

GEORGE BEST



Born:	22 May 1946
Signed:	22 May 1963
Debut:	14 Sept 1963 v West Brom (H) League
Goals total:	179
Appearances total:	470
Position:	Forward

"If I'd been born ugly, you'd never have heard of Pelé." Many a true word is spoken in jest, and few would argue that George Best was the most naturally gifted footballer Britain has produced.

Speed, balance, vision, superb close control, the ability to create chances and score from seemingly impossible situations tells half the story. The other half was an uncontainable zest for the game as it should be played, a ceaseless trickery and joy. Pelé, for his part, dubbed United's no.7 "the greatest player in the world."

A skinny teenager from Belfast's Cregagh estate, Best was spotted by United scout Bob Bishop, who famously told Matt Busby: "Boss, I think I've found you a genius".

Having fought off initial homesickness, Best turned professional on his 17th birthday in May 1963, made his debut in September – and scored on his second appearance. A first cap for Northern Ireland swiftly followed.

In 1964/65, alongside Denis Law, Bobby Charlton and David Herd, Best was a key figure in the Reds' first title triumph since the pre-Munich era.

The following season he almost single-handedly destroyed Benfica in the European Cup quarter-final in their own back yard. After scoring twice in a 5-1 success to inflict the Lisbon giants' first home defeat in Europe he was dubbed 'El Beatle'.