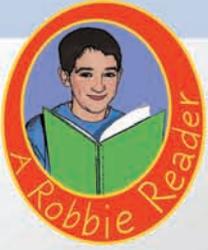
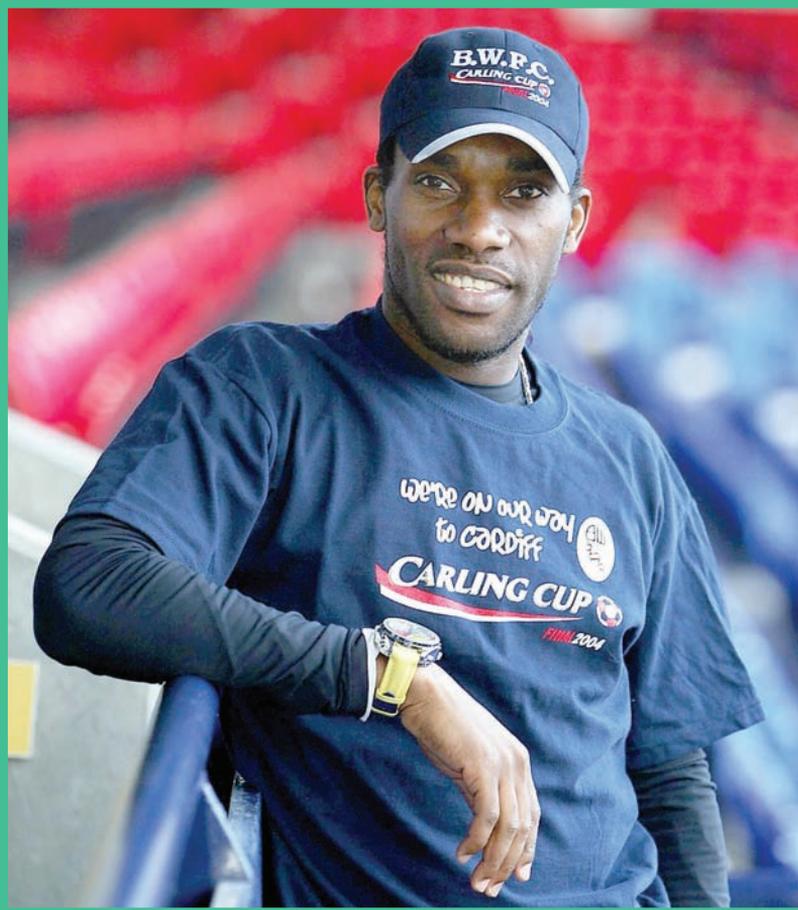


# NO HANDS ALLOWED



## Jay-Jay Okocha



*Tamra Orr*

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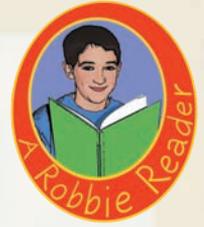
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## CHAPTER ONE

# An Unexpected Opportunity

It started out as just a simple visit. Augustine Okocha was 17 years old. He wanted to go to Germany and visit one of his brother's friends. It sounded like it would be fun. He knew the friend had played for a German football team. *Football* is the international word for soccer. Okocha loved the game. He had been playing it for as long as he could remember. Maybe he could learn a few new kicks or skills while he was there.

He had no idea that this quick visit would change his life, but it did. As soon as he got there, he asked his friend if he could go to soccer training with him. The answer was yes.



Jay-Jay battles with Italy's Roberto Donadoni during the 1994 World Cup match at Foxboro Stadium in Massachusetts.



Okocha watched all the players out on the field. He smiled. He knew he was as good as they were. He had been playing street soccer in Nigeria since he was little. Usually he did not have a real ball or an open field to play on either. Instead, he and other kids used the street and anything round enough to roll. It was not easy, but it was good training. He was sure he could do a great job on a real field with a real ball.

It did not take long for Okocha to ask if he could practice a little too. Once again, the answer was yes. By the second day, he had been invited to play with the team for two weeks.

At the end of that time, Okocha was registered with the Germans to be one of their main players. “It was all quite amazing,” he says. “It never occurred to me that I was old enough to be on my own and start my own career. But I realized I had a big opportunity in front of me and knew that I didn’t want to let it go. I knew I had to . . . grab the chance I’d been given.”

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