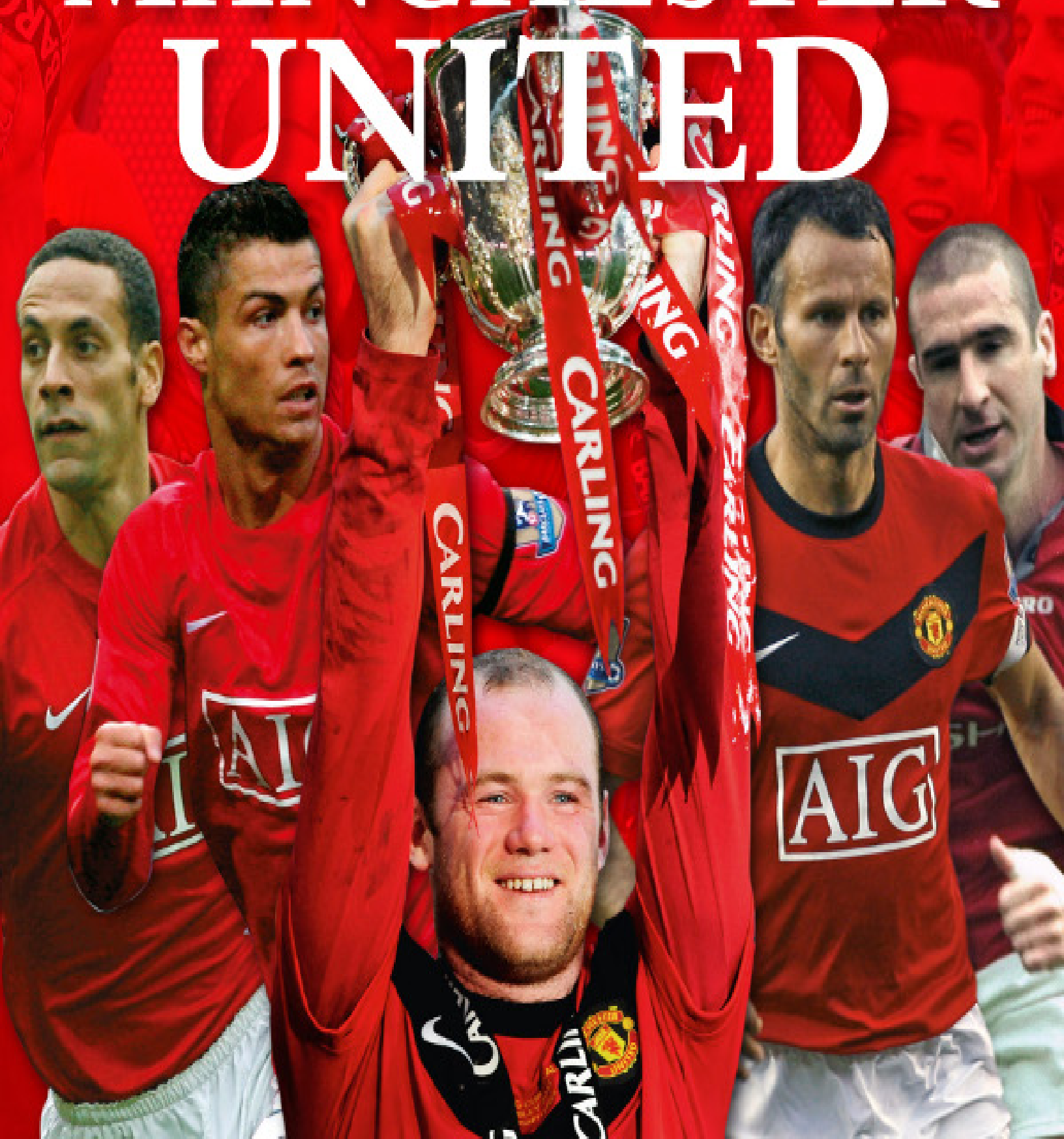
