

# Football Flukes

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## About the Book

*'We're on the cup trail!'*

Luke Crawford, captain of the Sunday league team the Swillsby Swifts, knows that he's got a tough task ahead of him when the Swifts set out to play an important cup-tie. After all, it's a running joke that his team are the strongest in the League: at the bottom, holding everyone else up! Luke wants to prove that the Swifts' first-round victory in the cup wasn't simply a fluke.

Win or lose, Luke and his teammates love their football. But if they can win once, they can win again. And again. For league positions count for nothing in the cup. Every game is a one-off, and a single goal is all it can take to turn a team into giantkillers...

A gripping tale, filled with football action, in the terrific SOCCER MAD series.

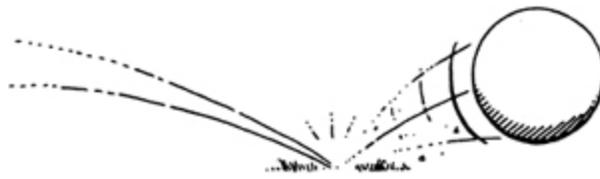
**ROB CHILDS**

**FOOTBALL  
FLUKES**

**ILLUSTRATED BY  
AIDAN POTTS**

**RHCP DIGITAL**

For soccer's underdogs - dream on and may your team be  
lucky!



# 1 Cup Trail

*'WE'RE ON OUR way to Wembley! We're on our way to Wembley! La-la-la-la! La-la-la-la!'*

The hopeful chant might have carried greater conviction if dozens of travelling supporters were rocking the coach with their delirious optimism. As it was, a few off-key, croaky voices from the back of an old van didn't have quite the same effect. Even if they did belong to the actual players.

'Quit that racket, will you!' the driver ordered. 'I'm trying to concentrate on where I'm going. And it certainly isn't Wembley.'

'Are we nearly there yet, Dad?' Luke chirped up, undeterred.

Mr Crawford sighed. 'You've already asked me that twice in the last ten minutes. I'm still none the wiser. Ray's got the map.'

'Bet he's got no idea how to find this place either,' Sanjay grunted. The goalkeeper rubbed a gap in the steamed-up, rear window and peered out. 'I'm sure we've been past these houses before.'

Luke saw Uncle Ray's crowded estate car pull into the kerb without warning, causing his dad to brake suddenly and jerk his own passengers against their seat-belts. The car behind, the third member of their little football convoy, almost ran into the back of them. All three drivers got out and began a heated argument over the map in the middle

of the road, involving much shaking of heads and gesticulating.

Luke consulted his watch anxiously. 'We should be there by now. It's almost kick-off time,'

'The match can't start without us, can it?' said Titch, squeezed in between Sanjay and Tubs. It was a squash even for someone as pint-sized as Titch. Tubs's vast backside took up most of the long seat.

The full-back's rumbling laugh now filled the van too. 'I wouldn't be too sure about that. It's gonna be so one-sided, I don't suppose they'd notice whether we turned up or not.'



'Rubbish!' countered Luke vehemently. 'They'll know they've got a game on their hands once we get stuck into them. The cup's got our name on it this year, I can feel it.'

'At the rate we're going, I'd tell the engraver to make it next year, if I were you,' Sanjay observed dryly.

Luke decided it was time to take action. 'If you want a job doing properly, do it yourself,' he muttered, climbing out of the van to stop a passer-by and ask directions to the local park.

Luke did most things himself as far as his Under-13 Sunday League team were concerned. Not only was he captain of Swillsby Swifts, he was coach, trainer and player-manager too. Picking the side was the only way Luke could guarantee getting a game each week.

The three men returned sheepishly to their vehicles and the convoy trundled on - just fifty metres to the half-concealed park entrance. They were greeted, for want of a better word, by the impatient, short-tempered team manager of Digby Dynamos.

'You lot are so late, I've got every right to claim a walk-over through to the next round,' he fumed, brandishing the League's handbook at them. 'That's what the rules say in here, y'know.'



Luke's dad attempted to apologize, but the man was in no mood to listen to any excuses. He turned on his heel with a parting sneer. 'Good job for you my lads still want to play. They're out to break the club record today for the number of goals scored in a single match!'