

CRISTIANO RONALDO

BENJAMIN
SOUTHERLAND

A BIOGRAPHY OF THE
PORTUGUESE
SUPERSTAR



Cristiano Ronaldo

A Biography of the Portuguese Superstar

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Chapter 1: A Legend is Born

Cristiano Ronaldo dos Santos Aveiro was born on February 5, 1985 in Santo António, a neighborhood of Madeira; a small island off the west coast of Portugal. The youngest of four children, to mother, Maria Dolores dos Santos, and father, José Dinis Aveiro, he grew up in poverty, living in a tin-roofed house, and had to share his bedroom with his older siblings: Hugo, Elma, and Liliana Cátia. His father was an alcoholic and to make ends meet his mother worked two jobs: one as a cook, the other as a cleaner.

His middle name, Ronaldo, was given to him by his father after his favorite actor, Ronald Reagan.

From a very early age, it was evident that he had a talent for football and his parents knew that this was his pathway out of the slums. As a boy he played for a small-town club, Andorinha, where his father was the kit man and by the time he was 10 he was touted as “one for the future.”

His godfather Fernao Sousa once told reporters, “All he wanted to do was play football. He loved the game so much he’d miss meals or escape out of his bedroom window with a ball when he was supposed to be doing his homework.”

After a small stint with Primeira Liga club Nacional (based in Madeira), Ronaldo was offered the opportunity to go on a three-day trial with Sporting CP (Sporting Clube de Portugal), another Primeira Liga side. The club was so impressed with the 12-year-old that they signed him straight away for \$2,000. Later that year he moved to Alcochete near Lisbon to join the club’s youth academy.

When he was 14 he was expelled from school for throwing a chair at a teacher who had “disrespected” him. It was at this point that his mother, Dolores, decided it would be best for him to leave school and concentrate on football instead.

A year later, tragedy almost ended his career when it was found that he had a racing heart. This is a condition when, at rest, the heart beats faster than it normally would. He underwent surgery, where a laser was used to cauterize the affected area. He was released from the hospital a few hours later. Two or three days later he was back in training.

Chapter 2: For Club...

Sporting CP

At 16 Ronaldo was promoted from the youth team to the seniors by manager László Bölöni. Bölöni had remarked that he was impressed by Cristiano's dribbling skills. He became Sporting's first player to play for the under-16s, the under-17s, the under-18s, the B team, and the Senior team all in one season. The following year, on October 7, 2002, Ronaldo made his debut in the Primeira Liga against Moreirense. Not surprisingly, he scored twice in their 3-0 win.

One particular date changed Ronaldo's life forever. It was August 6, 2003, at the official opening of Sporting CP's new stadium, Éstadio José Alvalade. To celebrate the opening Sporting CP played English side Manchester United. Sporting beat Manchester United 3-1 that day and so impressed were the Manchester United players with Ronaldo that they urged their manager, Alex Ferguson, to buy him.

In the transfer window that followed, three clubs put in offers for Cristiano: Liverpool, Barcelona, and Arsenal. He declined them all, choosing instead to ply his trade with the biggest club in the English Premier League: Manchester United.

Manchester United

The transfer fee paid out for Ronaldo, a cool £12.24 million (\$16.2 million) was, at the time, the most ever paid for a teenager. He also became the Premier club's first Portuguese player (followed later by Nani, Bebé, and Anderson).

He did initially ask for the No. 28 shirt, as this was his number at Sporting CP, but his request was denied. Instead he was given the No. 7 shirt, worn by Manchester United legends such as Eric Cantona, George Best, and David Beckham.

Manchester United manager, Sir Alex Ferguson, was key to the development of Ronaldo and was inspirational in his development as a player. When asked about Ferguson's influence Ronaldo told reporters that, "He's been my father in sport, one of the most important and influential factors in my career."

He made his debut for the club on August 16, 2003 against Bolton Wanderers, coming on as a 61st-minute substitution for Nicky Butt (midfielder) and received a standing ovation. Legendary Manchester United midfielder, George Best, said it was the most exciting debut he had ever seen. On November 1 of the same year, Ronaldo scored his first goal for the club. This was a free-kick in a 3-0 win over English Premier League side, Portsmouth. Things didn't always go to plan though, and Ronaldo showing his darker side was sent off on the last day of the season against Birmingham team Aston Villa. Incidentally he also scored in that game.

England's most prestigious football trophy is the Football Association Challenge Cup (commonly called the FA Cup). This cup allows all clubs, professional and non-professional, to participate annually in a knockout-style tournament. On May 22, 2004, Manchester United beat Millwall 3-0. This was Ronaldo's first piece of silverware in England. He scored the opening goal in the 44th minute.

They say with every genius comes a streak of imbalance; a Dr. Jekyll against a Mr. Hyde. This is no truer than with Ronaldo. Several incidents throughout his third season caused worry. While playing in the Champions League he was booed by Benfica fans. This dated back to his days playing for Benfica rivals, Sporting CP, a big rivalry. Rather than ignoring the crowd he retaliated by giving a middle-fingered salute. He was consequently fined \$5,000 and given a one-match ban. He also clashed with fellow Manchester United teammate, Ruud van Nistelrooy (Dutch striker) in a training session when van Nistelrooy took exception to his showboating. Van Nistelrooy was heard saying, "go crying to your daddy," a reference to Ronaldo's close relationship with Manchester United assistant manager and fellow Portuguese, Carlos Queiroz.

A more infamous incident occurred in the 2006 World Cup finals, held in Germany, when Portugal met England in the quarterfinals. In the 62nd minute of the game, England player and Manchester United teammate,

Wayne Rooney, seemed to stamp on Portuguese defender, Ricardo Carvalho. Ronaldo protested intensely with referee, Horacio Marcelo Elizondo, begging for action to be taken. On seeing this, Wayne Rooney pushed Ronaldo in the chest, giving him a few verbals in the process. That made up Elizondo's mind, and he promptly sent Rooney off. Ronaldo was seen a few minutes later winking at his teammates on the bench. Some say this incident was not Ronaldo's fault at all, as Rooney would have been sent off regardless, while others dispute this saying Ronaldo influenced the referee. Either way, it showed the volatility of the Portuguese player. After the match he publicly asked for a transfer away from Manchester United, as he felt that the club had not supported him through the incident. His request was denied.