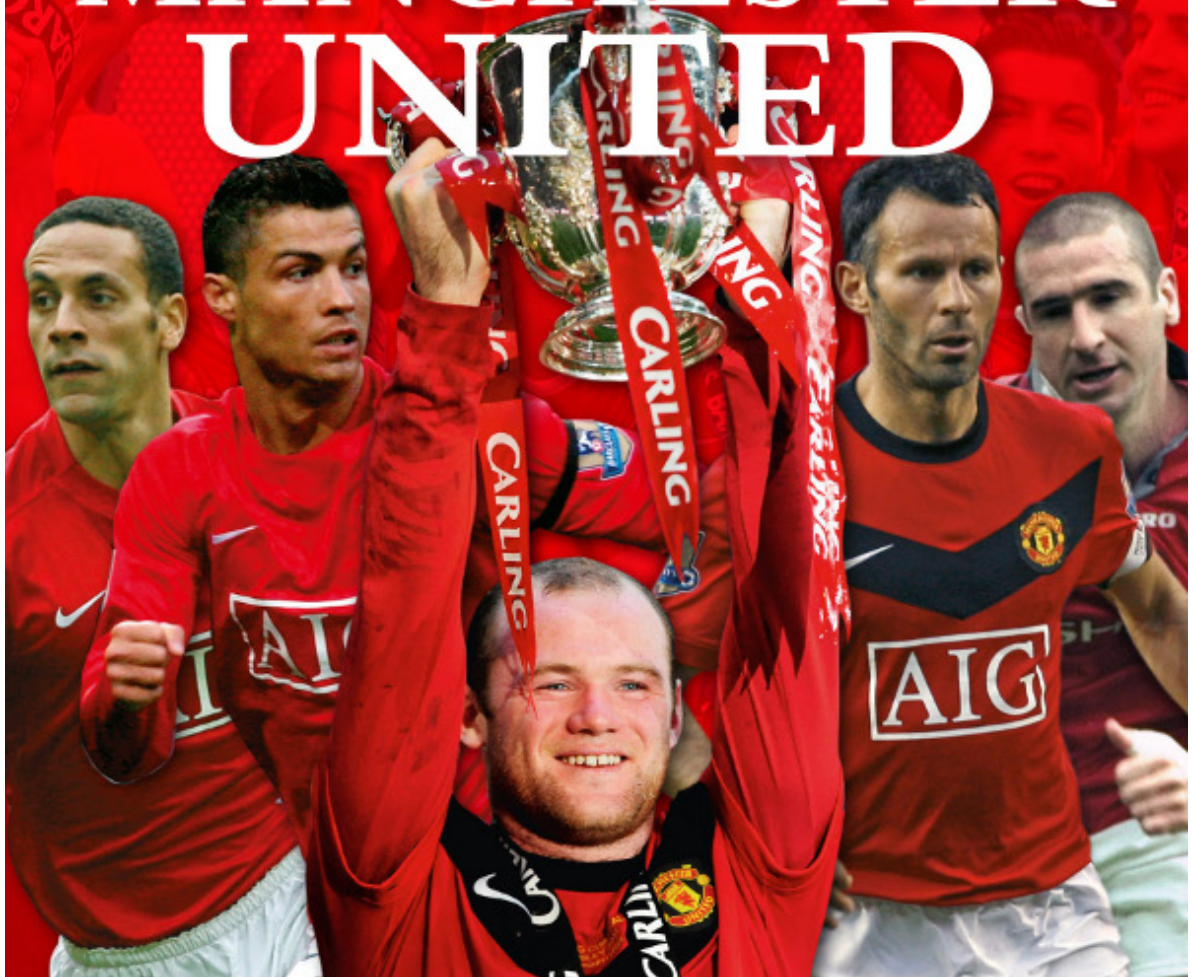


