



RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA READING GUIDES

Jasper Zammit (Soccer Legend)

By Deborah Abela and Johnny Warren

Random House Australia
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9781741660661 *The Game of Life*
9781741660869 *The Striker*
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Reading Level: 8+

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

'No other sport reflects life more than soccer.'

Johnny Warren, *Jasper Zammit (Soccer Legend): The Finals* p. 190.

Johnny Warren lived soccer. In his life as a professional soccer player, commentator and hero of the Beautiful Game, he believed soccer reflected life in the need to always do your best, to be a good human being and also in the highs and lows of success and disappointment.

Before starting to write *Jasper Zammit*, I knew very little about soccer, but with Johnny, SBS soccer coverage, local kids' teams and loads of books and websites, I've come to love the game. When I first met Johnny, he insisted that the *Jasper* books had to show soccer as a game of great skill

and expertise but also as a game of great character and respect. Johnny said the way you handled yourself on the pitch was the way you handled yourself as a human being.

It is also a game of equality. It is the most watched and played game in the world and is often referred to as the **World Game** . . . whoever you are, whether you're rich or poor, from the suburbs of Sydney or the favelas (slums) of Brazil, from Asia, Europe or Russia . . . the game accepts everyone and unites a world in a way no other single event can, even the Olympics. The 2006 World Cup in Germany broke all records for TV viewing with a cumulative audience of thirty billion people!

Welcome to the Beautiful Game and **Jasper Zammit (Soccer Legend)**.

Introduction to the series

There are three books in the series which cover an entire season of soccer for the Rovers U11s. It's a mixed team of girls and boys, many of whom have been playing together since they were in the U5s. It centres on Jasper Zammit, who dreams of one day being a soccer legend . . . and if he'd stop daydreaming about it during the matches then it might just happen.

A brief overview of the books

Jasper Zammit (Soccer Legend) Part 1: The Game of Life

Jasper Zammit is a soccer legend . . . at least in his own head. Whole stadiums shout his name as he bends balls, accepts trophies and scores magic goals for the Rovers Under-11s. When a new girl, Lil, joins the team, Jasper thinks he's found someone as obsessed with soccer as he is, but there's one hitch – Lil's dad is the reason Jasper's dad has lost his job. Can the two still be friends?

Jasper Zammit (Soccer Legend) Part 2: The Striker

There's a new kid at Jasper's school. Aamir can't speak English, but he knows a few tricks on the soccer field and he's soon invited to join the Rovers. The problem is, the Eastville Kings player, Badger MacKenzie, can't resist doing what he does best – badgering his opponents to put them off their game. This time his target is Aamir. Someone will be sent off the field with a red card – but who will it be? And will it affect the Rovers' dream of playing in the finals?

Jasper Zammit (Soccer Legend) Part 3: The Finals

It's a few weeks before the finals. Coach Wallace has to go overseas but he leaves the Rovers in the hands of a new coach who is keen, charming and knows his stuff. But winning is all he cares about, and suddenly the game isn't as fun as it used to be. When Lil's brother arrives home from playing with the state team, he helps the Rovers devise a plan to get them back on track. But will he be able to save the team from falling apart? Time is running out and he's their only hope.

THEMES AND RELATED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

The major themes of the Jasper Zammit (Soccer Legend) series include:

- 1)** The FIFA Fair Play rule (books 1-3)
- 2)** Who you are on the field should reflect who you are as a human being (books 1-3)
- 3)** Bullying (books 1-3)
- 4)** Racism (book 2 especially)
- 5)** Big Issues: Who do you talk to? Including how to act around girls/boys you like (books 1-3)
- 6)** Believing in yourself (books 1-3): you'll never score a goal if you never have a shot
- 7)** Competitiveness – the good, the bad and the ugly (book 3 especially)
- 8)** Relationships with parents/grandparents/friends (books 1-3)
- 9)** Playing as a team (books 1-3, especially book 3)
- 10)** Dealing with a family illness (book 3)

Other Activities

- The Rules of Life and Soccer
- Higsy and Richy
- Johnny Warren and other sporting legends. The importance of having heroes

Theme 1: FIFA Fair Play

Johnny says: 'The FIFA slogan, Fair Play, doesn't just apply to the players; it applies to the coaches, parents, spectators, media and association officials as well. Be fair – every person involved in soccer has the responsibility to respect the game and set the example.' (book 3 p. 151)

Johnny was a firm believer in Fair Play. He was constantly telling me how important the FIFA rules are to everyone associated with soccer. When the rules of FIFA are respected and adhered to, then it is truly a beautiful game. Related website: www.fifa.com/en/fairplay/index.html

FIFA is the world governing body of football (soccer) but it's also active in promoting Fair Play beyond the sport. Fair Play represents the positive benefits of playing by the rules, using common sense and respecting everyone.

