



Friendly Matches

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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The latest collection from the premier team that gave us **Please Mrs Butler** and **Heard it in the Playground** is again based around a single subject, but it is football this time rather than school life. As in the previous collections, Ahlberg plays variations in verse on jokes, stock situations, comic heroes and songs. There is the subtle modulation of point of view and address which moves cunningly between child and adult, and a characteristic nostalgic tone which makes us always aware of Ahlberg's own childhood. The subject offers limited scope. Girls put in only a token appearance, and it is slightly disappointing to find Ahlberg so often reworking ideas from film or television comedy. But this is balanced by the poems which link football and childhood more profoundly and by a tour de force like 'The Goals of Bingo Boot'. This takes the career of a working class footballer in the twentieth century beyond death to a crucial role in a local derby between Heaven and Hell, which involves Attila the Hun, Good King Wenceslas and Fred Astaire, among others. Wegner's cover is a team photo that features some of this crew, and his illustrations once again bring out the best in the poems, although, in one instance at least, what is shown in the illustration does not agree precisely with what is described in the text.

Running Order:

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