The following 2006-07 Premier League season saw Ronaldo being booed by away fans and a section of his own fans. This did not faze him though, as that season he broke through the 20-goal barrier for the first time and won his first Premier League title. He attributed his success to his coach, René Meulensteen, who taught him to be more unpredictable, improve his teamwork, call for the ball and capitalize on goal-scoring opportunities rather than waiting for "good-looking" goals. This proved good advice when against Premier League team, Blackburn Rovers, he was substituted and given a standing ovation. By the opposition fans.

In the same season Ronaldo scored his first ever Champions League goals. These were against Italian Serie A side, Roma. He also won the Professional Footballers' Association's Player's Player (abbreviated to PFA Player's Player), Fans' Player, and Footballer of the Year awards. On top of that he won the Football Writers' Association's Footballer of the Year award. These awards made him the first player ever to win all four main PFA and FWA honors. As a consequence he was offered a new five-year contract with Manchester United, with a weekly wage of £120,000 (\$160,000) and a total annual salary of £31 million (\$42 million).

Throughout the 2007-08 season Ronaldo scored 42 goals in all competitions. Ironically his first was against his old club, Sporting CP, in the Champions League. Again, though, his volatile nature reared its ugly head, and in a Premier League game against Portsmouth he was red-carded for a head-butt on fellow professional Richard Hughes. Manager Alex Ferguson blasted him

for being provoked and getting sent off. He was duly banned for three matches but was unrepentant, claiming he was provoked. “I am frustrated because three matches is unjust. I am willing to resist the provocation but only up to a limit. That limit was passed at Portsmouth. It was just absurd,” he was quoted as saying. Later, he seemed to backtrack, saying the ban had taught him not to let opponents provoke him.

One of Ronaldo’s greatest wishes was to be known as the greatest football player alive and in the latter part of 2007 that dream came true. Almost. He came second in the Ballon d’Or (an award presented annually to the best player of the year), to Brazilian Kaká. Third was arch-rival and nemesis: Lionel Messi. He also came third to Kaká and Messi in the FIFA World Player of the Year award.

The following year, on January 12, he scored his first hat-trick for Manchester United against Newcastle United in a 6-0 drubbing of the side. All six goals were scored in the second half, and the Portugal star scored the opening goal in the 49th minute. However, this was his only hat-trick for the club.

One of the proudest moments of his football career came for Ronnie on March 19, 2008, when he captained Manchester United for the first time. This was against Premier League team Bolton Wanderers. During the 2-0 win over Bolton, Ronaldo scored twice, taking his tally for the season to 33. This broke legendary Manchester United striker George Best’s record of 32 scored in the 1967-68 season. The 31 goals he scored in the league helped Manchester United win the title; Ronaldo’s second. That season he was also awarded the Golden Boot (given to a player for the most goals scored in a season) and the European Golden Shoe (formerly called the European Golden Boot, it is awarded to the player who has scored the most league goals in all recognized European leagues). This made him the first winger to ever win the award.

Controversy soon ensued when Manchester United filed a tampering complaint against Spanish La Liga (Spain’s top division) side, Real Madrid. United claimed that the Spanish Giants were deliberately trying to unsettle the player. Of course, Real Madrid denied this, claiming that Manchester United had no proof, save for press speculation. Article 18 of FIFA’s

Regulations state, “that a club interested in another club’s player/s have to inform that club, in writing, of its intentions to enter into negotiations with said player/s.” Ronaldo, himself, at the time serving his country in Euro 2008, stated that he would not be discussing the matter any further while he was with the Portuguese side. At the time though, it was a well-known fact that he secretly wanted to join the Spanish Galacticos. Then-FIFA president, Sepp Blatter remarked that the player should be allowed to leave Manchester United, as it was tantamount to “modern slavery” to keep him at the club. Despite later agreeing with Blatter, Ronaldo stayed with United a further year.

In 2008-09 Ronaldo underwent ankle surgery. This kept him out of service for 10 weeks. On his return, he scored his 100th Manchester United goal. This was against Stoke City. Another record had now been broken, as he had scored against every EPL team at the time. Just five days later he was again red-carded; his third time, at Eastlands; rivals Manchester City’s old ground (Manchester City have since moved to a larger ground, now called the Etihad Stadium). This, however, wasn’t a straight red; he received two yellow cards; one for a foul on Shaun Wright-Phillips, the other for an inexplicable handball. United still won the game 1-0 though.

In December of 2008 Ronaldo helped United win the World Club Cup, a tournament held for the champion clubs of the six continental confederations recognized by FIFA. The final took place at the International Stadium of Yokohama in Japan and was contested against Ecuadorian side, LDU Quito, the CONMEBOL (Confederación Sudamericana de Fútbol) champions. The winning goal was scored by Wayne Rooney in the 73rd minute.

After many years trying, Ronaldo finally won the coveted Ballon d’Or in 2008, making him the first United player to win the award since George Best in 1968.

Four days before Christmas of 2009 he won the Puskás Award (an award created in 2009, in memory of Hungarian football player, Ferenc Puskás, which recognizes the most pleasing goal of the year). This was awarded for his thunderbolt against Portuguese side, Porto, in the Champions League, which he claimed was the greatest goal of his career.

On June 30, 2009, Manchester United fans were left devastated, although not surprised, when Ronaldo left the club bound for Real Madrid. He departed United having won nine trophies, three Premier League titles, and a Football League Cup.

Real Madrid

80,000 fans turned up for Ronaldo's presentation at Santiago Bernabéu; Real Madrid's stadium (usually shortened to just, The Bernabéu). This surpassed the previous record of 75,000 fans for Diego Maradona's presentation when he joined Napoli in July of 1984. He was presented with the No. 9 shirt by Real Madrid legend Alfredo Di Stéfano. He initially wanted the No. 7 shirt, but that was already taken by Real Madrid striker Raúl.

