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ROY OF THE ROVERS®



FOOTBALL WRITING KIT

A writing activity guide for football-loving kids

by Rocky and Roy Race

CHAPTER ONE

CREATE YOUR OWN FOOTBALL TEAM

Introducing Roy and Rocky Race



Hi, I'm
Rocky.

And I'm
Roy.

We've made this workbook for you to do at home.

Life is empty without football, so I
thought this might help you.

"I" thought? You mean WE?

Yeah, yeah. Sorry. I mean we.

But the readers will quickly work
out who's the brains, Roy.

What does that mean?

Don't worry about it, brother.
Just keep talking. You were saying?

I... we... we think it'd be good if you did some
of this workbook with the help of your family and
friends. Maybe over the internet with a football-
loving relative you've not seen for a bit via Skype.
Or at home.

And, why do we think it's good
to work with others, Roy?

Well, I wouldn't have made it as
a footballer without the help of my
coaches and teammates. And even
more importantly, my mum and dad.
Even my sister helped a bit...

You really have no idea, Roy.
You'd be nothing without me.

Eh?

So, have a look. Set up your own football team.
Build a football stadium. Make up stories about it.

We've planned it to make it more fun.

I did that bit... didn't I, Roy.
The planning?

Well, yeah. But I...

But what?
But maybe it's time to stop
talking about yourself, Roy?
You think?

Fine.
(She's like this all the time.
I'm sorry...)



Create your own football team

Making up characters

by Roy Race



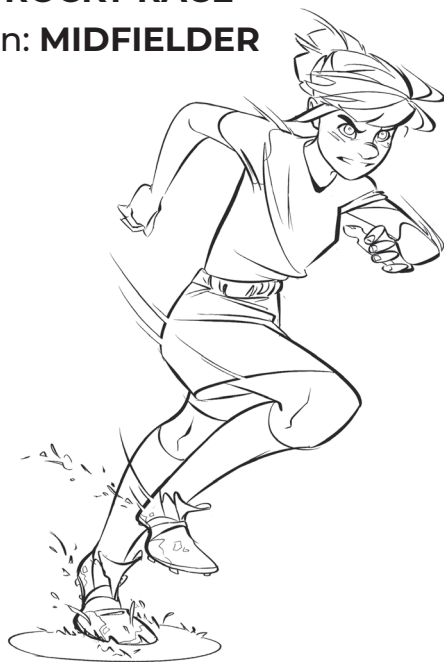
When I was younger and stuck at home, I used to invent my own football teams. I'd put in my favourite Melchester Rovers players. I'd include mega-players like Messi and Haaland, but I'd be striker. My dad would be in there too. Then I'd add a couple of my friends. And Rocky.

Then I used to make up stories about our games.

What really helped was having a team of interesting players to choose from. I knew who they were, what they looked like, what they played like and where they were on the pitch.

Name: **ROCKY RACE**

Position: **MIDFIELDER**



1. Short, dark-haired, strong
2. A dream teammate who will back you 100%
3. A nightmare sister, who will steal food off your plate

I'd draw their pictures. Note their position on the field. I'd also jot down three things about them, good and bad. It made them more real if I was able to see them. A bit like my own Match Attax® team.

Create your own football team

Now it's time for you to create your dream team. You can select anyone you want. Your favourite footballers. Players from the past. Your best friends and family. Even your pet.

And don't forget to put yourself in there too.

Fill in each box with the name of your player and three of their qualities. Then draw their picture to illustrate it.

Why not cut these out and create your own team formations!

Name:

Position:

1.

2.

3.

Name:

Position:

1.

2.

3.

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Position:

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Position:

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Name:

Position:

1.

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Coming next: Design your own football club!

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CHAPTER TWO

DESIGN YOUR OWN FOOTBALL CLUB

Design your own football club

Creating a setting

by Rocky Race



What sort of a football team do you play for or support?

What sort of a football team do you WANT to play for or manage?

Stop now and think of **the places you've played and watched football** – either live or on TV.

I play for a women's football team at the local sport centre. Big metal fences around the pitch to keep the ball from flying in the canal. 4G pitches. Smelly communal changing rooms. But all that will change when Melchester Rovers have a women's team...

Anyway... back to you. Make a **quick list of three things you've admired at other football clubs** that you'd like your football club and stadium to have.

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

Have a look at what you've put. You were probably a bit more imaginative than me when I did it. I mostly put things you could **see**. But there's more to a stadium than what you can see.