LITTLE BOOK OF

MANCHESTER UNITED



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UNITED**



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Aston:

John Aston Senior and John Aston Junior

Born 23 September 1921, John Aston Senior began his Manchester United career on 18 September 1946 when he made his League debut against Chelsea at inside-forward. Matt Busby switched Aston's position to full-back, not only changing the number on his back, but also bringing out the best of his talent. Aston blossomed as a full-back bringing his expertise in pace and accuracy to a defensive position which he utilised to the full when he faced Stanley Matthews in the 1948 FA Cup Final.



ABOVE John Aston, Senior

During the difficult 1950-51 season, the versatile Aston was moved forward on several occasions giving him the opportunity to score 15 goals. He won 17 England caps before injury cut his career short. He then returned to Old Trafford as a youth team coach and, in 1970, became chief scout for the club, a position he held for two years. He remained closely associated with the team and watched his son, John Aston Junior, also make his name at Old Trafford.



ABOVE John Aston in a heading duel with Adolfo of Benfica in the European Cup Final at Wembley, 29 May 1968



ABOVE John Aston Jr (r) taps home the opening goal as Chelsea's Peter Bonetti (l) and Joe Kirkup (c) watch helplessly

Born the year after his father's debut on 28 June 1947, John Junior settled well at Old Trafford, turning professional in 1964. Not as glamorous as Best or Law, Aston Junior was often given a hard time by the home crowd who thought he lacked imagination, but he was nippy and direct, and he remained a loyal and committed player. Matt Busby was impressed and recognised his contribution to the team and he was a member of the 1967 Championship-winning side.

It was in the 1968 European Cup Final where Aston really shone. It became the pinnacle of his career as he repeatedly managed to pass Benfica's Adolfo on the left wing. He lost his first-team place after breaking his leg and was transferred to Luton Town for £30,000 in 1972.

Atkinson

Ron Atkinson's first league job was as manager of Cambridge United in 1974. He had already gained experience with non-League clubs Witney Town and Kettering Town and went on to succeed Dave Sexton at Old Trafford in June 1981 after proving his worth with First Division West Bromwich Albion for three consecutive seasons.

Although United never finished lower than fourth in the League while he was at the helm, the Championship went to his home town, Liverpool, five seasons in a row. However, he won the FA Cup twice, claiming victory over Brighton in 1983 and Everton in 1985 with United setting a club record of ten consecutive League victories at the start of the 1985-86 season.

Renowned for spending large amounts on players, Atkinson only once paid more than £1 million for a player and that was for Bryan Robson who would be a loyal servant. The following season poor form cost Atkinson his job at Old Trafford and he returned to West Brom before moving to Atletico Madrid. He also managed Sheffield Wednesday twice as well as Aston Villa and Coventry City. His successor at Old Trafford was a certain Alex Ferguson, who joined the club on 6 November 1986.



ABOVE Ron Atkinson attends a press conference



ABOVE A thoughtful Ron Atkinson watches a match from the dugout

Attendances

The 76,962 supporters who crowded into Old Trafford on 25 March 1939 were not Manchester United fans. They had come to watch the FA Cup semi-final between Grimsby Town and Wolves. For many years, the record attendance for a Manchester United home game came on 27 December 1920 when 70,504 watched their team lose 3-1 to an Aston Villa side they had beaten 4-3 in the counterpart fixture just two days earlier.



ABOVE Old Trafford in 2007

This, however, has been beaten on numerous occasions following a new boost in Old Trafford's seating capacity that was unveiled in 2006.

On 31 March 2007, 76,098 saw United go in at half time trailing Blackburn Rovers by 1-0 but second-half strikes from Scholes, Carrick, Park and Solskjaer helped redress the balance. Attendances over recent

seasons have been 73,249 (2009-10), 75,304 (2008-09), 75,691 (2007-08), 75,826 (2006-07).

The ground's record attendance for a World Cup match saw 37,000 cheer on Hungary and Portugal in a Group 3 match in 1966. Old Trafford has also hosted the 2003 UEFA Champions League Final, with 63,215 watching an all-Italian clash as AC Milan emerged victorious after a penalty shoot-out with arch-rivals Juventus.

Beckham



ABOVE Beckham celebrates to the crowd after scoring a goal during the Premiership match against Everton, August 1997

David Beckham was born on 2 May 1975 and signed professionally for United in 1992 after joining as a trainee in 1991. He had come to United's attention after winning a Bobby Charlton skills competition at the age of 11. He made his first-team debut in September 1992 – coming on as a substitute at Brighton – but he had to wait a further two years for another

chance and he made the most of it by scoring against Galatasaray in the European Cup.

