

“Danny Harte is the Football Detective”



A pack to support reading for pleasure
the popular *Foul Play* series by Tom Palmer

About Tom Palmer



Dear Teacher or Librarian

I hope you enjoy this pack.

Best wishes

Tom Palmer

Tom Palmer is a football fan and writer. He didn't always do well at school, but once he got into reading about football – in newspapers, magazines and books – he decided to be a football writer.

He has written fourteen books for Puffin, including five in the Foul Play series, six in the Football Academy series and now two in the new spy series, The Squad. You can download free first chapters of all the books from www.tompalmer.co.uk/index.php?page_id=36

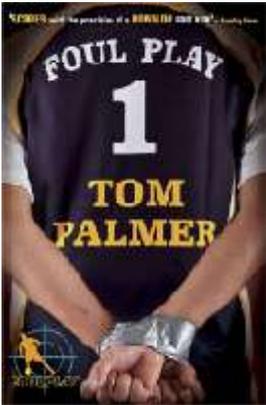
Tom is also a specialist in promoting reading. He visits hundreds of schools and libraries every year, up and down the UK, inspiring tens of thousands of children to enjoy reading for pleasure.

You can find lots more about Tom on his website www.tompalmer.co.uk, where he also writes a blog about his writing, his life and the schools he has visited.

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Anton Holt interviews Tom Palmer about writing Foul Play



Why did you write a crime book about football?

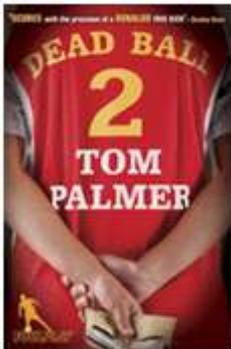
I was reading a lot of crime stories. I like them. At the same time I read a lot about football crimes in the newspaper. Kidnaps. Corruption. Fixed games. That sort of thing. It sort of came from that.

Why do you like reading crime books?

They're great. Lots of excitement and danger. But they make you think too. I like to read about detectives who slowly uncover a crime – and who get chased a few times in the process.

Have you ever been chased?

Yes. Twice. Once by Burnley fans, the other time by Everton fans. But I got away. It's not a nice feeling. When I write a chase scene. I always remember how it felt having eight Everton fans on my heels. You don't think. You just run. Whatever it takes to get away.



Did you have to go to Russia to research Dead Ball?

I did. Twice. The first time I got a tour of the Luzhiniki Stadium, where Man U won the 2008 Champions League final against Chelsea. I wanted to see the press room and the corridors under the stands, so I could get the book right. They showed me everything.

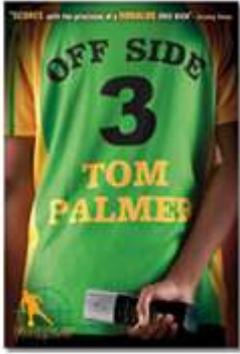
What about the second time?

The second time I saw a very rich man and his private army in a hotel bar. It was amazing to observe how they operated. Talking into microphones up their sleeves. All sitting on different tables, as if we didn't know they were working as a unit. And the best bit... they were all drinking carrot juice.

And how did that help the book?

It made it more realistic, I hope. I could never have imagined how a private army works. Lots of rich people in Russia have them. Also, I could describe the streets Danny walked on, and get a feel of a very different country to the UK.



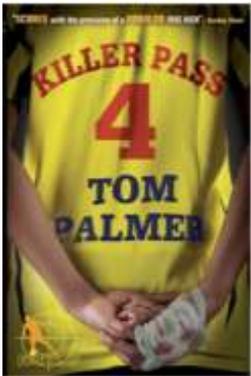


Why did you write about an African footballer in *Offside*?

I'd read a lot about how young players from Ghana and the Ivory Coast get cheated when they come to play in France and Belgium. I wondered what would happen if the same thing went on in the UK.

And you went to Ghana?

I did. It was amazing. I saw football games, watched a youth academy team and spent time with Man U's scout for Africa. It was awesome. I also saw some cocoa farms. Chocolate is a big part of the book.