FIFA has set up alliances with UNICEF, WHO, ILO, UNHCR, SOS Children's Villages and others, to link the power of football with the experience and ability of those who, day by day and side by side, are striving to make a better world.

The most hotly debated topics of our times, such as equality, peace, children's rights, health, education and the environment, do not escape the attention of FIFA. The fight against discrimination, racism and child labour and for better health, equal education opportunities for boys and girls, and the integration of handicapped people in society, are some of the priorities that FIFA has been concentrating on for many years.

Activities:

Research what programs (outside of sport) FIFA is involved in to promote the principal of Fair Play throughout the world.

Choose one of the programs FIFA has set up and investigate how it is carried out.

How can some of FIFA's Laws be played out in your life? Write examples of how this may work in your school or neighbourhood. (Rules below.)

Write a short story, script, comic or storyboard where we can see one or more of the FIFA rules below in action. This can be done by student choice or picked out of a 'hat' so that all the rules are covered.

FIFA Fair Play Code

1. Play fair

Winning is without value if victory has been achieved unfairly or dishonestly. Cheating is easy, but brings no pleasure. Playing fair requires courage and character. It is also more satisfying. Fair Play always has its reward, even when the game is lost. Playing fair earns respect, while cheating only brings shame. Remember: it is only a game. And games are

pointless unless played fairly.

2. Play to win but accept defeat with dignity

Winning is the object of playing any game. Never set out to lose. If you do not play to win, you are cheating your opponents, deceiving those who are watching, and also fooling yourself. Never give up against stronger opponents but never relent against weaker ones. It is an insult to any opponent to play at less than full strength. Play to win, until the final whistle. But remember nobody wins all the time. You win some, you lose some. Learn to lose graciously. Do not seek excuses for defeat. Genuine reasons will always be self-evident. Congratulate the winners with good grace. Do not blame the referee or anyone else. Be determined to do better next time. Good losers earn more respect than bad winners.

3. Observe the Laws of the Game

All games need rules to guide them. Without rules, there would be chaos. The rules of football are simple and easy to learn. Make sure you learn them; it will help you to understand the game better.

Understanding the game better will make you a better player. It is equally important to understand the spirit of the rules. They are designed to make the game fun to play and fun to watch. By sticking to the rules, the game will be more enjoyable.

4. Respect opponents, team-mates, referees, officials and spectators

Fair Play means respect. Respect is part of our game. Without opponents there can be no game. Everyone has the same rights, including the right to be respected. Team-mates are colleagues. Form a team in which all members are equal. Referees are there to maintain discipline and Fair Play. Always accept their decisions without arguing, and help them to enable all participants to have a more enjoyable game. Officials are also part of the game and must be respected accordingly. Spectators give the game atmosphere. They want to see the game played fairly,

but must also behave fairly and with respect themselves.

5. Promote the interests of football

Football is the world's greatest game. But it always needs everybody's help to maintain its greatness. Think of football's interests before your own. Think how your actions may affect the image of the game. Talk about the positive things in the game. Encourage other people to watch and play fairly. Help others to have as much fun from football as you do. Be an ambassador for the game.

6. Honour those who defend football's good reputation

The good name of football has survived because the vast majority of people who love the game are honest and fair. Sometimes somebody does something exceptional that deserves our special recognition. They should be honoured and their fine example publicised. This encourages others to act in the same way. Help to promote football's image by publicising its good deeds.

