Birth and Nickname Origin: Pelé was born on October 23, 1940, in Três Corações, Brazil. His real name is Edson Arantes do Nascimento; he was named after the inventor Thomas Edison. His nickname, Pelé, which he disliked at first, is said to have no meaning, though it's become synonymous with football excellence.

Early Career: Pelé's soccer talent was evident from a young age. He began playing for Santos at age 15 and became the top scorer in the league just one year later. His tenure with Santos Futebol Clube lasted nearly two decades, during which he scored a stunning 643 goals in 659 official matches, a record that stood for decades.

World Cup Brilliance: Pelé is the only player to have won three FIFA World Cups, in 1958, 1962, and 1970, a feat that remains unmatched. He scored six goals in the 1958 tournament alone, including a hat-trick in the semifinals and two goals in the final, helping Brazil clinch its first World Cup victory.

Scoring Record: Pelé's official goal tally is 757 goals in 812 matches, which includes games for Santos, the New York Cosmos, and the Brazilian national team. Including unofficial friendlies and tours, he scored a staggering total of 1,283 goals in 1,363 games, which is listed in the Guinness World Records.

Ambassador for Sport and Humanity: Pelé has served as a global ambassador for soccer and humanitarian causes. The United Nations appointed him a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador. He has used his fame to fight for improved conditions for the poor in Brazil and throughout the world.

Retirement and Comeback: After retiring from Brazilian football in 1974, Pelé was persuaded to come out of retirement to play for the New York Cosmos in the North American Soccer League (NASL). His presence and star power did wonders for the popularity of soccer in the United States.

Cultural Icon: Beyond his football prowess, Pelé has become a cultural icon. His life story has been depicted in movies and books, and he has been the subject of numerous songs in Brazil. His name is often used as a benchmark for greatness in football.

Innovative Play Style: Pelé was known for his powerful shooting ability, exceptional dribbling and passing, and profound understanding of the game. His play was characterized by his creativity, and he is credited with inventing several moves, including the 'Pelé run around,' where he would use his speed and guile to bypass opponents.

Recognition and Awards: Among his many accolades, Pelé was named the Athlete of the Century by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1999 and was included in TIME magazine's list of the 100 most important people of the 20th century.

Legacy and Impact on Football: Pelé has left an indelible mark on football. His influence on the game is seen not just in his records and titles but in the joy and artistic expression he brought to the sport. Many players, including contemporary greats, cite Pelé as an inspiration for their own careers.