

Gordon Banks - The Impossible Save

Friday 12 January, 2018

Gordon Banks, arguably the world's greatest ever goalkeeper, was eighty on 30th December. Inevitably what every commentator and journalist wanted to talk about, even more than the **1966 World Cup** victory, was the world's greatest ever save.

That 'impossible' save has taken on more significance as Gordon revealed his love of nature and his concern for what is happening to the planet we share. Gordon says, "Throughout my footballing career I have been fortunate enough in my lifetime to visit some of the most beautiful places on earth. I truly believe that we must unite to change attitudes and make the difference needed to save this beautiful world we live in. Sport and Art are consistent sources of inspiration to many, I believe sportsmen and women inspire people to achieve the impossible and artists open our eyes to see the beauty in so many things. Let us unite and fight to save this beautiful planet".

In 2016, Gordon became a sport ambassador for **NO MORE DODOS**, a charity which uses Art, Sport and Lifestyle to raise awareness of the threats to endangered plants, animals, and their habitats. The charity commissioned a 1970's pop art image of the save from artist Paul Windridge and the save has been adopted as an emblem and the metaphor which inspires their mission.

Says **Geoff Francis** co-founder of the charity, 'Gordon defied what appeared inevitable when he managed to make an impossible save from the greatest player in the world, Pele. Pele's header had 'goal' written all over it. For many people the continued destruction of the planet is seen as inevitable. But that sort of thinking is not what the world needs.'

The commentators at the time, and for many years after, suggested that Gordon would not know how he did it. But that is not the case. He applied intelligence, understanding and experience as he set about preparing for the prevailing conditions.

In Mexico the playing surfaces were baked hard. He saw how the ball was bouncing up high from the ground. And so it was on the day - as he dived he was able to anticipate how high the ball was going to bounce. He got a hand to it. The ball hit the top of his hand and looked as though it might still be heading into the top of the net. But as he hit the floor he saw that he had made the save.

For the sake of the planet and all the generations that will follow we have to take inspiration from the achievements of sporting heroes like Gordon, recognise the dedication and intelligence that brought them about and apply them in our own lives to the challenge. That challenge is to find the hero inside ourselves and to save this beautiful planet as Gordon asks us to.

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