

ENZO GATTO'S

SCOUTED!

CRISTIANO RONALDO

An Unofficial Sports Biography

by Magnus Lundgren

Enzo Gatto's Scouted! — Cristiano Ronaldo

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CRISTIANO RONALDO

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Meet Your Guides

Every great story needs great storytellers. Here's the team guiding you through this book.



ENZO GATTO — Your Scout

That's me. I'm a football scout — have been my whole life. I've traveled to every continent watching players, scribbling in my notebooks, and collecting stories. Think of me as the friend who's seen everything and can't wait to tell you about it.



PROFESSOR SOCCEROLOGIST — Numbers Nerd

Nobody knows the Professor's real name. What we DO know is that they have a brain full of statistics, a lab coat covered in football stickers, and an enthusiasm for numbers that borders on the medically concerning. Whenever you see a "BY THE NUMBERS" or "DATA LAB" box, that's the Prof.



NINA CRUZ — Skills Coach

Nina played professional football herself before becoming one of the sharpest tactical analysts in the game. She breaks down skills, techniques, and tactics in a way that actually makes sense. Whenever you see a "SKILL LAB" box, Nina's in charge.

CHAPTER 1

The Night Everything Changed



I've seen a lot of football in my life. I've watched matches in pouring rain in Manchester, under blazing sun in Rio, and in stadiums so loud I couldn't hear myself think. My name is Enzo Gatto, and I've spent my whole life traveling the world, scouting the greatest players on the planet. I've filled hundreds of notebooks with scribbled notes about wonderkids and superstars.

But I have never — *never* — seen anything like what happened in Paris on July 10, 2016.

. . .

It was the final of the European Championship. Portugal versus France. Eighty thousand fans packed into the Stade de France, the biggest stadium in the country. Millions more watching on TV screens from Lisbon to Tokyo.

I was there. Row 14 of the press area, squeezed between a Spanish journalist who smelled like coffee and a German reporter who kept muttering statistics under his breath. My notebook was open on my knee. I always bring a notebook. You never know what you're going to see.

The French fans were singing, waving flags, absolutely certain their team would win on home soil. The noise was immense — a rolling, crashing wave of sound that vibrated in your chest. The air was warm and thick and electric. You could feel something huge about to happen.

And there, wearing the captain's armband for Portugal, was the man this book is about.

Cristiano Ronaldo.

He was thirty-one years old. He'd already won three Champions League titles. He'd already won three Ballon d'Or trophies — the award they give to the best player on Earth. He'd scored hundreds and hundreds of goals. But there was one thing he'd never done. One thing that kept him up at night.

He had never won a trophy with Portugal.

Twelve years earlier, when he was just a teenager, Portugal had hosted the European Championship. They made it all the way to the final — and lost. The cameras found young Cristiano sobbing on the pitch, tears streaming down his face. He was nineteen. He promised himself: *one day, I'll put this right.*

Now, twelve years later, here he was again. Another final. One more chance.

The referee blew his whistle.

The game kicked off.

And then, in the eighth minute, everything fell apart.

. . .

A French player named Dimitri Payet came sliding in with a heavy tackle. His shoulder crashed into Ronaldo's left knee. Cristiano went down hard. The stadium gasped.

He got back up. He tried to run. You could see it on his face — the pain was screaming at him to stop, but his brain was screaming louder: *not tonight. Not now. Not after twelve years.*

He limped. He jogged. He tried to sprint and winced. The physios ran onto the pitch, once, twice, three times. Each time, Cristiano waved them away. He wasn't coming off. No chance.

But the knee wouldn't hold.

In the seventeenth minute, he sank to the grass. And for the second time at a European Championship final, Cristiano Ronaldo cried. Right there, in front of eighty thousand people and the whole watching world, tears poured down his face.

By the twenty-fifth minute, it was over. He was carried off the pitch on a stretcher, one arm draped over his eyes, his whole body shaking. His dream — twelve years in the making — was done.

Or so everyone thought.

. . .

Here's the thing about Cristiano Ronaldo, and it's the reason I wanted to write this book. Most people, if they got carried off on a stretcher in the biggest game of their life, would sit in the locker room. They'd put

ice on the knee, stare at the ceiling, and feel sorry for themselves.

Cristiano did the opposite.

He came back out. Knee strapped up, limping, unable to play a single minute more — but he came back to the sideline. And then he did something nobody expected.

He started coaching.