He made his debut for Real Madrid on August 29, 2009, against Deportivo La Coruña. He scored from the penalty spot. He then became the first Real Madrid player to score in his first four games for the club. In the Champions League that year he scored twice, both from free kicks, in Madrid's first group game against Swiss outfit, Zürich.

While on international duty in October he sprained his ankle, causing him to be out of action for seven weeks. This was an injury that had initially been diagnosed in September, but was aggravated in October.

A week after his comeback he was yet again red-carded in the La Liga game against Almería after receiving two yellow cards; the first, a petulant but automatic yellow nowadays, for taking his shirt off while celebrating a goal; the other, for hitting out at Almería midfielder Juanma Ortiz. He later apologized, stating, "I'm human, and I made a mistake. I have my flaws too, but I am a professional who doesn't like to miss or lose. I was sad after missing the penalty, and that's why I didn't celebrate the goal that followed. I am a perfectionist, but I am glad Karim (Benzema) scored. I was sent off because I reacted instinctively. I wish to apologize for that." During the game he created the first goal, scored their last and won and then missed a penalty; Karim Benzema scored the rebound and Madrid won the match 4-2. He missed the following game, which was a crucial match against fourth-placed Valencia.

Despite scoring 33 goals in all campaigns, including a hat-trick against Mallorca he still only managed second spot in that year's Ballon d'Or and FIFA World Player of the Year. In his first season with Los Blancos (Real Madrid's nickname, meaning The Whites, in Spanish) he won nothing.

The following season, Raúl surprisingly left Real Madrid for German side, Schalke 04. This gave Ronaldo the opportunity to take the No. 7 shirt, which he kindly accepted.

On October 23, 2010, he scored four goals against Racing Santander. This was the end of a run of six consecutive games in which he had scored: three times in La Liga, once in the Champions League and twice for Portugal, totaling 10 goals. This was the most he had scored in a single month. However, he was not nominated for the Ballon d'Or that year, and this was the first time, while in Spain, that he had not been picked.

On the home front, he won his first trophy on April 20 with Real Madrid when they beat rivals Barcelona 2-1 in the 2011 Copa Del Rey final. This was the 109th final since its establishment in 1903. The game was played at the Mestalla Stadium, home to La Liga side Valencia. The game was "El Clásico" meaning a game played traditionally between Real Madrid and Barcelona. This was the sixth Copa Del Rey El Clásico final, the last one being on April 5, 1990, also in Valencia. The last time the two teams had played each other in La Liga was just four days previous. They were also to play each other in the Champions League seven days later. In the 103rd minute of the game, Ronaldo headed the ball home to seal Madrid's 18th Copa Del Rey victory.

As is traditional when teams win major cups, they parade it around the city (or town) that the football club is from, usually on top of an open-topped double-decker bus. Players then pass the trophy around to each other and hold it aloft for the crowd to cheer to. Real Madrid did exactly this. When it came to defender Sergio Ramos's turn, he dropped the cup. It landed in front of the double decker's wheels, where it was crushed flat! Ramos later joked that he had not dropped the cup and that it had jumped down to meet the fans. A month later it was replaced and put in Madrid's trophy cabinet, along with their many other cups and trophies (and as far away from Ramos as possible, no doubt!)

The same season, Ronaldo equaled his personal best of scoring 42 goals in all competitions in a single season. He also equaled the record of both Telmo Zarra, who played mostly for Atlético Bilbao (1940-1955) and Hugo Sanchez, who initially started at Atlético Madrid before changing colors and moving to Real Madrid. However, he scored twice against Almería the following weekend to break that record, finishing with 40 goals. The game against Almeria was his last chance that season to do so. Later in the year he won the Pichichi Trophy (also called Trofeo Pichichi, which is given to the highest goalscorer of the season in La Liga by Spanish newspaper Marca, and, for the second time the European Golden Shoe. This made him the first player to win that award in two different leagues. He ended his second season with Los Blancos, with 53 goals in all competitions. As if that wasn't enough goals, the following season, 2011-12 he scored an incredible 60 goals in all competitions!

Though Barcelona won the Supercopa de España (Spanish Super Cup), 5-4 on aggregate, against Real Madrid, at Camp Nou (Barcelona's home ground), it didn't stop Ronnie claiming his 100th goal for Madrid. This helped him regain his position as one of the best players in the world when he came second, to none other than Lionel Messi in the Ballon d'Or, despite scoring hat-tricks against Real Zaragoza, Rayo Vallecano, Málaga, Osasuna, and Sevilla. His hat-trick against Sevilla put Madrid top of the league by the midway point. Sadly, in Europe, Madrid was eliminated from the Champions League when his penalty kick in the shootout was saved by Bayern Munich's goalkeeper, Manuel Neuer. On the other side of the coin, happily, Madrid won La Liga for the first time in four years with a record-breaking 100 pts.

His 100th league goal (as opposed to 100 goals in all competitions, previously) came against Real Sociedad. This was on March 24, 2012, in which he managed to achieve the feat in just 92 matches and over three seasons. The previous record was held by legend, Ferenc Puskás (after whom the Puskás award is named). He reached 46 goals by the end of the season but, this time, it was not a record as Lionel Messi had claimed that by scoring 50 that season. He did, however, break the record for scoring against every team in La Liga, so all was not bad.

CR7 (nicknamed due to his initials and shirt number given to him after the

departure of Raúl) began the 2012-13 season with victory in the Supercopa de España by beating Barcelona. The teams had drawn 4-4, but Madrid had won on away goals. This was to be his third trophy in Spain. During the game he scored in both legs and claimed his 150th goal for the club, however, he refused to celebrate his achievement blaming a “professional issue” within the club that he was not happy with. It did not dampen his spirit, though, as he scored his first ever hat-trick in the Champions League in a 4-1 beating of Dutch club, Ajax. Furthermore, he became the first player to score in six successive Clásicos, when he hit a brace (two goals) to level the game 2-2. Again, though, he came second in the Ballon d’Or to...Lionel Messi.

Unlike the English Premier League, teams in Spain have a break from football in the winter. After this break, in 2012-13, Ronaldo captained Madrid for the first time. This was against Real Sociedad in a 4-3 victory, and on January 30, 2013, he became the first non-Spaniard to captain Madrid in El Clásico.