7. Reject corruption, drugs, racism, violence, gambling and other dangers to our sport

Football's huge popularity sometimes makes it vulnerable to negative outside interests. Watch out for attempts to tempt you into cheating or using drugs. Drugs have no place in football, in any other sport or in society as a whole. Say no to drugs. Help to kick racism and bigotry out of football. Treat all players and everyone else equally, regardless of their religion, race, sex or national origin. Show zero tolerance for gambling on games in which you participate. It negatively affects your ability to perform and creates the appearance of a conflict of interests. Show that football does not want violence, even from your own fans. Football is sport, and sport is peace.

8. Help others to resist corrupting pressures

You may hear that team-mates or other people you

know are being tempted to cheat in some way or otherwise engage in behaviour deemed unacceptable. They need your help. Do not hesitate to stand by them. Give them the strength to resist. Remind them of their commitment to their teammates and to the game itself. Form a block of solidarity, like a solid defence on the field of play.

9. Denounce those who attempt to discredit our sport

Do not be ashamed to stand up to anybody who you are sure is trying to make others cheat or engage in other unacceptable behaviour. It is better to expose them and have them removed before they can do any damage. It is equally dishonest to go along with a dishonest act. Do not just say no. Denounce those misguided persons who are trying to spoil our sport before they can persuade somebody else to say yes.

10. Use football to make a better world

Football has an incredible power, which can be used to make this world a better place in which everyone can live. Use this powerful platform to promote peace, equality, health and education for everyone. Make the game better, take it to the world, and you will be fostering a better world.

Theme 2: Who you are on the field should reflect who you are as a human being

Johnny Says: "You see players losing their cool in all sports, not just soccer. It's a sign of class and leadership if you can keep your cool on the field." (Book 1 p. 58)

There are and have been many great soccer players around the world. Michel Platini from France, Ronaldo and Ronaldinho from Brazil, Maradona from Argentina and, one of the greatest players of all, the Brazilian striker, Pele. Johnny believed that what made these players great was not only their skills but the way they acted. To be a true soccer legend you needed to have great respect for yourself, your team, the opposing players and refs and the game itself, which meant never losing your temper, always respecting the decision of the ref and being gracious in both victory and defeat.

Jasper daydreams about being a great soccer player and one day playing in the World Cup. Some of it is natural talent but a lot of it is hard work, dedication and practice.

Read book 1, ch 1, pp 1–12: *Always keep your eye on the ball.*

Questions for discussion:

- What is your ultimate dream?
- Can you see it ever coming true one day?
- How do you think you will feel when it does?
- How important is it for you to achieve this dream? What do you think you can do to make it happen?

Activity:

Write a short diary entry explaining all the above.

Theme 3: Bullying

Badger Mackenzie has it all . . . a team who wins a lot, a dad who works at the TV station that sponsors them and new kit and gear that make the team look unbeatable. But he also makes a habit of winning by badgering the opposing team.

Read book 1, pp 112 – 118

Questions for discussion:

- Do you think Jasper handled Badger's teasing in the best way?
- What else could he have done?
- Badger is a good player, so why do you think he resorts to bullying?
- Have a look at p 119–123 to see how Jasper's granddad reacts to what Jasper did. Do you agree with him? Nannu has also had a fight with his dad, do you think he needs to take his own advice as Jasper suggests?
- How does what Jasper has learnt about soccer help him deal with Badger's bullying? (See what Coach Wallace and Nannu have to say especially.)

Activity:

- What if Jasper had reacted to Badger in a different way?

- You can draw it as a comic strip, write it as a straight narrative or perhaps do it in pairs and act it out as a dramatic piece or read it out as a sports commentary much like Higsy and Richy.

Some good anti-bullying websites with further activities:

www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/wellbeing/safeschools/bullying/index.htm

www.bullyingnoway.com.au/who/about.html#use

Theme 4: Racism

In book 2, **Jasper Zammit (Soccer Legend): The Striker**, Aamir Khan arrives at Jasper's school. He's a refugee and speaks very little English. On meeting Aamir, Jasper remembers what his granddad said about first arriving in Australia from Malta after WWII: *'Kids did give me a hard time, some adults too. About how I looked, what I ate and even the way I couldn't speak English properly. So I kept my mouth shut and learnt to get on with what I thought was important, which was one reason I threw myself into soccer. I was really good at it and not one person picked on me when I was on that field scoring goals.'*

