

FRANK LAMPARD

FRANKIE'S MAGIC FOOTBALL



WORLD
CUP
SPECIAL

FRANKIE AND THE WORLD CUP CARNIVAL



CHAPTER 1

"Budge up!" said Louise, as she came into the living room, carrying a bowl of crisps. Frankie shifted along the couch, pressing right up against Charlie.

"I can't go any further," grumbled Charlie, pointing with his goalie gloves to Max, Frankie's pet dog.

He was curled up at the end of the sofa, asleep. "I thought dogs slept in baskets, anyway."

Max opened one eye and growled softly.

"Not *that* dog," said Frankie, laughing. "He just wants to watch the game with the rest of us."

"He's asleep!" said Charlie.

It was half-time in the World Cup semi-final, and England were one-all with Argentina. At stake was a place in the Final against Brazil, where the tournament was taking place. Frankie had to pinch himself – no one had thought England would get this far. Especially not his dad. He'd

booked a table at a posh restaurant for himself and Frankie's mum on the night of the semi-final. He'd never thought this meant he might actually miss an England game!

Which meant there was more room on the sofa for Frankie and his friends.

Charlie was trying to get a crisp from the bowl, but he was struggling to pick one up.

"Why not take your gloves off?" said Frankie, knowing what the answer would be.

"No can do," said Charlie. "A goalkeeper's always got to be ready."

Frankie and Louise shared a

smile. Sometimes Charlie took things too far.

The TV was showing a replay of the other semi-final between Brazil and Germany. The game had been won when Ricardo, the nineteen-year-old Brazilian striker, had scored an incredible overhead kick in the last minute of the game. The fans were already calling it a "Ricardo". The TV showed the kick from several angles, normal speed and in slow-motion. Frankie could only shake his head in amazement. The commentator was talking about how Ricardo had grown up very poor in a slum, living in a single room with his four sisters.

“I wish I could score a goal like that,” said Frankie.

“I bet you could,” said Louise.

Frankie shrugged. It was all very well scoring a great goal, but to do it in a game as important as a semi-final was another thing entirely.

“Imagine the pressure he was under!” said Charlie.

Frankie heard footsteps pounding down the stairs and his brother Kevin burst into the room wearing a pristine Brazil kit. The only downside to his parents being out was that Kevin had to stay in to babysit.

“What’s the score, babies?” he said.

He shoved Max on to the floor, then flopped on to the sofa. Louise's bowl of crisps spilt all over Charlie. Max grabbed a few from the carpet, then scampered back to his basket.

"It's one-all," said Frankie, trying not to get irritated. *Kevin's not much of a fan if he hasn't even watched the first half*, he thought.

Kevin snatched the remaining crisps from Louise's lap and stuffed a handful into his mouth. "I bet England lose," he said. "They always lose."

Louise glared at him. "Come on, Frankie," she said. "Let's go out into the garden and have a kickabout."

There's still five minutes until the second half starts."

Charlie followed Louise through the French doors and into the garden, but first Frankie went to the back of the kitchen. In the cupboard under the sink were two balls. One was a few weeks old, and the other was a battered peeling wreck that barely bounced. Only a few people knew its secret. He grinned to himself, recalling all the adventures they'd had, thanks to his magic football. Well, tonight he didn't want an adventure – he just wanted a quick game with his friends, then back to the second

half. He took the good ball and closed the cupboard door.

It was a warm evening with clear blue skies. The neighbourhood was quiet, with everyone indoors watching the game. Frankie bounced the ball a couple of times on his foot, then kicked it to Louise. She controlled it under her trainer.

“Why not try that kick, Frankie?” she said. “I’ll kick it up for you.”

Frankie smiled. “Okay. You ready, Charlie?”

His friend had taken up position by the fence. The gap between two fence-posts was the goal they normally used.

“Always ready,” said Charlie, spreading his gloves.

Louise chipped the ball into the air, and Frankie watched it sail towards him over his shoulder. At the last moment, he flicked his body backwards.

“Loser!” shouted a voice.

Frankie’s foot skimmed the ball and he landed in a heap on his back.





FRANKIE'S MAGIC FOOTBALL

WANT TO READ MORE?

Go to

www.frankiesmagicfootball.com/books

to find more about books in the
series and purchase copies!