This marked his 500th appearance for the club. Three days prior in a game against Getafe, in which he scored a hat-trick, he topped 300 goals for all clubs he had played for. His 200th goal for Madrid came on May 8 in a 6-2 win over minnows, Málaga. He had scored these goals in just 197 matches.

He also helped Madrid get to the Copa Del Rey final by beating Barcelona in El Clásico. He scored twice and became the first player to score in the last six consecutive games against Barcelona. This was twice as long as any other player.

Incidentally, in the Copa Del Rey final against Atlético Madrid he headed the opening goal of the game, only for Madrid to eventually lose 2-1. It was the first time in 14 years that Atlético had beaten their rivals. He was red-carded for the seventh time in his career in the 114th minute of the game after clashing with Atlético defender Gabi (again). That same season, Madrid failed to defend their title, losing out to rivals, Barcelona.

In the first knockout stage of the Champions League in 2012-13 Madrid faced Ronaldo’s old club Manchester United. He scored twice, once to equalize, and then to score the winner. He later said he was sad to have knocked out his old and much-beloved club from the competition. Madrid

were though knocked out themselves at the semi-final stage by Germans, Borussia Dortmund. Ronaldo ended up being the Champions League top-scorer for the second time with 12 goals. In that season he scored a total of 55 goals in all competitions.

Rumors and rifts of him leaving were rife but were soon quelled when he signed a new three-year deal, taking him to 2018. His salary was increased to €17 million (\$20 million) net, making him, briefly, the highest paid football player in the world (David Beckham was the top-earner when he signed for MLS side LA Galaxy that year).

When English team Tottenham Hotspur sold Welsh international Gareth Bale to Real Madrid for an alleged record-breaking €100 million (\$117 million, and making him the world's most expensive player), and French side Lyon sold Karim Benzema for €8 million (\$8.6 million) the three players formed a terrifying trio upfront. The press nicknamed them BBC after their initials: Bale, Benzema, Cristiano. Ronaldo claimed to be in the form of his life at the time. Not many could dispute this, as he scored 32 goals in 22 matches for both club and country. He ended the season having scored 69 goals in 59 matches. A personal best. He won the Ballon d'Or that year establishing himself as the best footballer in the world. It is worth noting, however, that the press did favor Bayern Munich's Franck Ribéry for the award. He also helped Madrid win La Décima, their tenth European Cup.

In the Champions League he recorded his 100th game in the competition and equaled Lionel Messi's record of 14 Champions League goals when he scored against Borussia Dortmund.

Further records were to be broken when he scored from the penalty spot against La Liga side Atlético Madrid to become the first player to score in two European Cup finals for two teams in different leagues (Real Madrid and Manchester United). He was very subdued in this match, however, as he had a condition called Patellar Tendinitis, or jumper's knee. This is a condition caused by sports people who jump frequently and is thought to be associated with ankle sprains and stiff ankle movements, which Ronaldo had had in the past (it can also be attributed to hamstring problems). Ronaldo played against medical advice and commented, "In your life, you do not win without sacrifices, and you must take risks."

The following season, he became the top-scorer in the Champions League with 17 goals and won UEFA's Best Player in Europe award. In the Copa Del Rey he helped Madrid reach the final when he scored twice against Atlético Madrid. The first goal now meant that he had scored in every single minute of a 90-minute match he had played. Unfortunately continued problems with his knee prevented him from competing in the Copa Del Rey final where Real Madrid beat Barcelona 2-1. Madrid ended the season third that year but Ronaldo had contributed to the cause by scoring 31 goals in 30 matches. This feat earned him a further award in the Pichichi and European Golden Shoe category. He had to share the European Golden Shoe award with Barcelona's Luis Suárez, however. By now, he had scored 400 goals in 653 appearances for clubs and country. On January 6, 2014, he scored twice against Celta Vigo. He dedicated both goals to Portuguese footballing legend, Eusébio who had passed away just the day before. A delicately back-heeled, last-minute volley against Valencia on May 4 earned him the best goal of the season by Liga de Fútbol Profesional (Spain's footballing body). They also named him the best player in La Liga.

In the following campaign Ronaldo broke another personal best by scoring 61 goals in all competitions, starting with both goals in the victory over Sevilla in the UEFA Super Cup. In December of that year he scored his 23rd hat-trick against Celta Vigo making him the fastest player to reach 200 goals in the Spanish division. He achieved this milestone in just 178 games. He also won his second Ballon d'Or, joining the likes of Michel Platini, Johann Cruyff, and Marco van Basten as a three-time winner of the award.

2015-16 could not have been much worse for Real Madrid. Their 22 match-winning streak ended with defeat to Valencia (2-1), they didn't win a single trophy all season, lost in the semifinals of the Champions League and to top it off came second in La Liga, to Barcelona of all teams. However, Ronaldo furthered his record of scoring in consecutive away games to 12, including both goals in their defeat to Italian giants, Juventus. He scored 10 goals in the Champions League that year, becoming top-scorer with Neymar and Messi, the third successive season he had done so.

His first five-goal streak came on April 5 against Granada. This included an eight-minute hat-trick. Granada was thrashed 9-1. His 300th goal for Real

Madrid came just three days later against Rayo Vallecano. He broke the record for most hat-tricks for Real Madrid when he scored against Sevilla, Espanyol, and Getafe. This was his 31st hat-trick for the club and beat Angelo Di Stéfano's haul of 28 trebles. He ended the season with 48 goals. As well as winning the Pichichi award for the second time in a row, he also won the European Golden Shoe for a record fourth time.

On September 12, 2015, he became Real Madrid's all-time goalscorer with a five-goal haul against Espanyol, taking his tally to 230 goals in 203 matches. This surpassed previous holder, Raúl. He also broke the record for most goals in the Champions League when he scored a hat-trick against Ukrainian team Shakhtar Donetsk to score 80 goals in the competition and beat previous holder, Messi, on 77. On September 30 he scored a brace against Swedish side, Malmö, to reach 500 goals for both club and country.

A month later on October 17 he again surpassed Raúl, when he scored the second goal in the 3-0 win against Levante at the Bernabéu. This took his total tally to 324 goals in all competitions for Madrid.

