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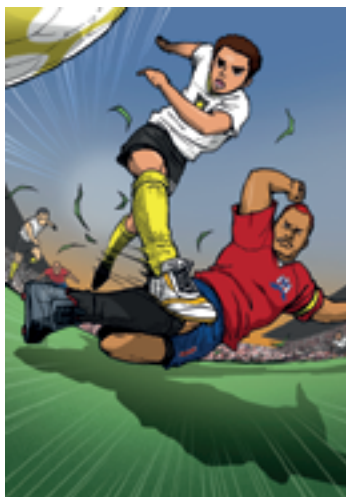
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## DOMINOES

# Football Forever

*Andrea Sarto*



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Illustrated by Kanako Damerum and Yuzuru Takasaki

Andrea Sarto was born in the UK, but has lived and worked in several different countries as an English-language teacher, trainer, and editor. As a child, Andrea's favourite football team was Wolverhampton Wanderers, who were once very good. As a teenager, Andrea liked the purple kit of Fiorentina, but now supports Barcelona like everybody else. The best features of Andrea's own game are ball control and a strong, left-foot cross.

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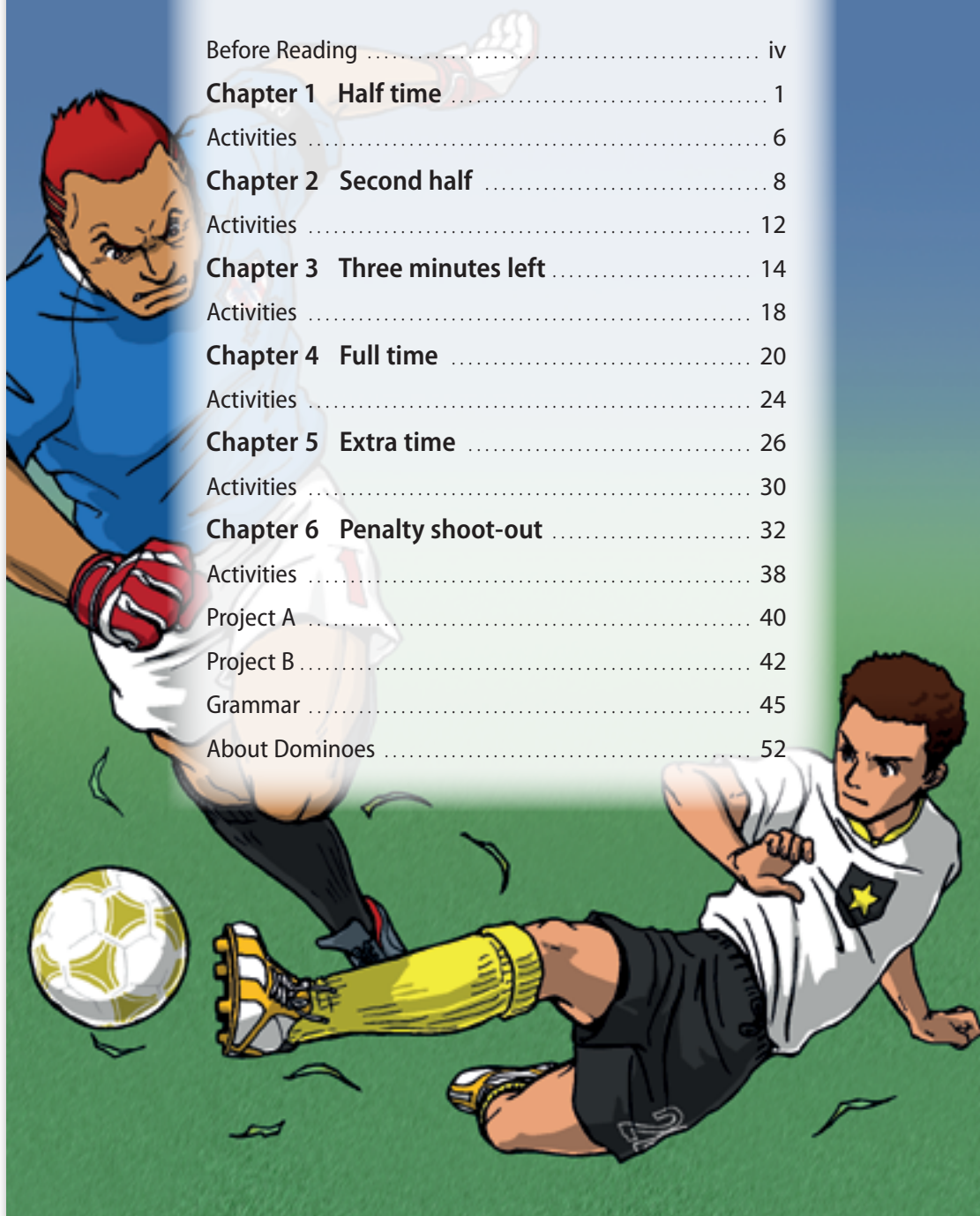
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‘Bad! Very bad!’ the **coach** says angrily.

It’s the last **game** of the year. We need to **win** to get the **Cup**. ‘We’ is Stars, my new football **team**, and I’m Albertino, or Tino to my friends.

