often thought of quitting. So Big Sabu stopped Pelé and told him he could not leave without permission. He wanted to keep Pelé on team Santos. Pelé listened and made an important decision. He headed back to his room. He would keep aiming for his dream.

And it turned out to be the right decision. Pelé had arrived at Santos as a very good player, but that was not enough. Pelé worked hard and soon learned to do

more than just dribble. He worked on shooting and passing and being in the right position to help his teammates. He ate more, exercised, and grew stronger and more confident.

In a few months, he was one of the team's stars, scoring goal after goal. With Pelé's help, Santos became one of the top teams in the country. When Pelé was only seventeen, he was named to the national team for Brazil and helped his country win its first World Cup championship!



In the years that followed, Pelé became the best, and most famous, soccer player in the world. He helped Brazil win three World Cup titles and scored more than 1,200 goals for his teams and his country. He also traveled to the United States in 1975 and helped the sport of soccer become popular among Americans. As the best player in the world's favorite sport, Pelé became an ambassador for soccer and a symbol for the sport itself.