In Europe he scored 16 goals in the Champions League making him the top-scorer for the fourth consecutive season. Fitness issues again plagued him and he performed poorly in the Champions League final against Atlético Madrid. He did, however, scored a penalty in that match and secured La Undécima, the 11th victory for Madrid.

For the sixth successive season, he scored more than 50 goals across all competition formats.

Chapter 3: And Country

Ronaldo began his international career in 2001 at the age of 16. He has played for all teams for his country, including the under-15s, under-17s, under-20s, under-21s, under-23s and of course, the senior team. In his youth, he claimed 34 caps and scored 31 goals. He has also played in the 2004 Olympics in Athens, Greece.

He was called up to the senior squad when he was just 18 and played his first international game against Kazakhstan. This was on August 20, 2003. His first international goal came against Greece in the group stages of the European qualification for Euro 2004. Greece were the eventual winners of the competition. In the European qualification section for the 2006 World Cup, held in Germany, he became the second-highest scorer with seven goals and scored his first World Cup goal when Portugal met Iran. He scored from the penalty spot.

On February 6, 2007, a day after his 22nd birthday, he became captain of Portugal in a friendly game against Brazil. This was a request from Carlos Silva, the president of the Portuguese Football Federation, who unfortunately had passed away two days previous. He had made the request on his deathbed the day before he died. As a mark of respect, Ronaldo did not celebrate his birthday that year. In that game Ronaldo was constantly fouled by the Brazilians and had to be substituted in the 62nd minute to prevent injury and for his own safety.

After the resignation of Portuguese manager, Luiz Felipe Scolari (after losing to Germany 2-3, in the Euro 2008 final), Carlos Queiroz replaced him. Queiroz had been Ronaldo's assistant manager at Manchester United, remember, and Ronaldo saw him as a father figure. Ronaldo was made permanent captain in July 2008, but in the European qualifiers for World Cup 2010 he failed to score a single qualification goal.

At the World Cup, he was made Man of the Match in all three matches in the group stages against Côte d'Ivoire (the Ivory Coast), North Korea, and Brazil. Alas, his solitary goal in the competition was against North Korea in a

7-0 drubbing. This, incidentally, was his first international goal in over 16 months. Portugal's journey ended when they were beaten 1-0 by neighbors Spain in the last 16.

His qualification record improved in the following campaign when he scored a total of 8 goals towards reaching World Cup 2014 in Brazil and on October 17, 2012, he earned his 100th cap in a 1-1 draw against Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland may well have been a lucky omen for him as he also scored his first hat-trick for his country, against them, in a 15-minute spell, on September 6, 2013. This was the return qualifying game in which Portugal won 4-2.

Portugal failed to qualify automatically for World Cup 2014 and instead had to play Sweden in a play-off. It was a nerve-wracking time for the Portuguese as a loss would mean they would be out of the competition at the qualification stage. An embarrassing result, no doubt. However, it was Ronaldo to the rescue as he scored all four goals in their defeat of the Swedes. His hat-trick in the second leg meant he had taken his international tally to 47, equaling legendary Portuguese striker, Pauleta's record. They qualified. But only just. Incidentally, he broke Pauleta's record when he scored twice in a friendly against Cameroon.

Old troubles flared up again, and his Patellar Tendinitis was back. On top of this, he also had a thigh strain. He still played, though, stating, "If we had two or three Cristiano Ronaldos in the team I would feel more comfortable. But we don't." Very humble!

He played the full 90 minutes of the game against Germany, but he could not prevent his team taking a beating, 4-0. After a 2-2 equalizer against the United States, he popped up to score the winner against Ghana, 2-1. This capped his 50th international goal for Portugal and made him the first Portuguese to score and star in three World Cups. Sadly, Portugal was eliminated from the competition, after the group stage, on goal difference.

Scoring five goals and another hat-trick in the qualification stages against Armenia meant he had reached 23 goals in the European Championship and, including qualifying matches, he had become that competition's all-time goalscorer. He also overtook Luís Figo as his country's most-capped player

with 128 caps.

With two goals and an assist in the 3-3 draw against Hungary, he became the first player to score in four editions of the European Championship, having made a record 17 appearances in the competition. Portugal finished third behind Iceland and Hungary, typically meaning elimination from the tournament but with the new “widened” format (meaning more teams could qualify and participate and, instead of the top two teams qualifying, the top three went through) this meant they had qualified for the next stage.

In the knockout stage against Croatia, Ronaldo created very little. His only attempt was shot directly at Croatian goalkeeper, Danijel Subašić, but this was enough. The ball rebounded off Subašić’s gloves into the path of substitute, Ricardo Quaresma, who slotted home in the 117th minute. Once they had disposed of Poland on penalties (5-3), Ronaldo became the first player to participate in three European Championship semifinals.

The following semifinal match against Wales would be interesting...

Record-signing Portuguese winger, Cristiano Ronaldo, would play opposite record-signing Welsh winger, Gareth Bale. They had a lot in common. Both were wingers. Both were record-signings at the time. Both had almost single-handedly gotten their teams to the semifinals. And both played for Real Madrid.

The scene was set. Hearts were racing, and the Stade de Lyon, where the match was taking place, was buzzing with anticipation. This was the first time in their history that Wales had reached a semifinal in any major football competition. To be fair, Wales had the passion and the better first half, but it was Portugal who took over in the second. With Ronaldo scoring first in the 50th minute, a header from a corner, and Nani toe-poking the ball home after a miscued shot by Ronaldo, in the 53rd minute, Portugal won the game 2-0. Ronnie’s goal in this game made him the equal all-time top-scorer in the competition with Frenchman, Michel Platini. They had both scored nine goals.

There was also a beautiful moment after the whistle had been blown, when Ronaldo went up to his Real Madrid teammate, Bale, held his hand and spoke

to him for several minutes, in what appeared to be consolation and praise for the way Wales had played throughout the competition.