He gained a regular place in midfield during 1995-96, scoring eight goals during 32 appearances and collecting an FA Cup winner's medal. The opening game against Wimbledon the following season was to mark the start of the David Beckham phenomenon when he scored from 57 yards in the dying minutes of the game.

Beckham made the transition from promising youngster to England's main creative force in just one season, making his debut under Glen Hoddle in September 1996 in Moldova. He enjoyed a momentous season and collected a second Championship medal and was voted the PFA's Young Player of the Year. Despite immense interest in his relationship with Victoria Adams (Posh Spice), Beckham continued to impress on the field, becoming United's top scorer during the 1997-98 season. But the World Cup in 1998 saw Beckham sent off after retaliation against an Argentinian player in a second-round match and many blamed him for England losing the game.

He returned from the World Cup to vitriolic abuse, but quickly knuckled down and proved wrong all those who thought his career in English football was over. He went on to captain the England side four years later and, despite going out in the quarter-finals to Brazil, the team returned home as heroes. Beckham enjoyed further success at Old Trafford including the 1998-99 Treble before his departure to Real Madrid in June 2003.



ABOVE Beckham scores the opening goal during the league match between Villa and United at Villa Park, 2003

After winning La Liga in his final season with the club he joined LA Galaxy in 2007, where he would help win the MSL Cup in 2011. His time in America also saw him have two loan spells with AC Milan, helping maintain the levels of fitness required to take him to 115 caps for his country, a record for an outfield player. Having been instrumental in helping London win the 2012 Olympic Games David was widely expected to be a member of the Team GB squad but was controversially omitted at the last stage.

Berbatov

Dimitar Berbatov is a classy centre-forward, pairing the ability to ruthlessly find the net inside the box with magical touches outside of it.

Berbatov started out at Bulgarian side CSKA Sofia where his talent quickly attracted the attention of Bundesliga club Bayer Leverkusen who made their move for the front man in January 2001. Although he was national team captain and Bulgarian Player of the Year in 2002, 2004, 2005 and 2007, he made a slow start to his time in Germany albeit regularly shining in the Champions League.

He was eventually lured to the Premier League when Tottenham signed him in July 2006 for a reported £10.9 million fee. He was an instant hit at White Hart Lane scoring his first competitive goal two minutes into his home League debut against Sheffield United. He went on to score 23 goals in his opening season, which he matched again in 2007-08.

After months of speculation linking him with a move to Old Trafford in the summer of 2008, Sir Alex Ferguson finally got his man on transfer deadline day with just minutes to go. Berbatov signed a four-year contract on 1 September 2008 for an undisclosed fee, with Fraizer Campbell heading to White Hart Lane on a season-long loan as part of the deal.

His tally of 48 goals in 108 League appearances helped United win two Premier Leagues, with Dimitar also picking up a winners medal in the Carling Cup in 2010. He also played in the 2009 Champions League final defeat against Barcelona and was omitted from the squad when the club reached the final again against the Spanish giants in 2011. Lack of first team football prompted a move to Fulham in August 2012.



ABOVE Fabricio Coloccini of Newcastle United is unable to stop Dimitar Berbatov scoring

Best

On 16 August 1961, George Best signed as an apprentice for United and went on to become one of the most prolific professionals of all time. The 'Belfast Boy', born on 22 May 1946, went on to sign professionally in May 1963, making his League debut against West Bromwich Albion in September, but remained in the reserves until December that year when he scored in a 5-1 victory. He kept his place on the team and went on to play 466 League, Cup and European games, scoring 178 goals.



ABOVE George Best against Fulham, 1971

Although Best won 37 caps for Northern Ireland – he made his debut in April 1964 – he never actually played in the finals of a major tournament. Not only did he make a name for himself with his goalscoring, Best was renowned for taking on his opponents which was exciting for his fans. Women, particularly, took a shine to Best and football's popularity during the 1960s blossomed alongside his cult status. Best was also gifted at making space for his team-mates, notably Bobby Charlton and Denis Law.

Nicknamed 'El Beatle' by the Portuguese after a European Cup match against Benfica in 1966, Best had become football's answer to the