



# TEACHERS' RESOURCES

## RECOMMENDED FOR

Middle to upper primary  
Ages 9+

## CONTENTS

1. Plot summary	1
2. About the author	2
3. Author's inspiration	2
4. Pre-reading questions	2
5. Characters	3
6. Key study topics	5
7. Turning fact into fiction	6
8. Further reading	6

## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English, Health & Physical Education
- **General capabilities:** Literacy, Critical & Creative Thinking; Personal & Social Capability; Ethical Understanding

## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Learning about friendship, teamwork and facing challenges in a positive, inclusive way.
- Seeing how kids from diverse backgrounds come together as a team.
- Looking at the positive influence sport, particularly team sport, can have on kids.
- Encouraging imaginative thinking and writing.

## THEMES

- Friendship
- Facing and overcoming challenges
- Resilience
- Being different
- Kindness and acceptance of others
- What makes a family?
- What makes a team?

## PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia and Kristin Darell

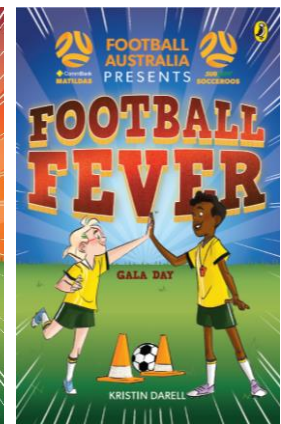
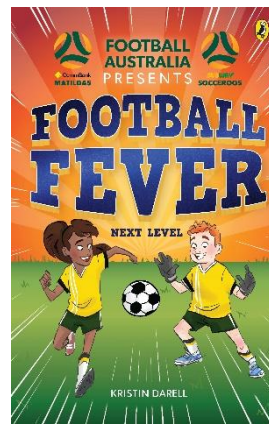
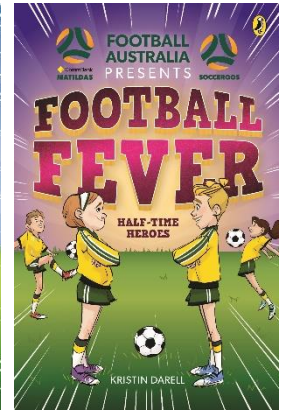
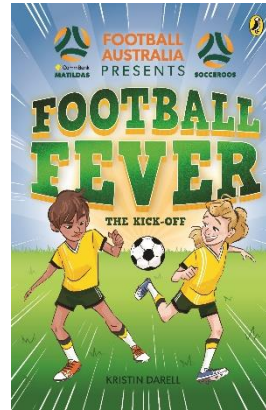
## PUBLICATION DETAILS

ISBN: The Kick-off	978 1 76 104809 8
Half-time Heroes	978 1 76 104808 1
Next Level	978 1 76 104807 4
Gala Day	978 1 76 104806 7

These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use and study within schools but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.

Visit [penguin.com.au/teachers](http://penguin.com.au/teachers) to find out how our fantastic Penguin Random House Australia books can be used in the classroom, sign up to the teachers' newsletter and follow us on [@penguinteachers](https://twitter.com/penguinteachers).

Copyright © Penguin Random House Australia 2023



## PLOT SUMMARY

Football Fever is an action-packed junior fiction series about six girls, six boys and a crazy dog who are all passionate about football. They play together for the Merridale Football club in a team called the Under 11s Merridale Fever. The series follows the team through a football season as they navigate friendships, exciting opportunities, tough choices and big changes in their lives.

The Merridale kids train hard and play hard as they strive to be the best they can be. They are given a chance to play as Half-time Heroes in a Subway Socceroos game, they participate in a High Potential Training camp and face a battle to save Gala Day, the best day of the season. They also face their own individual challenges but are lucky to get advice and support from some of Australia's biggest football stars.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Kristin Darell has been a passionate storyteller since she was a child. Whether it was making up adventures with her twin sister, or writing about the world around her, she was rarely found without a pen and paper in hand. As an adult, she has made this passion her life.

Kristin worked as a broadcast news and sports journalist for major Australian news organisations for more than twenty years. During this time, she covered natural disasters, reported live from bushfire zones and was present to witness some of Australia's most memorable sporting moments (namely Steven Bradbury winning gold at the 2002 Salt Lake Winter Olympics).

Kristin now spends all her time in the world of children's books. She is either writing stories, talking to kids and teachers, or helping behind the scenes in her work with the Australian Children's Laureate Foundation.

Football Fever is Kristin's debut junior fiction series.

