



LUCAS...From the streets of Soweto to soccer superstar

Richard Coomber

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LUCAS

From the Streets of Soweto to Soccer Superstar

The authorised biography by

RICHARD COOMBER

“This is my hero”

Nelson Mandela

Leeds United's biggest crowd of the 2004-05 season was for a testimonial match.

But this was no ordinary testimonial. The 37,889 who packed into Elland Road were paying tribute to Lucas Radebe, one of the few players whose name is mentioned in the same breath as the club's legends like Don Revie, Billy Bremner, John Charles, Eddie Gray, Peter Lorimer, Jack Charlton and Norman Hunter.

The South African international so captured the hearts of Leeds fans that they still chant his name years after he retired and the Kaiser Chiefs band took their name from his first club.

In his native land he is an iconic figure, who led his country to two World Cups as they emerged from the sporting wilderness and whose reputation as a player and a man helped convince the rest of the world that the World Cup finals should go to South Africa.

The kid who was rescued from the violence of the anti-apartheid struggle in Soweto when his parents sent him away from home for fear he would end up in gaol or even dead, received the ultimate accolade when Nelson Mandela declared: 'He is my hero.'

This is the story of how Lucas overcame a tough childhood, survived a shooting, and refused to be diverted from his destiny by injury, homesickness and adjusting to English conditions to become not only a football superstar but acknowledged as one of the nicest people in the game.

He was awarded the FIFA Fair Play Award as much for his unstinting work for charities and anti-racism organisations as his immaculate defending.

Lucas Radebe's story is much more than just another biography of a footballer. It is inspiring and heart-warming, tinged with tragedy yet marked throughout by his trademark smile that has lit up two continents and touched thousands of lives.

Four Four Two

“A compelling insight into a Leeds legend.”

Henry Winter, Daily Telegraph

“Takes the reader through a dramatic period in the history of Leeds United but even more fascinating is the insight it provides into Radebe's personal journey.”

Simon Hart,

The Independent on Sunday

“An absorbing and compelling account of his inspirational story.”

Anthony Clavane, Sunday Mirror

“A fitting tribute to a man who is every inch a Leeds United legend.”

Richard Sutcliffe, Yorkshire Post

“He's a very special person. He's always positive and a terrific role model for young people.”

Terry Venables

“Lucas was a joy to work with. He was up there with the best.”

George Graham

The Author

Richard Coomber is a freelance journalist and writer living in Yorkshire, who has 'ghosted' books for boxing referee Mickey Vann, world champion boxer Johnny Nelson, UK karting guru Martin Hines and Essex and England cricketer Ronnie Irani, as well as producing a special monograph on Leeds United legend John Charles.

He has covered the fortunes of Leeds United from the days of Howard Wilkinson to the present and for several years he co-wrote the matchday programme. It was during this period that he got to know Lucas Radebe well and realised that his was a special story.

As well as sports writing, Richard is interested in local and regional history and recently completed his BA honours degree after a 40-year gap-year!

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