Sadly, disaster struck for Ronaldo in the final against France. In the 25th minute, he was challenged heavily by French player, Dmitri Payet, and had to be stretchered off the pitch for some treatment. After multiple treatments, he attempted to play on but eventually had to come off being replaced by Ricardo Quaresma. The score was still 0-0 at the full-time whistle and extra-time had to be played.

Despite being heavily bandaged, Ronaldo was seen throughout the remainder of the game jumping up and down, shouting at his teammates, encouraging them to score. Éderzito António Macedo Lopes, or Éder as he is more popularly known, must have heard his captain. In the 109th minute of the game he slotted the ball into the back of the net to put Portugal 1-0 up and take victory from the French in their own backyard. As team captain, Ronaldo lifted the trophy in celebration of his country's first-ever major competition win. He was awarded the Silver Boot for being the second-highest goalscorer, scoring three goals and helping with three assists, and Portugal was named Team of the Tournament. This was the third time that Ronaldo had been part of a team so named.

Chapter 4: Shall I Compare Thee...

Cristiano Ronaldo, as has been previously stated, is regarded as one of the greatest footballers to have ever lived; the previous chapter has emphasized this point very well. However, this title is disputed amongst many. Others believe him not to be the greatest player to have ever lived but rather the second greatest. Why? Well, another player has argued his claim quite well too. His name: Lionel Messi.

On a personal level, these two could not be more different: Ronaldo is Portuguese, for a start, while Messi is Argentinian. Ronaldo plays for La Liga side, Real Madrid. Messi plays for their rivals, Barcelona. Ronaldo is 6'1. Messi is 5'7. Ronaldo is brash, volatile at times, and arrogant, while Messi is shy, humble, and forgiving. But their football records are unbelievable. Here is a snippet of their statistics, side by side:

Both have scored in two Champions League finals.

Both regularly break the 50-goals-a-season barrier.

Both are forwards.

Messi has won four Ballon d'Or awards, consecutively. Ronaldo has won three, non-consecutively. When Messi won, Ronaldo was runner-up; in 2011 and 2012. When Ronaldo won, Messi was runner-up.

Ronaldo has had 673 club appearances, scoring 487 times, while Messi has had 531, scoring 453.

Ronaldo has received 12 club honors and Messi 21.

In the all-honors stakes, Ronaldo's figures add up to 62, Messi's 101.

Ronaldo has represented his country 119 times, scoring 52 goals. Messi? 113 appearances, scoring 55.

And their estimated wealth: Ronaldo \$221 million, Messi \$210 million.

This list just goes on and on. It is hard to split the two. If hairs were to be split, you could argue that Messi has a greater goal to game ratio, but that would be the best you could do. It really comes down to personalities with these two. Do you like extroverted players that play with unpredictability and flair and a winning passion so deep they are likely to get sent off or do you prefer quiet, unassuming players that get the job done professionally and assuredly with no airs and graces? It's a tough one and depends on preference.

In the past Ronaldo has been accused of diving. Former Real Madrid manager José Mourinho said this when asked, “Cristiano is a player who does not have the culture of the swimming pool, he has no culture of simulation, he is a British-trained player, Ferguson trained. In some cases, the simulators are given more protection, and those who are honest are often the losers. I’m not a hypocrite if I say that they (defenders) hit Cristiano very hard and that the yellow cards do not arrive or are slow in coming.” Despite this, Ronaldo’s manager at Manchester United, Sir Alex Ferguson did criticize him, early in his career, for being selfish and too flamboyant.

Messi has, however, denied any rivalry between the two, saying, “It is only the media, the press, who wants us to be at loggerheads but I’ve never fought with Cristiano.” In 2012 Ronaldo said of his rival, “I think we push each other sometimes in the competition, this is why the competition is so high.”

So, it seems that between the players there is no rift. Ronaldo, when asked about his relationship with Messi: “We don’t have a relationship outside the world of football, just as we don’t with a lot of other players,” he remarked, although he did add that in years to come he hopes they can both look on the “rivalry” and laugh about it together. “We have to look on this rivalry with a positive spirit because it’s a good thing,” he said.

On the Jonathan Ross Show (a UK chat show) in 2015 presenter, Ross asked Ronaldo about his son, Cristiano Ronaldo Jr., and what Ronaldo would do if he came home with a Messi tattoo on his arm. Ronaldo shrugged nonchalantly and said, “No problem. If he does that, he is smart because he knows his good players,” to which the British crowd gave him a massive round of applause.

There will always be rumors flying around when it comes to great sportsmen. You only have to look at Ali-Frazier or Borg-McEnroe to find some good ones. A funny one was going around back in the early 2000s. Messi was attending one of his many interviews when he was asked by one of the reporters what he thought of the comments made by Ronaldo that he was told by God to play football. Messi smiled at this, thought for a little while before shaking his head and replied, “I don’t remember telling him that.” The gathered journalists were in hysterics. Whether this is true or not, it is still a funny anecdote and shows the rivalry, whether true or not, of the two players.

In a debate at the Oxford Union in the UK, in October of 2013, then-FIFA president Sepp Blatter was asked whether he preferred Ronaldo or Messi. Blatter praised the work ethic of the Argentine before taking a swipe at Ronaldo, claiming “one of them has more expenses for the hairdresser than the other.” Real Madrid demanded an apology and was promptly given one.

Not one to shirk away from controversy, in a game against La Liga side Sevilla, Ronaldo gave a mock-salute after scoring a penalty after Blatter had described him as a “commander” on the pitch (possibly claiming Ronaldo was bossy and demanding).

Chapter 5: Personally Speaking

Ronaldo's father, José, was a known alcoholic. In 2005, he passed away from an alcohol-related liver condition. He was just 52. On his death, Ronaldo was quoted as saying, "I'm not complaining. It's the life. Of course, as I say in my movie (released in November of 2015), I wish to have a better dad in that way (but) it is what it is. I have to respect the decisions he made, the decisions I made in my life, and I'm happy because it (taught) me many things, him and my mum and my brothers and I'm a happy man, you know, I just have him in my mind all the time but it's good that life is like that. And we have to respect, and when I speak about him, I feel so proud because he (taught) me many things and it's great. I'm not unhappy; I'm so happy."