Have another think. **Now try to include the other senses in your stadium description.** And, if you've not been in a football stadium, ask someone you know who has.

Here goes. In a football stadium what can you:

Smell (*for example, my brother, Roy's, stinking kit after training – like rotting zombie corpses*)

Smell _____

Hear _____

Taste _____

See _____

Feel _____

I was talking to the guy who writes our fiction books – Tom Palmer – and he said if you describe place using more than one of your senses, then it evokes that place better. I had to ask him what evokes meant. He said it means it's **the things that make the reader feel like they are really there.**

And I suppose that makes sense when you are writing about football: you do want the reader to feel like they are there.

Design your own football club

Here are pictures of two places I've watched and played football.



Mel Park, where I watch
Melchester Rovers.

The local sports centre where I
made my debut for Sowerby FC.



What will yours look like? You can draw it like a stadium. In 3d. Or you can do it like a plan from above. If you want to see some examples look online and search 'football stadia' or 'football stadia plan' you get some really good examples.

You might want to name the stadium and the stands after things that are really important to you.

Try to add some of the other things you listed on the previous page. Can you put arrows pointing to where you came up with an idea from each of your senses?



Now you have a football club full of players and a stadium, characters for your setting. In the next section we'll help you think up some ideas for what is going to happen to your team.

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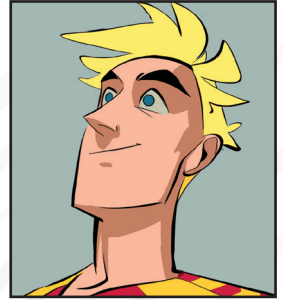
CHAPTER THREE

UPS AND DOWNS

Ups and Downs

Planning

by Roy Race



We have a song at Mel Park. It goes like this:

*We've been through it all together
And we've had our ups and downs
We're going to stay with you forever
At least until the world stops going round*

Ups and downs. You get a lot of them in football. **Every team beats a big rival in the last minute sometimes.** There's always the chance of a giant-killing in the cup.

If you want to write an exciting story, however, events can't just keep getting better and better. **Things have to go wrong.** Without things going wrong, stories are boring. Even the greatest teams on the Earth have downs. Take Brazil losing 7-1 to Germany in the 2014 World Cup semi-final. At home. Ooof!

My writers have given me the following storylines recently:

- I am sent off for a handball that I didn't even do.
- They forced me to sign for the club I hate most in the world, Tynecaster United.
- They sent my girlfriend, Ffion, to live in America.

Horrible for me. But it **makes the stories more exciting**, I suppose.

So... have a go at it yourself now. Here's your next exercise. This is where you can begin to generate the highs and lows for your fictional football team.

First of all, think of three dramatic things that have happened to that football team – that you play for or support – since you started with them.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Now ask three other football fans their footballing dramas, happy or sad:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

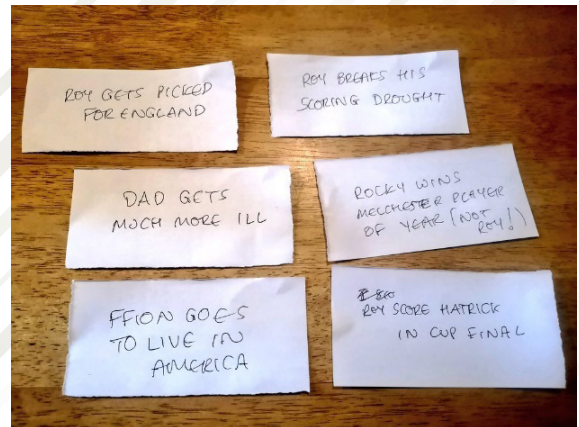
This is how believable stories are born. Real things that you can turn into stories.

Ups and Downs

Right. It's time for you to make up your own story. You've got lots of good ideas above. Now to make it all into a story – or a “plot” as your teachers might want to call it.

When Tom Palmer writes a book, he scribbles down all the dramatic things – good and bad – that could happen in his story. He gets one piece of paper and tears it into six pieces. Then he writes three good things that could happen to me. And three bad.

Once Tom has done this, he organises the pieces of paper into an order that makes sense. Then me and the other characters in the *Roy of the Rovers* books can have ups and downs and it makes it an exciting story.



So, now it's your turn to plan like Tom Palmer.