Our team are losing 2–0 to Stripes. They’ve got some good players and are playing well, but I know we can play better.

‘Bad! Very bad!’ the coach says again. They call him ‘Zangado’ – ‘angry’ in Portuguese. He looks **around** the changing room. His hair is white, his face is red.

‘We must win this game! Do you want to win the Cup or not?’

We want to win, but nobody answers. The players are looking down – all but three of us. The first is my friend, Junior. He’s nineteen and comes from my hometown. He’s a good player and my best friend. I like him a lot. I remember we played *futsal* when we were children. *Futsal* is football with only five players in the team. It’s a fast game!

**coach** a person who helps and teaches players

**game** something that you play

**win** (*past won*) to be the best in a game

**Cup** you get this when you win an important game

**team** a number of people who play together in a game

**around** all the way round

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The second is Lenda. He's thirty and he comes from São Paulo. He's the **captain** of Stars and a very good player. He played for the Brazilian team when he was younger. I saw him play and I had a picture of him in my bedroom. But he doesn't like me because I'm new... and very young.

The third is me, Tino. I'm only sixteen, but I live football. In the day, I play football; at night, I sleep football. I eat and drink football! The beautiful game! Stars is my first big team and I'm very happy to be here. I know I'm young, but it doesn't matter. I've got two quick feet – I'm not tall, but I'm very fast, and **stronger** than other boys of sixteen. I can play **forever**.

I didn't play in the first half. I waited and watched, but I could do nothing, of course. We went 1–0 down after ten minutes, then 2–0 down five minutes before half time. Ouch!

'OK,' the coach says suddenly. 'I want much more from all of you in the second half. We must play better, so I'm going to make some changes.'

Now all the players look up.

'You and you,' the coach says to two players. 'You worked well, but I'm making two changes.'

'Nakano, are you ready?' he asks a different player.

'Yes, coach,' says Nakano.

'OK. You're on.' Then he looks around. Who's the next player? I feel my hands get hot. Coach Zangado looks past me. Then he looks back. 'Tino, are you ready?'

'Who – me?' I ask.

'Yes – you. You're the only Tino here.'

'Er, yes, coach. I'm ready.'

'OK. You're up front, with Lenda. We need a **goal** early in the second half. Understand?'

**captain** the most important person in a team

**strong** when you can carry things easily or run a lot

**forever** always; never stopping

**goal** to get a point in a game of football; where you need to put the ball to win



‘Yes, coach.’

Junior looks at me and gives a big smile. Lenda looks at me, but he doesn’t smile. He’s thinking, ‘Who is this boy? How good is he? Can he help us win?’

I can’t answer these questions, but I feel very happy and excited. My shirt is white: number 20 with ‘TINO’ in big black letters on the back. On the front is a big star. I pull up my right **sock**, then my left. In my left sock there is something for good **luck**: a little star.

**sock** you wear this on your feet in your shoe

**luck** when things happen to you that are very good or very bad

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My mother gave the little star to me when I began to play *futsal*. 'Here, Tino – take this for luck. You're little now, but one day you're going to be a big star, an **amazing** player. I know it. You're going to play for a big team.' I love my mother. She's here today, with my younger brother,



Alex, and my little sister, Talita. My hometown is watching the game on TV, but my father isn't here today.

He doesn't want to come, he says.

'Sshh! Now listen to me,' says the coach. Everybody in the changing room is suddenly very quiet, and we can hear the big clock.

'It isn't finished. OK, we're 2–0 down. Not good. But we've got forty-

five minutes. Anything can happen in football, you know that. Stars is a good team; Stripes is an OK team. They've got one good player: their **keeper**. He's a big man and he can stop a lot, but he's only one man. Let's play our game. Move the ball and work for the team. Don't stand and think. Play with your feet, and when you can, **shoot**! This is Brazilian football. It's easy!'

The players are looking at coach Zangado. 'He's right,' says Lenda. 'The game isn't finished. We can do it.'

'But do you want to win?' asks the coach.

'Yes,' some of the players say.

'I can't hear you,' says the coach. 'Do you want to win?'

This time all of the players **shout** 'Yes!'

'And can you do it?' asks the coach.

'Yes!' shout the players.

'Come on – we can do it!' the captain shouts. He looks in our eyes. 'OK, let's go!'

**amazing** very good

**keeper** (goalkeeper) the player in front of the goal who can use his hands to stop the ball

**shoot** to hit the ball with your foot at the goal

**shout** to say loudly



We all walk out of the changing room. I've got **butterflies** in me, but I feel good. Butterflies are OK in my first big game! The **fans** shout when we run onto the **pitch**. The noise is amazing. The pitch is very green and it suddenly feels very, very big. I look around. There are thousands and thousands of fans – some in white shirts, some in red shirts. White is our colour; red is the colour of Stripes. They're all watching the game, and watching me. 'Come on, Tino!' I say quietly. I know I can do it!

**butterflies** an excited feeling before doing something important

**fans** people who like football a lot

**pitch** where you play a game of football, usually green



YOU HAVE REACHED THE END OF THE SAMPLE.

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