What inspired you to write *Killer Pass*?

For a long time, real footballers have been being burgled. I wondered what Danny would do about this. I wanted to see if I could make up a story where he could solve a crime very close to home, based not abroad.

Two of the characters in *Killer Pass* are former footballers. Why did you do that?

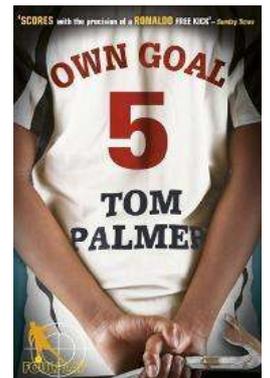
I have read about footballers and how they deal with life after giving up the game. A lot of players are not millionaires when they hang up their boots and many don't do so well. I have a read about a few who get involved with crime. That really interested me. How could someone go from being a professional footballer to being in prison.

Charlotte helps Danny a lot in *Killer Pass*. Is the series becoming more about a team of football detectives than just Danny?

Yes. I like the idea of more than one of them solving crimes. Charlotte is a great character and I wanted to give her the chance to grow a bit. But, in the end, Danny is the lead detective.

Why did you write *Own Goal* about someone trying to brainwash fans into supporting one football team?

Because lots of people these days support the big clubs and not their local team. I hoped writing the book might make fans think about who they support and why.



Foul Play Discussion Topics

From unscrupulous football chairmen to fair trade chocolate, Tom Palmer's *Foul Play* books are full of big topical issues as well as rollercoaster adventures, and readers will enjoy the chance to talk about some of the themes in greater detail. Here are ten issues from the books that you could raise with readers, each with some questions to ask to get the discussion going, plus some ideas for further reading if you want to learn more.

1 Real-life football crimes. The *Foul Play* stories are all fiction— but you don't have to look far in the sport to find even stranger goings-on!

What real-life wrongdoings can children think of? You could talk about some of the problems currently affecting the game—like match-fixing, dodgy chairmen and misbehaving players.

What can be done to clean up the game?

Read: *Foul Play 3 : Off Side* has a list of real football crimes at the back of the book.

2 Slavery. In *Foul Play 3 : Off Side*, young Ghanaian footballer Kofi is brought to England with promises of fame and fortune, and then abandoned to fend for himself. The trafficking of young Africans to football clubs in Europe via agents is a big problem, and has been compared to other forms of modern day slavery.

Is that fair?

Or does it prove that slavery is still a problem around the world? What can be done to stop it? You could use Black History Month (in October) as a chance to talk about slavery new and old.

Read: Julius Lester's *To Be a Slave* (Puffin) tells a slavery story brilliantly.

Visit: The official Black History Month website at www.blackhistorymonthuk.co.uk is packed with useful resources.

3 African football. Africa is full of talented players like Kofi in *Foul Play 3 : Off Side*, but no side from the continent has ever won a World Cup. Why is that?

Did any African countries have a chance of winning in 2010?

See how many real-life African football stars children can name, and use a map of the continent to see if they can identify the countries they come from.

Read: Tom Palmer recommends *Feet of the Chameleon* by Ian Hawkey (Portico) as the best book on African football.

Visit: The Right to Dream charity works to give young Africans a sporting chance in life; you can find more about its work at www.righttodream.com.

4 Fair trade. *Foul Play 3 : Off Side* tackles the issue of fair and unfair trade between Africa and richer countries.

Are children aware of the fair trade scheme? More and more schools are becoming fair trade schools. Explain the principles behind it, and the difference it can make. Ask children what they think they can do to help.

Read: *The Fair Trade Everyday Cookbook* by Sophie Grigson (Dorling Kindersley).

Visit: Dubble chocolate bars have a great website with info about fair trade, and a 'Dubble Agents' scheme to get children backing fair trade. Go to www.dubble.co.uk.

5 Football club ownership. *Foul Play 3 : Off Side* begins with a protest on the pitch against City FC's owners and features in *Foul Play 2 : Dead Ball* and *Foul Play 4 :*

Killer Pass too. Several big English clubs have had similar issues around their ownership. How many can children name?