1. Get a sheet of paper.
2. Tear it into six pieces.
3. Write some of the good and bad things that you wrote down on the previous page, then apply them to your fictional football team.
4. Now try them out in different orders, swapping them around.
5. Remove ones that don't fit in.
6. Add new ones if you want to.

Until you have a zigzag of 6 or more events that could happen in a story. Now write them here in order.

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

There. Well done. **That's a plot you've got for your story.** It might look like a list of stuff now, but it is really useful. You know how your spine keeps you upright and alive? It's a bit like that. Your story's got a spine now.

Next up, you need to work out how your characters are going to react to these dramatic events. My sister will do the next session. So watch out. If anyone is going to react dramatically... it's Rocky.

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CHAPTER FOUR

MAKE YOUR CHARACTERS ARGUE

Make your characters argue

Conflict

by Rocky Race



My dad used to be able to speak. Then he got ill. When he could speak he used to say a lot of helpful things to me:

There are events, he told me once. **And there's how people react to them.**

Think about it.

A player on the opposing team fouls you brutally. That's the **event**.

Next is how you react. The clever **reaction** to do is to get up and wait for the referee to send the player off.

But I don't do that. I lose it. I see red. And I **react** badly. I know... I need to work on it...

Ask yourself a couple of questions. **What would you do if you got fouled really badly?** What would be the best thing for you to do for the team? Leave it to the ref or start a fight? Characters react to events in different ways. That's what makes stories interesting.

Now it's your turn to react to an event. Here are some of the things that have happened in the *Roy of the Rovers* books. What would you do in each situation?

ONE. Dad is sad. A good way to cheer him up is to wind my brother up. I could snatch a sausage off Roy's plate and eat it to make dad laugh. (Childish, but funny.)

Would you steal the sausage and annoy one person to make the other laugh?

TWO. Some important documents are our football club chairman's car and if we can get them we'll save the club. If we don't the club will go out of business.

Do you break the law to save our team?

THREE. Melchester Rovers can't play at Mel Park after it burned down. We are invited to play at our hated rival's stadium for free. But we hate the stadium and the team.

Do you play there or not?

Now find someone else to ask. Ask a few. And when you find a person that you disagree with find out WHY they're going to do what they say. And think WHY you're going to differently.

The WHY is really important in a story. There's something called motivation. It means the reason they did something. **If you believe a character's motivation it will make your story much better.**

Make your characters argue

Which are the two most dramatic scenarios you've made up in the last section of this workbook, in the last section? One good thing. One bad thing.

Now choose two of the main players / characters on your team and give them completely different reactions to the events.

For instance

The documents that could save Melchester Rovers are locked in a car in the chairman's garden.

ROY won't take them because it's wrong to steal. That means his football team will no longer exist.

ROCKY breaks into the car, takes the documents, gives them to the newspapers and Mel Rovers are saved.

That's two very different reactions. You can see how Rocky and Roy might have argued about what was the best thing to do.

Now you have a go putting your dramatic event in the first box and the different reactions of two of your characters in the second and the third.

How did it go? You could try out a few more of your dramatic events on another piece of paper if you want to.

So now you have set your characters against each other. It means you have some tension in the story and more people are going to enjoy it.

And in the next session... one of the most exciting things about writing. The dialogue – the things people say.

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CHAPTER FIVE

MAKING YOUR CHARACTERS TALK

Making your characters talk

Dialogue

by Roy Race



Making your characters speak in a story is difficult. Your teachers might call it **dialogue**. You know the “*she said*”, “*he asked*”, “*she exclaimed*” bits.

But how can you make what your characters say sound realistic?

One way is to get help from Roy of the Rovers comic book script writer, Rob Williams. That's what Tom Palmer does when he is writing fiction.

This is a comic book page by Rob Williams:



Making your characters talk

This is a page of dialogue by Tom Palmer:

Roy saw the owl and smiled faintly. It reminded him of when his dad would take him and his sister on late night nature walks. When he was younger. But Roy was not a child any more. Times had changed. He was here for a different reason.

‘This is your plan?’ Paco went on. ‘Breaking and entering. I would rather go to Germany on loan than go to prison, Roy Race.’

For the thousandth time, Roy questioned what they were about to do. Breaking. And entering. Into Mel Park. It was illegal. It was immoral. It was irresponsible. But that didn’t mean it was wrong. It didn’t mean that – if this worked – then his and Paco’s world, Melchester Rovers’ world and even the whole world would not be a better place.

Roy coughed quietly before he said to Paco what he had said to himself over and over.