Find out more about Kristin, including how to book a fiction or non-fiction talk or workshop at your school or library, at [www.kristindarell.com.au](http://www.kristindarell.com.au)

## AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

### *Kristin says:*

Football Fever was the perfect first series for me as an author. It combined the two things I enjoy most – making up stories for children and learning new facts about people and the world. Being able to include real-life football players in the books took the process of writing to a whole new level. I spent hours researching all the different CommBank Matildas and Subway Socceroos stars. I wanted to include players in the books who had something authentic to add to the made-up stories I was telling. It was the unexpected things I discovered that led to my 'ah-ha' moments and then the stories would fall into place.

I know these books are about a football team, but they are also about a group of kids doing something they

love together. As a child, I didn't always feel like I fitted in. What helped me was doing activities I loved with other kids who loved them too. When I was on a team with them, or in a group, I felt accepted and understood. That's why at their heart, these books are about how special it is to find the people who share the same passions and interests as you. When you find those people, you often also find the courage to be authentically yourself.

### Questions

1. Have you ever felt a bit left out or misunderstood? What did you do to make yourself feel better?
2. Do you have a favourite activity you do with friends? How important do you think it is to have different groups of friends?
3. The author worked as a television journalist before becoming a children's author. She was lucky to see some exciting moments in history. What are some exciting things you have seen that you don't think you'll ever forget?
4. These books are made up (fiction) but also contain lots of facts. The author mentioned she found lots of 'unexpected' facts while researching the books. What are some unexpected, quirky or interesting facts you know or have discovered?

## PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Look at the illustration on the cover of the book. What do you think the story will be about?
2. The illustration is just one of the things on the front cover. What other elements can you find that create the full cover and why are they there?
3. What does the full cover tell you about the characters in the book? Are there any other things you can learn about the story?
4. Before reading the blurb on the back cover, write your own blurb, based on the cover. Include where the story is set, the characters' names and what problems they are going to face in the story.
5. Now, read the blurb on the back. It includes information about the characters, the story and a question. Why do you think a question is included here? What other interesting information is highlighted on the back cover?
6. Read the first paragraph of Chapter 1 and the first paragraph of Chapter 2. Can you work out whose point of view the story is being told from in each of these chapters? Is the point of view (the character's voice) different between Chapter 1 and Chapter 2? Why do you think the author has done this?



## CHARACTERS

### Football Fever 1: The Kick-off

#### Kyra

Kyra Williams has just turned eleven and she is the star striker for the U11s Merridale Fever. She has been in the team since the U6s. Her hero is Australian Football star forward Mary Fowler and she is determined to play for Australia one day too. Kyra's mum is the team's coach and was also a talented football player. Kyra always tries hard and is enthusiastic and energetic, but she is also shy. She has trouble talking with other kids sometimes, but being around her teammates is always easy because they love the same thing – football.

#### Questions and activities

1. Have you ever been disappointed when something wasn't the way you thought it would be? Imagine it's your friend feeling sad. What would you say to them?
2. When Kyra is finding things hard, she turns to messages from Football players she admires to remind her who she wants to be. Who are the people (real or made up) who inspire you?
3. Read Chapter 1. Write down what you have learned about Kyra. What sort of person is she? What does she enjoy? What other interesting facts have you discovered?
4. Kyra always gives everything she has when she plays sport because she loves football and it makes her feel good. Do you have an activity you love? Share the activity with your class and find out what your classmates love to do.

#### Diego

Diego is Kyra's dog. He is a Golden Retriever with long white fur. He is very good at chasing and rounding up footballs. He is the Merridale Fever's unofficial mascot and is always goofing around and making the kids smile.

#### Questions and activities

1. Diego is named after the famous Argentinian football player Diego Maradona. People choose the name of their pets for all different reasons. Sometimes the names are real. Sometimes the names are made up. Ask your friends and family about the names they have given their pets. Are they real or made up? Is there a story behind the name? Kristin has a three-legged pygmy dragon she called Pixel

because he's missing some little bits – specifically, one leg!

2. Diego is talented at rounding up footballs. This is Diego's favourite trick. Have you ever trained an animal? What is the craziest thing you've seen an animal do? Make a list of things animals can be taught to do.
3. Imagine the kids in the Merridale Fever are arriving for their first training session. Write a scene from Diego's point of view. How is it different writing from the perspective of an animal instead of a human? What different things did you have to take into consideration?

#### Sam

Eleven-year-old Sam Elrick has just arrived in Australia from England. His mum is Australian, but his dad was born in England and has Indian heritage. He loves playing as a forward in football, in the position of striker where he is very good at kicking goals. When he was in England, Sam went to an all-boys boarding school, where the boys live on campus during term time. That means he has never played football with girls before. He doesn't mind being on a team with girls, but it is making him very nervous.