Do they know who owns their favourite team? Do they think it matters who owns a football club? Should there be more rules about who can own one? Would it be better if fans owned their clubs?

Visit: Ebbsfleet United is a club owned by fans around the world. You can see how the system works at www.myfootballclub.co.uk.

6 Russia. *Foul Play 2 : Dead Ball* sees Danny travel to Moscow on the trail of a sinister Russian oligarch. What do children know about Russia?

Can they name any places there, or any footballers from there?

The Russian oligarch in the book is purely fictional, but children might be able to think of a real-life one involved in football! Have they read any other books about Russia?

Read: *Football Dynamo* by Marc Bennetts (Virgin Books)

Visit: www.footballinrussia.com

7 Italy. Tom has set *Foul Play 5 : Own Goal*, in Italy.

What do children know about this country? How many of them have been there?

Have they learnt anything about Italy from books or school lessons?

Can they name any famous Italian football clubs?

Show them a map of Italy and see if they recognise any of the cities from football.

What adventures do they think Danny Harte could have in Italy?

Visit: www.football-italia.net is a good website about Italian football.

9 Young people in football. Both *Foul Play 3 : Off Side* and *Tom's Football Academy* books feature some young stars wanting to make a career in football.

How many of the children want to be footballers when they grow up? Why?

Do any of them already play for an Academy like the one in the books?

Have their experiences been similar to any of those in the Football Academy series?

Read: *The Football Academy* series by Tom Palmer.

10 The Foul Play books. Aside from all the issues, what do children think about the Foul Play books themselves?

Did they enjoy the stories?

How long did it take them to read the books?

Which characters did they like? What would they improve about the books?

How would they go about writing a *Foul Play* story of their own?

Read: The *Foul Play* series by Tom Palmer.

Visit: Tom's website at www.tompalmer.co.uk for much more about the author and the *Foul Play* books.

Foul Play Stories

There are five great stories in Tom Palmer's *Foul Play* series: *Foul Play*, *Dead Ball*, *Off Side*, *Killer Pass* and *Own Goal*. Tom is already hard at work on a new book, but if you can't wait for your next dose of football adventure, why not try writing your own story?



You can use the space overleaf to write your ideas for Danny Harte's next investigation. Imagine Danny has come to solve a new football crime. What adventures might he have? What mysteries might he have to solve, and what sort of villains might be met along the way? Invent your own characters for your story, or perhaps use some real-life football stars. Be as imaginative as you can! When you've written a summary of your story, try drawing a picture that would look good on the cover of a book.

Five real football crime-solving stories to inspire a story of your own

We've given draft titles but are sure you can come up with better ones for these story ideas. The questions may give you more ideas.

A matter of life and death

A few days before the last World Cup, a former Italian football player fell from a window in a football stadium.

- Did he jump or was he pushed? Why?
- Can you think up a fan character who could solve the mystery?

They think its all over

A few years ago in England, floodlights started going out at stadiums in the middle of games and the games were abandoned. Someone was sabotaging the floodlight controls.

- How did they do that?
- What could they get out of it?
- If someone tried to stop the crimes how would they do it?

Death by Football

In Columbia a footballer was murdered a few days after returning from the World Cup Finals, where he scored an own goal.

- Who did it?
- Was it about more than just football?
- Can you extend the story so even more players are in danger?