‘The reports say that the final contracts for our transfers have gone missing. They have to be in Cleaver’s office. Along with, I’ll bet, proof of all sorts of dodgy stuff. If we can get in there we can, I dunno, maybe prove to the league that rovers have done nothing wrong? Maybe we can play again!’

Then a noise.

The crunch of a stone under a boot. The flick of gravel against the wooden fence. An intake of breath.

Can you see how Tom has based his prose storytelling on the comic book dialogue of Rob Williams and his illustrator, Lisa Henke?

Tom only does this for the parts of his story that overlap with Rob’s comic books, but it is a really useful way of learning how to write better dialogue.

Now you have a go.

Making your characters talk

Here is a page from Rob Williams' *Roy of the Rovers* comic books. I've rubbed out all the things Rocky and I say, so that you can fill it in. It's up to you what they say. It's your story. You could even do it twice. One where I look good. The other where Rocky looks good.



You could try to make it into a written story. So use the dialogue and the pictures to write a short story. There is an example of how to do this on Tom Palmer's website here:
<https://www.tompalmer.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Roy-worksheet-2020.pdf>

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CHAPTER SIX

KICKING OFF

Kicking Off

How to start a story
by Rocky Race



Imagine you're taking a kick off in a football match with a teammate. The team mate taps the ball to you. Now you have to choose what to do next.

The crowd is roaring with anticipation: this is the beginning. It's up to you to set the tone for the whole game. But the opposition are already closing you down. How do you feel? A touch panicky?

I feel like that when I have to start writing a story or an essay at school. Do you know what I mean? The blank page. Your head goes empty. You panic. It's horrible. And it's REALLY normal.

But back to football for a minute. Think about what you might do with the ball at kick off in a football game. List three ideas here:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

Kicking off a story is quite similar to kicking off a football game. Look at these three sentences. Each sentence is the very first sentence in the *Roy of the Rovers* books that Tom Palmer writes:

Imagine this. You're playing up front for the team you've supported all your life.

Circle whether you think this beginning is like a **DREAM COME TRUE**, a **DISASTER**, or a **MYSTERY**.

The second he heard the final whistle Roy Race slumped to the ground and closed his eyes.

Circle whether you think this beginning is like a **DREAM COME TRUE**, a **DISASTER**, or a **MYSTERY**..

A hard bright moon illuminated the scene. Two figures moved stealthily...

Circle whether you think this beginning is like a **DREAM COME TRUE**, a **DISASTER**, or a **MYSTERY**.

There are three different ways to start a story above already. Another way you can start a story is with an **ARGUMENT**:

Kicking Off

'That's a penalty: you fouled me!'
'No way. You dived. It was obvious.'

Or a QUESTION:

'Where's my Xbox controller?' Roy roared. Some one's hidden it.

Think of other books you have read. How do they start? Go and have a look. Try and work out how other authors like to grab their readers' attention.

Your challenge is to make up three sentences that start stories in three different ways. Why not use the characters you've made up in previous chapters? You could also use the ups and downs you wrote for them too!

To help, I've done an example for each one.

QUESTION 1

Have one of your characters ask another character a challenging question.

MY GO: Why aren't you in your football strip? Coach raged. Kick off is in ten minutes.

YOUR GO: _____

QUESTION 2

Have one of your characters ask another character a challenging question.

MY GO: Why aren't you in your football strip? Coach raged. Kick off is in ten minutes.

YOUR GO: _____

STRIVING FOR SOMETHING

Give your character something to aim for. Start there.

Rocky ran hard. She had to do it. She was desperate to reach the top of the hill before her brother.

YOUR GO: _____

Can you think of other ways to start a story? See how many you can work up!

Now for session seven: Keeping your reader interested!

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CHAPTER SEVEN

KEEPING THE READER'S ATTENTION

Keeping the reader's attention

On the edge of your seat

by Roy Race



Do you watch Match of the Day? Or highlights of football games? Maybe you always watch the whole 90 minutes? Which do you like best?

If I'm watching Melchester Rovers – when I'm not in the team! – **I like to watch the whole game.** If it's not my team though, I prefer highlights. That way I don't lose interest.

Quick quiz for you! Name five different pieces of football action that you might see in highlights, like a goal, or a corner, or a free-kick, or a penalty!

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

Here are mine: **goals, saves, fouls, penalties** and **VAR decisions**. Do you agree? These bits aren't usually boring.

But what about stories? Let's face it, sometimes books and stories can be a little boring...