A month after his father had died, in October, an allegation broke, claiming that he had raped a woman at a central London Hotel after Manchester United had played Fulham the day before. The woman claimed she had been raped in the penthouse suite of the hotel in question. After being interviewed, Ronaldo was released on bail pending further inquiries. He denied the charges and after an investigation had taken place those charges were dropped by Scotland Yard in November 2005. Ronaldo issued a statement saying, "I have always strongly maintained my innocence of any wrong-doing, and I am glad that this matter is at an end so that I can concentrate on playing for Manchester United."

On June 17, 2010, Ronaldo became a father for the first time. His son was named Cristiano Ronaldo Jr. and nicknamed "Cristianinho" by family members. Cristiano Jr. was born in the United States and for a while the baby's mother was unknown. Although her name was not reported, it is understood that she was a waitress and was given \$15.1 million to sign a confidentiality agreement and give Ronaldo permanent guardianship. Ronaldo has told his son that he will reveal his mother's identity when he is 18. There were further rumors of a second son, also born in the US, but these were quickly quashed by his mother, Dolores Aveiro.

His other conquests have included: English models Alice Goodwin and Gemma Atkinson, Big Brother UK star, Imogen Thomas, and socialite Paris

Hilton. Since 2010, he has been dating Russian model Irina Shayk, who he met through their Armani Exchange campaigns. They both appeared on the cover of Vogue's Spanish edition in 2014 but unfortunately split up in January of 2015.

Ronaldo says he doesn't drink. In July 2008 he sued British tabloid newspaper, The Daily Mirror, for substantial damages when they published an article titled, "Ron The Lash." (In the UK, if you go out with the intention of drinking alcohol you are said to be, "On the lash"). The newspaper claimed that Ronaldo had gone to a nightclub and had become intoxicated on £10,000 bottles of champagne and vodka, having already drunk four glasses of red wine at a meal earlier that evening. This was while he was recovering from an ankle injury and on crutches. The newspaper claimed he had gone on to the dance floor where he had thrown down his crutches and danced around on his good foot. He won an undisclosed fee as he claimed he had indeed been at the nightclub but had not touched any alcohol. The newspaper apologized to him. Ronaldo claimed that he had been vindicated and now saw the matter as closed.

Ronaldo has stated in the past that he does not like having entourages around him as he is a private person, but he does have a few close friends. He says he prefers to train alone, as well, as it fits in with his independent way of living. "In football, I don't have a lot of friends," he has been quoted as saying, "People I really trust? Not many. Most of the time I'm alone. I consider myself an isolated person."

He, along with all of his family are Roman Catholics. He does not have any tattoos as it would prevent him from giving blood which he does several times a year.

In August of 2015 he decided he wanted somewhere new to stay, so, while in New York he bought an \$18.5 million loft in Trump Tower.

American business magazine, Forbes, has twice ranked Ronaldo first on their list of the highest-paid football players. In 2013-14 his total earnings, including salaries, bonuses, and off-field earnings were in the region of \$73 million. The following year this had gone up to \$79 million and put him behind only boxing middleweight, Floyd Mayweather Jr. as the world's

highest-paid athlete.

SportsPro rated him the fifth most marketable athlete in 2012, with Barcelona's Neymar topping the list and in 2014 he was listed in Time 100, Time magazine's annual list of the most influential people in the world. June 2016 saw him voted the world's most famous athlete by ESPN.

Being so famous and marketable saw sponsors clamoring for his signature, including US sports giant, Nike. Ronaldo has, though, worn Nike Mercurials all his football life, switching between the Vapor and the Supply, depending on which is the top-tier model at the time. Nike has, since 2010, created boots especially for Ronaldo, the first of which was the Superfly II Safari CR7 (a bit of a mouthful but they sell!).

He has also been sponsored by Coca-Cola, Emporio Armani, Castrol, Banco Espírito Santo, Motorola, Jacob & Co, KFC, Tag Heuer, Fly Emirates, Samsung, Herbalife, and Pokerstars.

He has also been the face of video games such as Pro Evolution Football 2008, Pro Evolution Football 2012 and Pro Evolution Football 2013. He also features in EA Sports' FIFA video game series as well as the spin-off franchise FIFA Street, appearing in every game since FIFA Football 2004 and on the cover of FIFA Street 2. The previous series features Ronaldo's "Thigh Flex" (FIFA 13), "The Bear" (FIFA 14), "Calm Down" (FIFA 14) and "Right Here. Right Now" (FIFA 15) celebrations.

As far as social media is concerned, he has over 49 million Twitter followers, 87 million Instagram followers, and 119 million Facebook followers. Totaling over 255 million followers.

He has had several books written about him, including his autobiography entitled *Moments*, which was published in 2007 and has appeared in several documentaries, namely *Cristiano Ronaldo: The World at His Feet*, narrated by actor Benedict Cumberbatch. There was also *Ronaldo*, a movie about his life and career. This was released in November of 2015.

Chapter 6: Good Causes

The devastation that the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami caused shocked the world. An eight-year-old boy, named Martunis, wearing a No. 7 Portuguese football shirt was orphaned amongst the chaos that ensued. He was stranded for 19 days after his mother and two brothers were killed during the aftermath and was forced to drink puddle water and eat noodles he had found lying on the beach. Journalists finally found him but so dehydrated was he that he needed to be put on a saline drip. A member of the Save the Children team who had taken him to the hospital had remarked that had he been found just one day later he probably would not have survived.

On seeing the destruction on television Ronaldo visited Martunis' village of Banda Aceh, in Indonesia, and met the young boy. Martunis told Ronaldo how he was playing football at the time of the 9.3 magnitude tremor. Ronaldo was later heard telling reporters, "I believe many adults would not be able to deal with what he has gone through. We must respect him. His was an act of strength and maturity. He is a special kid." Immediately, he began raising funds for rehabilitation and reconstruction of the area. Martunis' home was finally rebuilt by money raised by the Portuguese FA and by Ronaldo's fundraising efforts. Martunis was eventually reunited with his father.

Eleven years after the Tsunami struck, Sporting Lisbon, of Portugal, who had nurtured Ronaldo in his younger days (as well as Luís Figo), signed Martunis to their football academy. Martunis, now 17, had pursued his dream of becoming a football player despite his struggles. And they had come true.