May we have our cup back, please

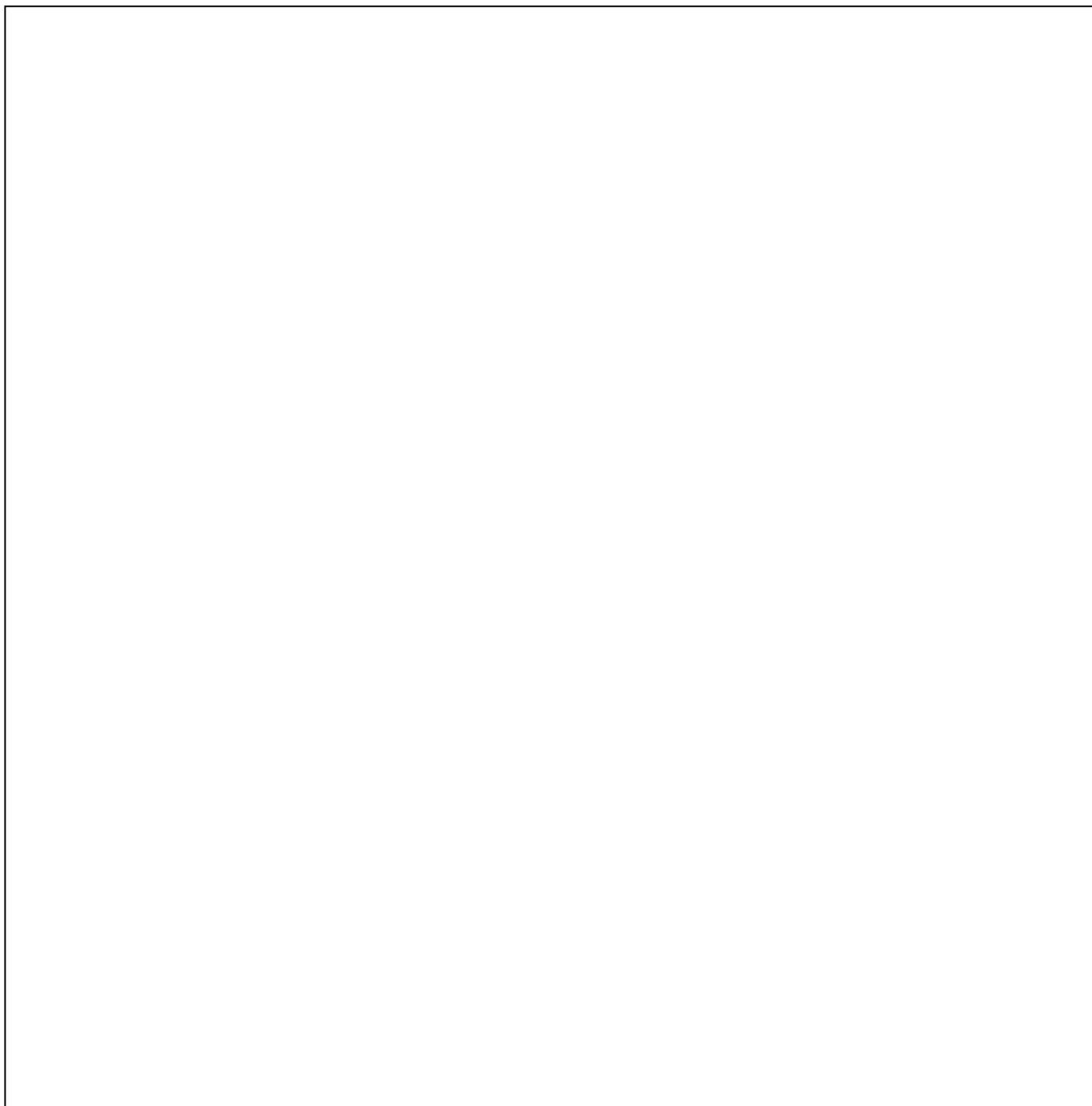
In 1966 the real World Cup was on show in a shop window. Someone stole it. Days later it was found by a dog under a bush.

- Where else had it been before it was found?
- Who stole it?
- What did they want to do with it?
- Why did their plans fail?

My Foul Play Drawing

Fans of Tom Palmer's *Foul Play* books know all about the brave character of their hero, football detective Danny Harte. But what do you think Danny looks like? Use the space below to draw him. You might like to sketch him in the middle of one of his adventures, or perhaps playing football in his City kit. You could try drawing some other characters from the *Foul Play* books too – like City and England star Sam Roberts, goalkeeper Alex Finn, reporter Anton Holt or the dastardly Sir Richard Gawthorpe.

My *Foul Play* character:



Book Reviews

Tell everybody about a book you have enjoyed.

What did you like best about it?

Which character did you like the most?