Read book 2, ch 11, pp 95–101: *Play the ball, never the player*

Questions for Discussion:

- Badger hasn't even met Aamir so why does he pick on him? Do you think that is perhaps how a lot of racism occurs? Do you think Badger's reactions would have been different if he'd met Aamir?
- How did Badger's taunts make you feel?
- After trying to ignore Badger's insults against Aamir, Jasper reacts and sticks up for his friend. What does he do? Does this make the situation better or worse?
- Jasper 'knew his granddad was right about not letting bullies get to him', so why did he react?
- How else do you think Jasper could have handled the situation?
- Do you think sport really has the power to combat racism? How?

Johnny says: 'Don't be distracted if other players try to put you off your game. It's ungentlemanly conduct and the referee should pull them up on it – but the best way to shut them up is to outplay them!' (book 1, p 107)

Read chapter 12, pp 102–107.

Questions for Discussion:

- Is Nannu right to be angry with Jasper?
- Why does Jasper feel Nannu isn't being totally fair with him?
- 'There was nothing noble about the way Badger played soccer and yet it was Jasper who was in trouble.' Do you agree with this? Is that a fair argument from Jasper? If so, why?
- Nannu says: 'Soccer is just like life. It is life. Soccer brings nations together, unites brothers and sisters across all countries and races. Sport is the great healer.' Do you agree with this? How do you think you could use this theory to combat racism in your school or neighbourhood?

Questions for Discussion:

- Imagine you have landed in a country where you don't know the language, the food, the customs or the culture. How do you think you'd feel?
- How would you know what your teacher was saying?
- How would you know what work to do?
- How would you communicate with the other kids?
- How would you react if they thought you weren't smart just because you couldn't understand what they were saying?

Activities:

- Create an anti-racism poster with Jasper, the Rovers or another character.
- Create a song that uses soccer to denounce racism.
- Write a poem that describes how you feel about racism.
- Give a speech to the class about why racism is wrong. Remember to give your posters, songs, speeches and poems catchy, attention-grabbing titles.

Related Activity: Refugee week is 22–28 October

Go to the website www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/lem/esl/refweek.htm and see what related activities your class and school can participate in to learn more about refugees.

Some other useful websites to do with this theme include:

- www.humanrights.gov.au/youthchallenge
- www.humanrights.gov.au/info_for_teachers
- www.abc.net.au/civics/oneworld/convention

- www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/index.html
- www.australiaforunhcr.org.au/aus4unhcr.WRD.html
- www.racismnoway.com.au/classroom/lesson_ideas/index_bytheme.html#Migrationandrefugees

Theme 5: Big Issues - Who do you talk to?

In the **Jasper Zammit (Soccer Legend)** series, there are a few issues Jasper and his friends face that leave them confused, sad or hurt. Sometimes the best thing to do is talk to someone.

Questions for discussion:

Choose one of the issues listed below and write a story, poem or play using that issue as your focus.

Who would you talk to if:

- You liked a girl but didn't know how to tell her? (Jasper and Lil: book 1 pp 56–57 starts it all and in pp 77–80 Jasper starts acting strange around Lil.) What does Jasper learn about the best way to act around Lil? Why does Jasper's behaviour change towards Lil after his mum said Lil was cute? Should he just be himself?
- You were being bullied? (Badger bullies Jasper: book 1 pp 112–118.)
- You saw someone being bullied? (Jasper tells Nannu Aamir is being picked in book 2, p 81-83)
- You knew someone was being attacked because of their race? (Jasper hears Aamir being picked on: book 2 pp 76–77.)
- A person in charge of you was telling you to do something you felt was wrong? (The new coach tells the Rovers to play unfairly: book 3, pp 137–138.)

Theme 6: Believing in yourself

'You'll never score a goal if you never have a shot.'

There are many times throughout the series where Jasper's belief in himself is tested.

Read book 1, p. 150 from 'The second half started with . . . ' to p. 154

With only 30 seconds left of a game, Jasper is encouraged to take a corner kick by his team mate, Diego: 'You're the king of banana kicks

from practicing with your granddad. I've seen you. It's freaky. It has to be you.' Jasper walked to the corner, lined the ball up and kicks the perfect curved ball into the goal.

