

SPORTS ZONE!

CORNER KICK!



Written by
ANDREW MARANISS

Illustrated by
AISHWARYA TANDON

**BRANCHES™**
SCHOLASTIC INC.

For my favorite team: Alison, Eliza, and Charlie. — AM

**For my brother, Abhishek, for introducing this sport to me.
For my friends, Ayoush, Abhi, and Malathi. And for Lionel
Messi and the Arsenal Football Club. — AT**

If you purchased this book without a cover, you should be aware that this book is stolen property. It was reported as “unsold and destroyed” to the publisher, and neither the author nor the publisher has received any payment for this “stripped book.”

Text copyright © 2026 by Andrew Maraniss
Illustrations copyright © 2026 by Aishwarya Tandon

All rights reserved. Published by Scholastic Inc., *Publishers since 1920*. SCHOLASTIC, BRANCHES, and associated logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Scholastic Inc.

The publisher does not have any control over and does not assume any responsibility for author or third-party websites or their content.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, or used to train any artificial intelligence technologies, without written permission of the publisher.

For information regarding permission, write to Scholastic Inc.,
Attention: Permissions Department, 557 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author’s imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Maraniss, Andrew author | Tandon, Aishwarya illustrator
Title: Corner kick! / written by Andrew Maraniss ; illustrated by Aishwarya Tandon.
Description: First edition. | New York : Scholastic, 2026. | Series: Sports zone!; book 2 | Audience term: Children | Audience: Ages 6–8 | Audience: Grades 2–3 | Summary: Jasper, Mo, and Ruby join their town’s World Cup soccer tournament, where they learn about soccer, teamwork, and self-confidence.
Identifiers: LCCN 2024053338 | ISBN 9781546120087 paperback | ISBN 9781546120094 library binding
Subjects: CYAC: Soccer—Fiction | Contests—Fiction | Friendship—Fiction | Sports—Fiction | BISAC: JUVENILE FICTION / Readers / Chapter Books | JUVENILE FICTION / Social Themes / Friendship | LCGFT: Sports fiction
Classification: LCC PZ7.1.M36976 Co 2026 | DDC [Fic]—dc23/eng/20250602
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024053338>

ISBN 978-1-5461-2009-4 (hardcover) / 978-1-5461-2008-7 (paperback)

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 26 27 28 29 30

Printed in India 197
First edition, March 2026

Edited by Katie Carella
Book design by Jaime Lucero

Believe

THE WORLD'S GAME



“Okay, everyone, close your books,” Miss Hackett says as she stands up from her desk at Raintree Elementary and walks around the classroom. “Reading time is over.”

“No fair,” says Jasper. “I’m just getting to the best part of the story!”

“Pleeeeeeeeeeassse can we keep reading?” asks Ruby.

Miss Hackett walks to the front of the classroom.

“I love that everyone is enjoying their books,” she says. “But there is something special I want to tell you before lunch.”

Mo groans and turns toward Dougie, who is sitting next to him. “It’s probably Fish Stick Friday in the cafeteria,” Mo says. “Soooo special.”

Miss Hackett motions for Mo to shush.

“Can anybody tell me what worldwide event starts next week?” she asks.

“The International Napping Contest?” asks Harvey, yawning.



Miss Hackett sighs. “Anyone else have a guess?” she asks.

The room falls quiet.

“Here’s a hint,” Miss Hackett says. “It’s a sporting event that will determine the best team in the whole *world*.”

A kid in the middle of the room shoots up their arm. “The Super Bowl!” Davey says.

“Nice try, but all the NFL teams are in one country,” Miss Hackett replies.

“The World Series!” adds Amina, raising her hand.

“That *sounds* international, but there are only two countries that have Major League Baseball teams,” Miss Hackett says.



Jasper loves sports, and he often hears a sports announcer voice in his head. It's the kind of voice you hear on TV on the weekends. He hears it now: *These kids say they're big sports fans, but they don't know the answer! They need somebody to step up before lunch!*

A quiet voice in the front row calls out an answer.

"The World Cup starts next week," says Sofia, a new student from Texas. "It's a soccer tournament."

"Correct! And it's not just any tournament," Miss Hackett says. "It's the biggest sporting event on the planet! Countries from all over the world participate. So, next week, all our lessons will relate to the World Cup!"



Ruby raises her hand.
“Miss Hackett, there is a Men’s World Cup and a Women’s World Cup,” she says. “Which one are we talking about?”

Miss Hackett nods. She’s proud of Ruby for raising the point.

“Next week is the Men’s World Cup,” she replies. “Next year, it will be the women’s turn.”

“Well, let’s celebrate then, too,” Mo says.

“Of course,” Miss Hackett says. “Both tournaments are great!”

The bell rings.

“All this talk about soccer makes me want to kick a ball,” Mo says to his friends Ruby and Jasper. “Let’s play after school!”