Did anything surprise you in the story?

Did you like the ending?

Words that may help you exciting / adventure / brave / danger / thrilling / solving / moving / secret / scary /

Use the ball shaped template overleaf to create a display

Post a review of one of Tom's books for one of the book review websites listed below. Puffin have printed book reviews by real children in Tom's books!

www.puffin.co.uk

www.cool-reads.co.uk

www.kidsreview.org.uk

www.amazon.co.uk

www.mrsmad.com

www.borders.co.uk/book

www.whosreadit.com

Or comment on someone else's review – did you agree with them?

www.achuka.co.uk

Or fill in the Red House Children's Book Award survey

www.redhousechildrensbookaward.co.uk

Draw a picture of the favourite part of your story below



My Book Review



Further Reading

If children enjoy the *Foul Play* or Football Academy stories, you might like to direct them towards the following websites:

Websites

www.bbc.co.uk/football – the best place to look for football news and everything else footie-related.

www.literacytrust.org.uk/reading_the_game – the online HQ of the National Literacy Trust's Reading the Game project, which uses football to advance reading and literacy. It's also offering a new football literacy activity pack *Love Football Love Reading 2*.

www.puffin.co.uk – everything you need to know about Puffin books and authors.

www.tompalmer.co.uk – Tom Palmer's official website.

Other resources

Don't forget that newspapers and magazines can be great sources of information for children. Keep library copies of newspapers available so that children can read match reports, previews and interviews, or perhaps cut out interesting stories and paste them into a special football scrapbook. You might also like to buy some copies of football magazines for children like *Match!* or *Match of the Day*. Don't underestimate the value of publications like these – many people, Tom Palmer included, became interested in reading in this way before getting hooked on books!

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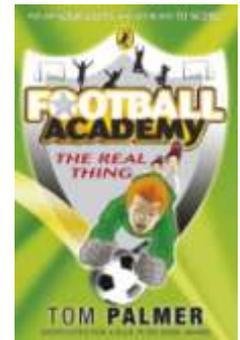
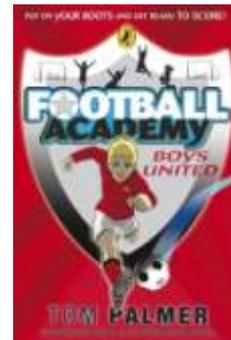
The Squad
Black Op
White Fear

Set Special £10.80
Tick to order



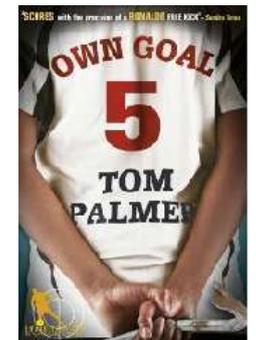
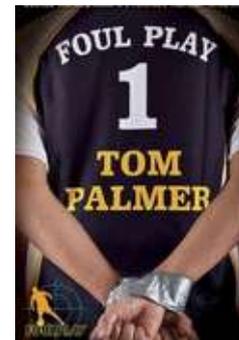
The Squad is about a youth football team that represents the country around the world in international tournaments. But, secretly, five of them are spies, sent to stop foreign agents harming British interests.

Football Academy **Set Special £32.94**
Boys United, Striking Out, The Real Thing, Reading the Game, Free Kick & Captain Fantastic **Tick to order**



The stories of six boys who are part of a fictional Premier League football academy. (7+)
'I wanted to write a series of books based at a real football academy, a series that would be just like the academies at Manchester City or Arsenal or Swansea. I went to a couple of real academies and met the coaches and players to see what academies are really like. Then I wrote the books, making sure I made it as realistic as possible.'

Foul Play **Set Special £31.46**
Foul Play, Dead Ball, Off Side, Killer Pass & Own Goal **Tick to order**



A series about a boy called Danny who tries to solve crimes in the football world, using his experience reading detective stories to help him.
'There is loads of crime in football around the world. Kidnaps, bribery, exploitation of young players. I wanted to create a boy hero who would clean up the game and show a new generation that football is about more than money and puffed-up egos.'

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