Here's a list of ten things you might find in a typical fiction book. As you go through the list, decide whether you think each one is **exciting**, **boring**, or **somewhere in the middle**, and circle the numbers you'd rather **not** read too much of:

1. Car chase
2. Description of a setting
3. Cliffhanger
4. When someone is going where they're not supposed to be
5. A description of the weather
6. Conversation between two friends
7. Conversation between two enemies
8. A fight
9. A romantic dinner
10. The first five pages

I put 2, 5, 6 and 9 as not being very exciting. That's because I like action. How about you?

When you're writing **it's good to focus on what makes you excited**. If you're writing the kinds of things you want to read, then there's a good chance they are the kinds of things other readers will want to enjoy too.

Keeping the reader's attention

So, here's your chance to write some of the more exciting moments of football.

I'm going to be really nice to my sister, Rocky, now. I'm going to find extracts in books by Tom Palmer that describe key moments in her football career: Scoring a penalty, saving a goal, and committing a foul.

I've left a gap for you to describe – in 20 words or so – the same action for one of your characters you created earlier in this writing guide.

Rocky scores a penalty

Roy watched Rocky step back four paces, breathe in and out, eyes on her brother all the time, then run at the ball. Just as she was about to strike it Roy leapt with all his power to the top left corner. As he fell back to the ground, he looked down to see the ball slowly rolling over the line at the dead centre of the goal.

Now can you write one of your players scoring a penalty.

Rocky saves a certain goal

Rocky ran through her options in a split second. She identified that there was only one way to stop a certain Hebden goal. Block. So, with another explosion of adrenaline, Rocky threw herself down, full-length, in front of the ball as the Hebden striker lined up her shot. Next – in slower than slow motion – Rocky saw the underside of her opponent's boot coming at her head. Then she heard a crack.

Now can you get one of your players to save, block or tackle to prevent a goal?

Foul

Only Rocky had a chance of catching her before she reached the penalty area. But Rocky was behind her, no way she could clean tackle. With only the keeper to beat the Wibsey sub prepared to strike the ball just as Rocky lunged in, taking her legs.

Your turn now. Describe one of your players making a nasty tackle.

If you can try to write the highlights and the exciting bits when you're writing it should help you both enjoy it more – and write better. Good luck.

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CHAPTER EIGHT **HOW TO BE FIT TO WRITE**

How to be fit to write

Reading

by Rocky Race



Footballers don't just show up and play brilliantly, then go home and chill for a week until the next match. **They work really hard training all week throughout the year.** That's what makes them so good in matches.

Look at these two lists. Try to match what you can do **in training** with what it would help you achieve **on the pitch**. Draw a link to each training exercise!

TRAINING	ON THE PITCH
Training drills	Game stamina
Running	Power
Watch videos/read briefing notes	Avoid injury
Shooting practice	Control
Stretching	Know their opponents
Strength training in the gym	Scoring

Well done!

So, when it comes to it ... it's the same with writing.

You can become a better writer by practicing, and doing what you've been doing in this workbook. If you've got this far you'll definitely be a better writer than you were when you started!

But there is an even better way – and easier way – to become better at writing.

Read about what you love. If you love football: read about football.

How to be fit to write

This is what Tom Palmer said in an interview. Bear in mind he writes our books and he is the author of 50 books now.

'I really struggled with reading when I was at school. But it was reading about football in newspapers, magazines and books that helped me come to love reading. And, once I read for myself about football, I didn't find it as hard as I thought it would be.'

See. Just find something you want to read – not even a book! – and you can do better at writing.

Roy and I have listed our five favourite things to read below:

Rocky's top 5 reads

1. *She Kicks* – football magazine about the women's game
2. *The Girls FC* series by Helena Pielichaty
3. The BBC website football pages
4. *F2 World of Football Skills Book*
5. *Rocky* by Tom Palmer (Out October 2020!)

Roy's top 5 reads

1. *World Soccer* magazine
2. *Bend it like Beckham* by Narinder Dhami
3. *The Melchester Leader* newspaper
4. *Keeper* by Mal Peet
5. Harry Kane's biography

Well done! You've finished the Roy of the Rovers Football Writing Kit, and you've done amazingly well!

Now it's down to you what to do next. You've got characters, a football club, ups and down and all the other parts of writing we've been working on. Can you make a plan, then use one of your story starters to write your own story?

Good luck, let us know how you get on!

Rocky and Roy Race