#### Questions and activities

1. Sam is new to Australia and to the Merridale Fever. Can you remember what it felt like to be new at something? Perhaps it was being in a new class at school or starting a new activity. Discuss some of the ways you cope with being new.
2. Sam isn't sure how to play football on a team with girls. Why do you think he is worried? What advice would you give Sam?
3. Crabbie quickly becomes friends with Sam. Imagine you are Crabbie. You can see it is hard for Sam being new, but you don't want him to leave the team. Write Sam a letter to convince him to stay.

### Football Fever 2: Half-time Heroes

#### Finn

Eleven-year-old Finn Sadler joined the Merridale Fever in the U8s and enjoys playing in the midfield the most. His best friend is Sasha. While she is often loud and energetic, Finn is usually a bit quieter. Finn's mum has been sick, but it looks like she is close to being better. It has meant Finn has taken on more responsibility helping with his eight-year-old brother Xavier. Finn loves football, but no matter how much he practises, he always finds tricks really hard.



**Sasha**

Ten-year-old Sasha Parry loves her life with her two dads, but she knows her family is a bit different. Sometimes that makes her a bit worried. She is grateful for her best friend Finn who has always accepted her for who she is. She also loves spending time with all the rest of her football friends. She feels a special bond with them because they are all working towards the same thing – to be the best football players they can be. One of Sasha’s favourite things is to do fun football tricks.

**Questions and activities**

1. This book is about the team figuring out what makes them special. The problem is half of them think it’s tricks and half of them think it’s other football skills. Imagine you are either Sasha (tricks) or Finn (skills). Write a persuasive letter to the team to convince them why you are right.
2. Re-read pages 18 to 22. In the book this section is written from Finn’s perspective. Imagine you are another member of the team. Do you agree with how Finn and Sasha handled things? Would you do or say anything different? Write the team’s reaction to the video from your perspective.
3. Sasha and Finn are best friends, but they have very different lives. It’s something they like about being friends. Do you have any friends who are different to you? It could be their family, where they are from, their interests or even their pets. What do you learn from talking to them? How does that change the way you see your own family?

**Football Fever 3: Next Level****Kat**

Katarina (Kat) Horvat’s favourite position in football is being a defender. This means her main job is to stop balls getting close to the goal. She is very good at it. Kat’s twin brother Luka is also in the U11s Merridale Fever. She has never played football without her brother and never been on a team with just girls before.

**Questions and activities**

1. Do you know any twins or have any twins in your class? Kristin Darell, the author of these books, is an identical twin. Research the different types of twins. What are twins? How common are they? Write the facts down. There are also lots of myths about twins. What is the difference between a fact and a myth? What myths can you find about twins?

2. Read Chapter 11. Kat experiences a lot of big feelings. Why do you think the author had Kat react the way she did to Marley’s behaviour? Do you think Kat did the right thing? What would you have done differently?

**Crabbie**

Crabbie’s real name is Charles Cannon, but he much prefers Crabbie. He is facing some big changes in his life and what he needs most is his football family. Instead, he is unexpectedly split up from his teammates as well as facing the pressures of the High Potential Training camp. His dream had always been to make it into the Game of Stars, but he didn’t realise how hard everything was going to be.

**Questions and activities**

1. Crabbie is disappointed about being split up from his teammates. Have you ever had to deal with being disappointed? What did you do?
2. How many examples of kids teasing Crabbie can you find in the book? How did Crabbie react? What would you have done differently? Is it ever okay to tease someone?



3. Look at the illustration from *Football Fever 3: Next Level* (pp72–73). Imagine you are the person sitting beside Crabbie. What would you tell him about not giving up? Write the scene with dialogue.

**Football Fever 4: Gala Day****Harper**

Harper Brown is the youngest member of the Merridale Fever. She is small and wears glasses, but she’s also very fast and an excellent football player. She isn’t a huge personality, but when she’s playing football she has a really big impact moving the ball up and down the pitch. Everyone knows they can always rely on Harper.



**Hani**

All Hani Hasan has ever wanted is to play for the Subway Socceroos. He also loves football facts, strategy and learning about the history of the game. He's the eldest in a family of four kids, and playing his favourite game is all that matters to him. When Hani gets hurt, he faces the possibility that his dream may never come true.

**Questions and activities**

1. What is the dilemma Harper faces in this book? Do you think keeping her news a secret makes sense? What would you have wanted to do if you were in the same situation?
2. Hani and Harper both keep secrets in the book. They both have good reasons for not telling people things that they know. Do you think it is okay to keep secrets? Do you think there are different rules for different types of secrets? What if someone shares a secret with you?
3. Read Chapter 9 (pp67–74). Harper has a big decision to make about what she is going to tell her teammates and when. Re-write the scene imagining you are Kyah Simon. What advice would you give Harper?
4. Hani wins lots of slushies for winning Coach's weekly football quiz. Research some interesting facts about the game of football. In a group, create a game or activity for your classmates that will also teach them about the sport. It could be football trivia, a card game, bingo, a crossword puzzle or any other game you like.