I'm not joking. He stood right behind Portugal's actual manager, Fernando Santos, and started *giving instructions*. Pointing. Shouting. Telling his teammates where to run, when to press, where the gaps were. Santos didn't stop him. How could you? This was Cristiano Ronaldo, and the fire in his eyes could have melted steel.

The television cameras caught every second of it. Millions of people around the world watched Cristiano Ronaldo coaching his team from the touchline, injured, strapped up, barely able to stand — and refusing to leave. His teammate José Fonte later admitted that the players on the pitch were so focused on the game that they didn't fully realize what Cristiano was doing until they watched the footage afterward. But the cameras saw it. And the whole world saw it.

. . .

The game dragged on. Ninety minutes. No goals. Extra time.

France poured forward. They hit the crossbar. They hit the post. Twice, I was sure the ball had crossed the line, and twice it somehow didn't. The Portuguese defense held on with everything they had — headers, blocks, last-ditch tackles, bodies thrown in front of shots. In the stands, Portuguese fans were biting their fingernails down to nothing. On the sideline, Cristiano was still hobbling up and down, bellowing instructions, his strapped-up knee completely forgotten.

I remember looking at the big screen around the 105th minute. They showed a close-up of Cristiano's face. His jaw was clenched so tight you could see the muscles twitching. His eyes were locked on the

pitch like a general watching a battle from a hilltop. If sheer willpower could score goals, he would have had a hat-trick from the touchline.

The clock hit 109 minutes. A Portuguese substitute named Éder — a player most people had barely heard of, a journeyman striker who'd bounced between clubs in Portugal, England, and France without ever quite finding a home — picked up the ball about twenty-five yards from goal. He held off a French defender, took one touch, and hit it. Low, hard, screaming across the grass — a twenty-five-yard drive that gave Hugo Lloris no chance. The ball flew past the goalkeeper and buried itself in the bottom corner of the net.

1-0 Portugal.

The stadium fell silent — except for one corner, where the Portuguese fans completely lost their minds.

And Cristiano? The man who'd been carried off crying two hours earlier? He erupted. Jumping, screaming, tears flowing again — but this time, tears of pure, uncontrollable joy. Portugal held on. The final whistle blew. They had done it. Portugal's first-ever major trophy.

During the trophy ceremony, as Cristiano was lifting the cup above his head with his good leg bearing all his weight, a moth landed on his face. A big, fat, gray moth — right on his cheek. He didn't flinch. He didn't brush it away. He just stood there, trophy above his head, moth on his face, grinning like a madman. The internet went crazy. Some people said the moth was the spirit of Portuguese football, finally at peace. I think it was just a moth. But it made a beautiful photograph.



BY THE NUMBERS

The Professor

Ah, greetings! The Professor is in. Let me adjust my glasses and give you the numbers on the Euro 2016 final — the night Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal became European champions:

- **25 minutes** — That's all Ronaldo played before his knee injury forced him off the pitch
- **12 years** — The gap between his Euro 2004 final heartbreak as a teenager and this moment of glory
- **109th minute** — When Portuguese substitute Éder's goal went in. That's just 11 minutes from a penalty shootout!
- **61** — Goals Ronaldo had scored for Portugal before this match. And yet, the biggest win of his international career came on a night he couldn't score at all.

Fascinating, isn't it? Sometimes the greatest victories have nothing to do with goals.

That night in Paris tells you everything you need to know about Cristiano Ronaldo. Not just the talent — you already know about that. But the *refusal to quit*. The stubbornness. In Italian, we have a word for it: *la grinta*. It means grit — a raw, almost savage refusal to accept defeat. I look for it in every player I scout. Almost nobody has it like Cristiano.

I closed my notebook after the final whistle. I hadn't written a single word during the game. That's never happened to me before. I was too caught up in it. Too amazed. Sometimes the best scouting report is no scouting report — just a memory burned into your brain forever.

How does someone get like that? How does a kid from a tiny island in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, a kid so poor his family could barely put food on the table, a kid who cried so much they called him “the cry-baby” — how does that kid become the greatest goalscorer the world has ever seen?

That's the story I want to tell you. And I'll tell it the way I tell all my stories — the way I've told them to scouts and managers in hotel lobbies and taxi rides and airport lounges for thirty years. With the details that matter. With the moments that tell you who a player really is.

And trust me, it starts in a place you'd never expect.

Let's go to Madeira.