



Goal!

By Mina Javaherbin

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A lyrical, strikingly illustrated story celebrates the unifying power of soccer.

In a dusty township in South Africa, Ajani and his friends have earned a brand-new, federation-size soccer ball.

They kick. They dribble. They run. They score. These clever boys are football champions! But when a crew of bullies tries to steal their ball, will Ajani and his friends be able to beat them at their own game?

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Editorial Review

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Arriving in time for the 2010 World Cup, this heart-tugging picture book from a debut author tells a lyrical soccer story in the voice of a young boy in a South African shantytown. After winning a federation-size “football” at school, the narrator and his friends enjoy a game, but bullies interrupt them. With some deft foot maneuvers, though, the young players deter the aggressors and resume their game, this time with a wary lookout: “The streets are not always safe.” The poetic text’s rhythmic repetition emphasizes the boys’ joyful empowerment: “When we play, / we forget to worry. / When we run, / we are not afraid.” In full-page oil paintings, Ford uses unusual angles to intensify the sense of the scuffling, exciting action; the tense confrontation; and the reality of shantytown life. An afterword includes fascinating historical notes and reinforces the narrator’s moving message about soccer’s power to inspire and connect fans and players around the world: “I follow the ball to the end of the alley; / I follow the ball to the end of the world.” Grades K-3. --Gillian Engberg

About the Author

Mina Javaherbin was born in Iran and immigrated to the United States, where she is now a practicing architect. She lives in Southern California. This is her first picture book.

A. G. Ford is the illustrator of the New York Times bestseller *BARACK* by Jonah Winter and *MICHELLE* by Deborah Hopkinson. He also contributed to *OUR CHILDREN CAN SOAR: A CELEBRATION OF ROSA, BARACK, AND THE PIONEERS OF CHANGE* by Michelle Cook. He lives in The Colony, Texas.

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