



A HEART OF GOLD AS RADIANT AS THE 'GOLDEN BOOT'

Gary Lineker retired from the soccer pitch as one of England's top scorers in international football, winning the golden boot at the 1986 World Cup final. Lineker was born in Leicester, and as a young man, he was equally talented at both cricket and football. For several seasons, he captained the Leicestershire youth cricket teams. At one point, he thought he might try to specialize in cricket, but in 1976 he joined his local team, the Leicester City youth team and made steady progress through the ranks and from there on he has never looked back!

Fast forward to the 1986 World Cup finals, Lineker became a household name in one of England's most memorable world cup campaigns in Mexico. In the 1990 World Cup, Lineker was again instrumental in leading England to the semi-finals – their best performance since 1966. With 48 goals he finished his inter-

national career with one of the best scoring rates of any striker. He also achieved a rare and honorable feat of finishing his playing career without ever receiving a red or yellow card in any game.

Once he bade adieu to the game, it was time now for a more effective role in perhaps a bigger game! A subject which is difficult for many to discuss – that of child sexual exploitation. The "It's a Penalty" Campaign exists to counter child sexual exploitation across the world by harnessing the power of sport to do so. The campaign has been spearheaded by Lineker himself with support from other big names like Cup winner Francois Pienaar, treble Olympic Gold Medallist and Olympic legend Usain Bolt and British athletes Denise Lewis and Baroness Tani Grey-Thompson, to whom this award is given in recognition of her hugely significant contributions

to the cause and the work It's a Penalty does in helping break-the-taboo around child sexual exploitation and enables those who believe a child is in immediate danger to act positively in real time to protect the child in question.

Let us trace the roots of It's a Penalty. This would definitely help to understand this grave social evil more thoroughly.

Happy Child International, founded over 23 years ago, rescues, rehabilitates and reintegrates children at risk and places them back into education, family life and the community in Brazil. In 2011 the Happy Child team on the ground in Recife, northeast Brazil, became increasingly aware of street-connected children being commercially sexually exploited. With the 2014 World Cup in Brazil steadily approaching, the high influx of visitors and tourists to the country for the duration of the event meant that vulnerable children and adolescents would be placed even more at risk of exploitation or abuse. They encouraged the members of the foundation to cam-

paigned warning supporters of the risk of inadvertently having paid-for sex with children 17 and under, believing them to be older. Ahead of the World Cup in the Summer of 2014, the first It's a Penalty Campaign was launched to prevent the exploitation and abuse of children on-the-ground in Brazil.

Following the success of the first campaign, It's a Penalty (sister charity to Happy Child International) has been established to focus on this essential pre-emptive task. It's a Penalty will continue campaigning around all the forthcoming major global sporting events so that many more children can be protected from exploitation and abuse globally.

Here we salute Gary Lineker, OBE for his wonderful work with the foundation and we bow down in recognition of the immense service It's a Penalty does in helping break the taboo around child sexual exploitation and enable those who believe a child is in immediate danger to act positively in real time to protect the child in question.

for upholding the greatest values of sport – loyalty and fair-play, with a heart of gold as radiant as the 'golden boot', for lending the great game an eloquent voice and for committing to protect children from exploitation and making the world a safer place for those most vulnerable to violence and abuse.