Questions for discussion:

- What do you think Nannu meant when he talked about a team's 'chemistry'?
- How do you think Jasper would have felt kicking that goal?
- How do you think he'd felt if he'd decided not to take the shot and saw someone else shoot the goal?
- How do you think Diego's words helped him?
- Have you ever been in a situation where you've been scared to take a chance, but you did and it worked out?
- What are ways you overcome being nervous?
- How important is it to believe in yourself in tough situations?

Activities:

- Write an article about Jasper's famous goal. Remember to describe the action, build up the tension and capture the joy or despair on the players' faces after the goal has been scored. You may even like to interview Jasper about how it felt, after all his hard work in training, to kick the winning goal.
- You are a TV reporter or talk show host: interview Jasper about his big moment. Present as a video or act it out in front of your class.
- Write a diary entry or story about a big moment in your life where you took a chance and it paid off.

Theme 7: Competitiveness - The good, the bad and the ugly

- Badger is a key player for the Eastville Kings and he often employs tactics that don't involve Fair Play.
- **Read** the following out loud: book 2, pp 90–94.

Questions for discussion

- What do you think of Badger's tactics?
- Badger is a good player, so why do you think he resorts to faking a fall? What do you think of his behaviour?
- Do you agree with Jasper's decision not to go to the ref?
- What would you have done in the situation?

- A champion team will always beat a team of champions. What do you think this means?
- In ch 14, Jasper and Lil discover some things about Coach Riley that conflict with the rule of Fair Play. What do they discover? Do you think the role of the Coach includes promoting Fair Play?
- Do you think competitiveness is necessary to be a good sportsperson?
- Debate one or more the following topics:
 - sport may not always be good for us
 - sport brings out the worst in people
 - sport is a flimsy cover for violence
 - we take sport too seriously.

The following website is a good one for outlining the process of a debate and includes such topics as the role of each speaker and judges' criteria.
<http://www.pcug.org.au/~terryg/debate.htm>

Theme 8: Relationships with parents/grandparents/friends

In book 1, Jasper's dad and granddad have an argument. Jasper knows there is more going on than what is being said.

Read book 1, ch 8, p. 65 (in groups, solo or as a group read out loud)

Questions for discussion:

- How does it make Jasper feel to see his dad and granddad arguing?
- p. 69: 'That's not how you play soccer?' What do you think Nannu meant by this?
- Do you think Nannu and Jasper's dad each have a good point?

Read book 1, ch 9, p. 73

Questions for discussion:

- What is Jasper's dilemma in this chapter?
- How does he decide to deal with it?
- What are other ways he could have acted?
- How does it affect his relationship with Lil?

Theme 9: Playing as a team

Johnny says: 'Whatever the result, be satisfied that you gave it your best effort. Win or lose – either way you had fun and a chance to be with your mates.' (book 3, p. 170)

The Rovers' coach, Coach Wallace, has a saying before each game, 'Play fair, play well and play as a team', but in book 3, the new coach, Coach Riley, wants to win at all costs and ignores these rules. Playing soccer in the Rovers U11s changes dramatically.

Activity:

Students are assigned roles and asked to read out loud: book 3, ch 12, p. 140 from: 'For the rest of the game...' to p. 145. Non-dialogue is read by a narrator.

Questions for discussion:

- What are some of the main differences in coaching style and attitude between Coach Wallace and the new Coach Riley?
- What are some of the ways Coach Riley doesn't act fairly?
- What do you think of how Nippy leaves the team? Is it fair?
- What do you think of the way Tricky has been playing under Coach Riley? How had his behaviour changed? (e.g. ch 12) Does he act differently on the field?
- Do you think Coach Riley could have dealt with the argument differently?
- Nippy decides to leave the Rovers for the Eagles who are at the bottom of the ladder. What are her reasons for doing this? Do you agree with her? (pp 149–150.)
- Ch 12, p. 145 ends with the line: 'The Rovers had won the semifinal, but to Jasper it felt more like they'd just lost everything'. Why does he feel like this? (FIFA says: Winning is without value if victory has been achieved unfairly or dishonestly.)
- How important do you think playing as a team is to the success of any team?