Ronnie sued another British newspaper, The Sun, in 2008. He won and donated the undisclosed fee to a charity from his hometown of Madeira. Later in the year, he was devastated by news that his mother, Dolores, had been diagnosed with breast cancer. Fortunately, the lump was removed successfully and Dolores made a full recovery. As a thank you to the hospital that saved his mother's life, Ronaldo gave them \$234,000, so that they could build a cancer center on the island of Madeira where they were based.

In 2012, Cristiano sold his 2011 Golden Boot. He received €1.5 million (\$1.7

million) and gave the lot to Gaza to enable them to fund schools for their children. A month later, in December, he joined the “11 for Health” program, which raised awareness amongst children, teaching them how to steer clear of such conditions as drug addiction, HIV, Malaria, and obesity.

He also appeared in FIFA’s “11 against Ebola” campaign with a selection of other famous football players, including Neymar (Barcelona), Gareth Bale (Real Madrid), Xavi (Barcelona), and Didier Drogba (at the time of English side, Chelsea). The campaign slogan was, “Together We Can Beat Ebola.” It was done in conjunction with the Confederation of African Football and health experts, with the players holding up eleven messages to raise awareness of the disease and ways to combat it.

The following year he became the Save the Children’s new Global Artist Ambassador. He said he hoped to fight child hunger and obesity. He is also the ambassador for the Mangrove Care Forum in Indonesia, an organization aimed at raising awareness of mangrove conservation. In 2015, he was named the world’s most charitable sportsperson.

Ronaldo opened a museum in 2013. It was built to celebrate his life and football career and holds all his cups, trophies, and memorabilia. It is based in his hometown of Funchal, Madeira and is called Museu CR7.

In January of 2014 the President of Portugal, Aníbal Cavaco Silva, raised Cristiano to the rank of Grand Officer of the order of Prince Henry, “to distinguish an athlete of world renown who has been a symbol of Portugal globally, contributing to the international projection of the country and setting an example of tenacity for future generations.”

On top of all this generosity, he donated his entire €600,00 (\$660,000) Champions League bonus to various charities, after Real Madrid won the 2015-16 Champions League final beating Atlético Madrid 5-3 on penalties after a 1-1 draw.

Chapter 7: What Next?

Ronaldo is now 31. He still has several years left as a football player with most now retiring in their late thirties. But the question must have entered his head. What happens after football?

Well, he is known for his fashion sense and is considered by many to be a fashion icon. In 2006, he opened his first fashion boutique on the island of Madeira, under the name CR7 (his initials and shirt number). Such was the success of the boutique; a further store was opened two years later in Lisbon. Some of his items include diamond-studded belts, jeans with leather pockets, and patented buckled loafers. He expanded his brand, CR7, with a line of shirts and shoes. He also has a range of underwear and socks, which he co-designed with New York fashion designer, Richard Chai, and he recently brought out a fragrance, in partnership with Eden Perfumes called Legacy (which smells gorgeous, by the way!).

But, of course, this is never enough for Cristiano. He has now opened a chain of high-end hotels, naming them CR7. The first three will be located in Funchal, Lisbon, and Madrid, with a fourth planned, surprisingly, for New York. The chain will be in partnership with Portugal's Pestana Hotel Group.

On the subject, Ronaldo stated, "My job is to play football, but life won't always be like this. I have to dedicate myself to this new project, and I have the best team in the world, around me, to do it. I am young, but I feel very fulfilled, so this project is exciting for me. I'm thinking about my future, my son and my family."

The first hotel is scheduled to open in his hometown of Madeira, sometime in the summer of 2016. It will be followed by Lisbon, later in the year. The Madrid site is due to be opened sometime in 2017.

When asked about his input into the project, Ronaldo joked, "I will look after the beds!" before adding, "I will have the opportunity to be present as all the projects unroll but, of course, I don't have much time available at the present, but this is all about quality. And I like to be around quality. I'm certain that

this investment is surely one of the safest deals that I can capitalize on for my future. We were considering only one hotel initially, so to start with four locations is a big kick-off. It's like playing for the first time and suddenly scoring lots of goals. This came about naturally, and it made me feel good about this project, that's why when you ask about the future, I don't know."

Many were surprised that he had no intentions of opening a hotel in Manchester, where he has some of his fondest memories, but there is to be a hotel opening in New York in 2017, sparking rumors of a possible move to the MLS, possibly with either the New York City FC or New York Red Bulls. Strength was further added to the stories after buying a condo in New York.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

And there you have it. Facts, figures, and stories of arguably the world's greatest football star.

It is quite amazing to see all these honors and goals and believe that one person could have achieved so much. You couldn't make it up if you tried. It is even more remarkable, given the fact that he is still relatively young, at 31. And those records are sure to be broken further still. As stated earlier, injuries permitting, he could go for another five or six years. And then what? What records will have been broken by then? Who knows.

It is true that as he has got older his temper has leveled. He is an all-round better player now, and if he lost the arrogance and aggression (which he claims is not arrogance but, instead, a competitive nature), he might improve more.

But then, would that be Cristiano Ronaldo? No, it wouldn't. It would be another Messi. Now, there's nothing wrong with being another Messi. He is a fantastic football player; one of the best in the world, in fact. We all know that. But, he wouldn't be Cristiano Ronaldo, would he? And we need Cristiano Ronaldos in the world. No. Scratch that. We just need THE Cristiano Ronaldo in the world.

About the Author

Benjamin Southerland is a lifelong Chicagoland resident. Southerland developed a strong interest for politics and government during his college years through his study of leaders who have shaped history, such as Winston Churchill, Napoleon, and Thomas Jefferson. Southerland is also interested in individuals who have impacted the world of sports and entertainment. He has studied and written about politicians, world leaders, athletes, and celebrities. He researches these fascinating figures extensively in order to determine what has shaped their worldviews and contributed to their success. He aims for his books to give readers a deep understanding of the achievements, inspirations, and goals of the world's most influential individuals. Follow Benjamin Southerland at his website benjaminsoutherland.com to learn about his latest books.