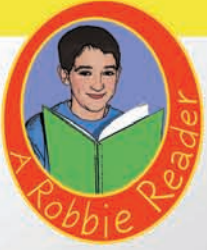


# NO HANDS ALLOWED



## Ronaldinho



*Rebecca Thatcher Murcia*



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## CHAPTER ONE

# Making Soccer History

Nothing like it had happened in Madrid's historic Bernabeu stadium in twenty-two years. Fans in general usually hold back their cheers for opposing players, even if they do something amazing. But on November 19, 2005, most of the 75,000 Real Madrid fans packing the huge stadium in Spain stood and cheered for Ronaldinho. The brilliant Brazilian midfielder for Real Madrid's rival, Barcelona, had just scored his second goal of the game, giving Barcelona a highly unusual 3-0 victory in an away game against Real Madrid.

Real Madrid was one of the richest clubs in Europe at the time. It had just spent millions of dollars to acquire David Beckham from Manchester United, and had a **roster** that was



Ronaldinho's skills often prompt defenders to make desperate attempts to take the ball away from him. In the November 19, 2005, game against Real Madrid, Sergio Ramos tried to stop Ronaldinho with a slide tackle, but Ronaldinho kept the ball and kept going.

packed with stars like the French player Zinedine Zidane and the Brazilians Ronaldo and Roberto Carlos.

That day in 2005, however, Ronaldinho and his teammates made Real Madrid look like a second-rate team. Ronaldinho was faking out Real Madrid with his dazzling moves and his pinpoint passes. First, Samuel Eto'o scored



15 minutes into the game. Then, in the second half, Ronaldinho received the ball near the midfield, **dribbled** effortlessly past two defenders, and fired a shot past Real Madrid's goalkeeper, Iker Casillas. With about 12 minutes left in the game, Ronaldinho again received the ball near the midfield, and again raced down the field and hammered the ball past Casillas.

“Incredible! Again! Ronaldinho!” the television announcer shouted in excitement. “Real Madrid does not have an answer for Ronaldinho!”

Gradually, the Real Madrid fans rose to their feet, clapping. They had not so honored an opposing player since they gave the Argentinean great Diego Maradona a standing **ovation** (oh-VAY-shun) in 1983.

“It was a perfect game,” Ronaldinho told reporters after the game. “I will never forget this because it is very rare for any soccer player to be applauded in this way by the opposition fans.”

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