**KEY STUDY TOPICS****Friendship & Teamwork**

The Football Fever series has strong themes of friendship and teamwork. The author has created twelve unique characters who make up the U11s Merridale Fever. They come from a diverse range of family groups and have different personalities but share a common passion for football.

Kristin Darell says: 'My Football Fever books shine a spotlight on the joy and confidence that can come when you find friends who love the same things as you. The kids at Merridale Football Club come from all different backgrounds and different schools. Because they share a love of football, they understand each other and that helps them feel safe and secure. It is these friends they choose to turn to when things are hard and to share the special moments in their lives.'

It's about helping kids find their tribe and giving them the space to authentically be themselves.'

**Questions**

1. Do you have friends who have the same interests as you? Do you have more than one group of friends? What do you like about those friendships?
2. Do friends always have to agree? Why is that?
3. Think about what makes someone a wonderful friend and ways you can be a good friend. Create a mind map with you in the centre and surround yourself with words and ideas to show what friendship means to you.
4. The Football Fever series is about teamwork. Even though there are some differences, the Merridale Fever usually play well as a team. Write a story where the main character doesn't want to be a team player.
5. Diego is the Fever's team mascot, but he doesn't have any four-legged friends. Create character descriptions for two of Diego's best friends. Make sure to include descriptions, personality, family, interests, strengths, challenges and any other fun facts you can think of.

**Courage & resilience**

Throughout all four books, the members of the Merridale Fever face challenges on and off the football pitch. They must deal with personal fears, big changes, misunderstandings, disappointments, people who don't like them and many other real-life problems. In the end they all show great courage and learn how good it can feel not to give up.

**Questions & activities**

1. The kids in the U11s Merridale Fever help each other when one of the team is having a hard time. They also get advice and support from CommBank Matildas and Subway Socceroos players. Pick one of the books. What is the problem faced by the two main characters? Pick one character and imagine you are their best friend. What advice would you give?
2. In *Football Fever 2: Half-time Heroes*, Sasha uses her breathing to keep herself calm when she's worried. What sort of things do you do when you worry or are finding things hard?
4. Diego always seems to know when someone in the Merridale Fever isn't feeling great. He will often stand beside them so they can give him a pat. Did you know dogs are often used to support people emotionally? Can you think



of any other ways dogs are used to help people?

### Turning Fact into Fiction

The author, Kristin Darell, spent more than twenty years working as a journalist. She worked as a television producer and reporter in the areas of news and current affairs, and sport for the Seven Network and Australian News Channel. Her experience as a journalist helped give her the tools to research the football facts and real-life players included in the stories.

Kristin says: 'One of my favourite things about writing the Football Fever series has been learning about all the players from the CommBank Matildas players and the Subway Socceroos. They have such interesting and diverse stories and took many different pathways to end up playing for Australia in a sport they love. So much of what I discovered was unexpected, and it is the unexpected things that make the best stories.'

#### Questions and activities

1. Players in the CommBank Matildas, Australia's national female football players, are breaking lots of records. Research Matildas players Sam Kerr and Clare Polkinghorne. What records do these players hold?
2. Choose an Australian football player you find interesting. Create a page/poster to persuade your class why that player is special. Include all the important information about the person and any unusual or unexpected facts. Why is this player important to you?
3. Write a short fiction story about meeting the Australian football player you researched. Think about the unexpected things you found out and what makes them interesting. Imagine what would it *feel* like to be talking to them and what could go wrong. Remember an author's job is to make trouble!



## ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
Football Fever 1: The Kick-off	Kristin Darell	9781761048067	3	\$14.99		
Football Fever 2: Half-time Heroes	Kristin Darell	9781761048074	3	\$14.99		
Football Fever 3: Next Level	Kristin Darell	9781761048081	3	\$14.99		
Football Fever 4: Gala Day	Kristin Darell	9781761048098	3	\$14.99		
<b>TOTAL</b>						

PLEASE NOTE THAT PRICES ARE RECOMMENDED RETAIL ONLY AND MAY HAVE CHANGED SINCE THE TIME OF PRINTING. PRICES ARE GST INCLUSIVE.

<p>NAME: _____</p> <p>SCHOOL: _____</p> <p>ADDRESS: _____</p> <p>STATE: _____</p> <p>POSTCODE: _____</p> <p>TEL: _____</p> <p>EMAIL: _____</p> <p>ACCOUNT NO.: _____</p> <p>PURCHASE ORDER NO.: _____</p>	<p>PLEASE SEND ORDER FORMS TO YOUR LOCAL EDUCATION SUPPLIER.</p>
---	--