Theme 10: Dealing with a family illness

All his soccer-playing life, Jasper knew that the most important day of his life would be when his team, the Rovers, finally won the finals, but in book 3, something happens to make him rethink his dream.

Read book 3, ch 17 & 18, pp 178–197.

Questions for Discussion:

- How much does winning the finals mean to Jasper?
- When Jasper and his parents hear the bad news about Nannu, how does Jasper feel?
- How does Jasper's attitude to winning change when he sees his grandpa?
- What lesson do you think Jasper learnt about life in these chapters?
- Do you think Jasper was right to blame himself for not guessing Nannu was sick?
- Do you think what happened to Nannu will change the way Jasper plays or thinks about soccer?

Activities: Point of View

Write a journal entry from Jasper's point of view about how his granddad had the stroke. Include what happened as Jasper saw it and how he felt at different times, e.g. when he first heard, when he entered the hospital, when the doctor spoke to them, when he saw Lil in the hospital when Nannu woke up.

Note: If the students preferred, they could write a journal entry from Lil's point of view.

Other Activities

The Rules of Life and Soccer

If you look at the rules (or chapters) of the books you'll find that a lot of them apply to soccer as much as they do to life.

Activity:

- Pick a rule from any of the Jasper Zammit books and explain why you think this is good motto or rule.
- Describe a situation in your life, not necessarily in sport, where this might be true.
- Write a short story with one of the rules as your title.
- Present your thoughts as a compelling speech to the class.
- What would be a great life motto for you?

Book 1: The Game of Life

- Rule # 6: It's not how you look but how you play the game
Rule # 16: Don't be intimidated by other players
Rule # 20: Don't ever be afraid to take a shot

Book 2: The Striker

- Rule # 9: Always encourage new players
Rule # 15: There's more than one way to kick a goal
Rule # 18: No matter how nervous you are, the game must go on

Book 3: The Finals

- Rule # 8: Never underestimate your opponent
Rule # 16: A good team loses and wins with dignity
Rule # 19: Play every game like it's the World Cup

Higsy and Richy

Higsy and Richy are famous commentators at a TV station. The calls of games in the books are always cut off by Jasper being pulled out of a daydream. Commentators are often known for their passion for their game and their tendency to get carried away during a game.

Activity:

In pairs, finish writing one of the calls ending the game however you'd like. Read this out in 'commentator mode' from behind the desk of a TV or radio sports show. E.g. book 1 p. 23, book 3 p. 99.

Johnny Warren and other sporting heroes . . .

The importance of having heroes

Sporting heroes are respected and looked up to all over the world. And for many of them, there are great reasons why this happens.

Questions for discussion:

- Do you have a sporting hero? What makes them your hero?
- Why are sporting heroes or other heroes important to have in your life?

Activity:

- Research Johnny Warren or another soccer legend and find out why they are/were considered so great. Find out about other aspects of their life, other than soccer, that make them great.

Helpful websites are:

www.fifa.com

<http://www.planetworldcup.com/LEGENDS/wcstars.html> (A very good one)

<http://www.soccer-corner.com/Players.htm>

www.fifaworldcup.yahoo.com

- Or you could search for websites for national teams: some great teams are Brazil, Argentina, England, Australia, Croatia, France, Hungary, Portugal, Italy.
- Create a webpage or PowerPoint presentation devoted to your chosen hero, include pictures, a brief biography, some big moments and a report or blog on why you think they are considered so great.
- Write a newspaper article about your hero – remember that it has to have a catchy headline and story angle. See if you can find an angle to focus on during your research.
- Present a radio story about your hero including an interview with him or her. (Have a friend stand in as your hero. Record this for the class or perform it live.)

FINAL NOTE

If you have any questions you'd like to ask Deb, comments about the notes or additions you'd like to make or have Deb come and visit your school, please go to her website at www.maxremy.com.au, contact Deb's publicist at Random House Australia or, if you're in NSW, go to bookings@laterallearning.com.au.

The last word, of course, has to come from Johnny:

'The lasting message I'd like to leave for the next generation of soccer players is this: leave the game better than when you entered it. Your time on the pitch should make you a better player and a better person.'
(book 3, p. 162)

Thank you, Johnny.