

'THE DAY I PLAYED FOR SCOTLAND'

Children from across the country combined their love of football and writing in a well-received project

A Scottish FA initiative encouraging primary school pupils to write about 'The Day I Played for Scotland' sparked an "overwhelming" response.

Children from all over the country were invited to write a 250-word story about playing their first game for Scotland – and the outcome was wonderful. From Banchory

to Burnside, from Tynewater to Toryglen, pupils let their imaginations run riot.

Jen Malone (pictured top right) and her colleagues from all departments of the Scottish FA sifted through the efforts of 540 entrants before eventually deciding that nine-year-old Brodie Huntzinger, of Kinross Primary School, was the winner.

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"'The Day I Played For Scotland', stems from the Learning Through Football programme, which recognises the power of football to enthuse, encourage and motivate young learners," said Malone.

"We have had this programme for about two years and it has evolved over time, looking at opportunities that football presents and this was one of them.

"It allows us to engage with young people and schools and the number of entries was overwhelming. We thought we would be doing well to get between 50 and 80 but in the end there were 540.

"About 100 schools have signed up for the Learning Through Football programme and we →

WINNING ENTRY: BRODIE HUNTZINGER

'It's Declan Rice's ball. No, a brilliant tackle from Brodie Huntzinger he drives the ball up the park like a rocket. He shoots and scores!'

I was pretending I was an actual football player like I always dreamed of.

I go to a football club and I am good but nobody at the club really knew it because our goalkeeper is Matteo Becker (the son of Brazil keeper; Alisson Becker!) 'oh unlucky' said coach David as I shot. My shot was saved. Matteo just stuck his hand out and saved it with ease.

I was practising football in my garden. I took a shot. I missed. The ball went under my hedge. I tried to grab it but something caught my eye. I saw a star shaped like a football. I touched it.

'Brodie!' shouted John McGinn, asking for a pass. I was too stunned to move. I saw it was Scotland v Brazil in the 2026 World Cup final. By half time we were losing 2-0.

In the second half Neymar scored making it 3-0. But then Lyndon Dykes scored a hat-trick, making it 3-3. We got a penalty and I was worried because the goal keeper was Alisson Becker and I couldn't score against his son.

I took a shot. GOAL! I scored!

The full-time whistle blew... I scored the winning goal of the World Cup!

I did my signature goal celebration then when I opened my eyes, I found myself back practising in my garden. ✕



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communicate directly with them but there are more who engage with the platform because it is an open platform that anyone can access.

"The Day I Played for Scotland' project was a reminder for us that are a little bit older about hopes and dreams that you have as a young person and the excitement of the thought of playing for your national team. The nervous anticipation of pulling on that jersey, hearing the roar of the crowd, hearing the bagpipes, all that came through in the writing.

"I had to put a plea out for help so we have had a lot of members of staff across all departments in the association looking through the pieces of writing and the feedback was great. It is almost a pity that we have to select one."

Malone was delighted to see the women's game in Scotland captivating the imagination as much as the men's side.

"We had boys and girls imagining themselves playing for Scotland," she said. "We had references to Rachel Corsie and Andy Robertson, John McGinn, Steve Clarke and Pedro Martinez Losa. It was great seeing that.

"We had stories in the form of poems, which was really creative. We had superpowers coming through – the other players slowed down and the author became really fast – and we had

CREATIVE AND INSPIRING

Primary school teacher David Weir, who supports the Scottish FA in the Learning Through Football initiative, was pleased to see so many pupils of all ages reveal such fertile imaginations when writing about playing for Scotland.

He said: "I read about 40 of the stories. There were some stories from Primary 2 pupils which were outstanding and naturally there were some from older pupils.

"There were unbelievably creative pieces but what absolutely came through in every one of the pieces was the passion for Scotland, regardless of age, gender or background.

"There was one pupil who wrote about being a child from a military family who never had the opportunity to go to a game of football before and that was quite inspiring.

"Hampden Park came through as an iconic venue – and goals were scored against England a few times. They wrote about how exciting it was to walk out at Hampden Park and hear the crowd and they set the scene brilliantly.

"I found it a lot more difficult to whittle them down to a shortlist than I anticipated. It came down to fine margins and the teachers will be proud of what their pupils managed to come up with.

"The Scottish FA will acknowledge the shortlisted pieces which didn't manage to win and hopefully display and share them widely. There is a winner but it would be great to have a look at all those great pieces that came in." ✕



people going back in time with time-travelling.

"We had one story where the pupil was just attending the match with his dad but John McGinn's car broke down and Steve Clarke asked if he could get his boots and play.

"The creativity came through in all of the writing. We will look to review it and, if it has value to young learners, we will look at doing it again." ✕