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News  
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## World's first database of footballer statues compiled by UK researchers

**\*\*Images available\*\***

A database of statues commemorating football's heroes around the world has been compiled by researchers from the University of Sheffield, UK.

Over 400 statues of footballers now stand proudly at stadiums or civic sites in 56 different countries spread across six continents, reflecting the global appeal of the game.

The striking database, at [www.sportingstatues.com](http://www.sportingstatues.com) features information on when the statues were unveiled, who sculpted them and the inscriptions on plinths or plaques, as well as images of each statue and links to location maps, as well as a world map of statues.

Just under 300 different footballers, as well as less obvious subjects such as chairmen, broadcasters and fans are amongst the 320 distinct individuals depicted. Unsurprisingly, the most frequently portrayed player, with 6 statues, is the legendary Pelé; a statue of his father has also been erected. In addition, 125 statues of anonymous football players have been identified.

Though the United Kingdom leads the way with 80 statues, traditional football nations Brazil, Spain and Holland have each erected more than 20, and statues are also popular in Argentina, Russia and Mexico. Even nations with a less successful playing history, such as China, Bolivia, Israel and Indonesia, have erected monuments to their greatest players.

The database and mapping have been compiled by a small team led by Dr Chris Stride, a statistician from the Institute of Work Psychology, University of Sheffield and Ffion Thomas, a postgraduate student from the University of Central Lancashire, who have worked on the project for the past three years.

Dr Stride said: "The earliest footballer statue identified, an anonymous player, can be found in Copenhagen, Denmark, and was sculpted in 1903. Real Madrid were the first club to erect statues at their stadium, portraying their Argentinian stars Sotero Aranguren and Alberto Machimbarrena in 1925."

"However, almost 95 per cent of football statues have been created since 1990, and over half in the last decade, showing it to be a largely modern phenomenon. The primary reasons for this increase are football clubs' marketing strategies based around branding through nostalgia and authenticity, along with the desire of fans to project their club's distinct identity in an increasingly globalised game. Statues are also being erected by towns, cities and commercial organisations, who are seeking reflected glory and identity from their local sporting heritage."

The database goes live to the public at [www.sportingstatues.com](http://www.sportingstatues.com) at 10:00 GMT on Monday 7 April 2014, but advance access is available to media organisations from 12:00 GMT Friday 4 April 2014 at [www.offbeat.group.shef.ac.uk/statues/database\\_footballx.htm](http://www.offbeat.group.shef.ac.uk/statues/database_footballx.htm).

Dr Stride will be speaking about football statues at the *Soccer As A Beautiful Game* conference at Hofstra University, New York, between 10<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> April 2014, as part of a line-up of soccer scholars, journalists, players and coaches, including the great Pelé.

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**To view this news release and images online (from 4 April), visit:**  
<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/news/nr/world-first-football-statue-database-1.364756>

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## **Notes to editors:**

### **The Sporting Statues Project**

The Sporting Statues Project, based at the University of Sheffield, UK is a cross-disciplinary research study that records and researches figurative statues and other forms of commemoration of sportsmen and women around the world. Since 2010 we have published a series of academic papers and magazine articles, spoken at sport history, visual art, and sports marketing conferences, and collected information on over 600 statues.

At present the project website [www.sportingstatues.com](http://www.sportingstatues.com) displays databases for all UK-sited sporting statues, US baseball statues, world cricket statues and now world football (soccer) statues. For news on forthcoming project publications and website updates, follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/sportingstatues>

### **The University of Sheffield**

Each year nearly 25,000 of the brightest students from 125 countries come to the University of Sheffield to learn alongside 1,181 of the world's best academics at one of the UK's leading universities. Staff and students at Sheffield are committed to helping discover and understand the causes of things - and propose solutions that have the power to transform the world we live in.

A member of the Russell Group, the University of Sheffield has a reputation for world-class teaching and research excellence across a wide range of disciplines. The University of Sheffield has been named University of the Year in the Times Higher Education Awards 2011 for its exceptional performance in research, teaching, access and business performance. In addition, the University has won four Queen's Anniversary Prizes (1998, 2000, 2002, 2007), recognising the outstanding contribution by universities and colleges to the United Kingdom's intellectual, economic, cultural and social life.

One of the markers of a leading university is the quality of its alumni and Sheffield boasts five Nobel Prize winners among former staff and students. Its alumni have gone on to hold positions of great responsibility and influence all over the world, making significant contributions in their chosen fields.

Research partners and clients include Boeing, Rolls-Royce, Unilever, Boots, AstraZeneca, GSK, ICI, Slazenger, and many more household names, as well as UK and overseas government agencies and charitable foundations.

The University has well-established partnerships with a number of universities and major corporations, both in the UK and abroad. Its partnership with Leeds and York Universities in the White Rose Consortium has a combined research power greater than that of either Oxford or Cambridge.

For further information, please visit [www.sheffield.ac.uk](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk)