



ZOMBIE XI SET TO SCORE

By Carl Palmer

IF YOU love football Pete Kalu's latest book – *Zombie XI* – will reduce you to tears of laughter.

The award-winning writer harks back to his ill-fated days as his team's perennial bench warmer – and the inspiration it subsequently provided.

To the wider world Kalu is known as a novelist, playwright and poet. He has previously won a clutch of prizes, including the BBC Playwrights Award, The Voice/Jamaica Information Service Marcus Garvey Scholarship Award and Contact/BBC Dangerous Comedy Prize.

But go back to his days when he started writing as a member of the Moss Side black writer's workshop in Manchester, and Kalu clearly suffered for the beautiful game.

"I got up at 8am every day one summer for training sessions; to no avail it turned out – I remained a substitute," he says.

Zombie XI: The Boy Who Got Sick of Warming the Bench, a story about football, friendship, family and cross-cultural teen relationships, comes with



AWARD WINNER: Author Kalu

plenty of humour, drama, and occasional shivers.

Kalu, son of a Danish mother and Nigerian father, reels off anecdotes with a broad grin.

"We had particular rules on "wallies" (where you bounce the ball off a wall to get past

another player), and for those who had to go and rescue stray balls from hostile neighbour's gardens," he recalls.

"We often called in a big guy (Kwako) to get the ball for us – he could run faster when they set the dog on him!"

In his teens, Kalu played for a youth team called Chorlton Olympic, but again was the substitute and this provides more research background for *Zombie XI*.

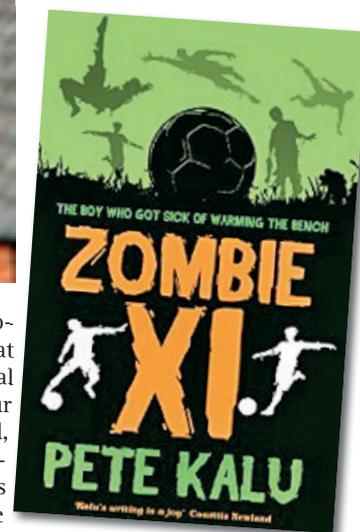
"Other obstacles to a decent match included errant police

training dogs (there was a police animal training school at the back), kites, a horizontal rain that got driven into your pores by the sweeping wind, the stray balls from the zillion other football pitches that made up Hough End," he

adds.

"I played for a pub team called The White Horse. The captain was a guy called Amrick who was prone to walking off in the middle of the match if he didn't like what was going on," he says.

"I quite by chance met him outside Moss Side Leisure Centre about a month ago (after 30 years!). We chatted. I asked what brought him here. He said he'd just stormed off from a five a side match and he wasn't taking rubbish from people."



By Troy Townsend

THIS WEEK'S column focuses on Kick It Out (KIO), the organisation where I have worked for the past five years.

Kick It Out is football's equality and inclusion organisation. Established in 1993, as Let's Kick Racism Out of Football by our chair Lord Herman Ouseley and senior figures within the game. The organisation was originally formed to challenge the continuous and horrendous abuse black players had to endure playing football. In 1997, came the change to Kick It Out to cover all aspects of discrimination.

Kick It Out has had many challenges during its 23-year existence to date, one of the most recent and high profile was the boycott of wearing Kick It Out t-shirts in October 2012, by some high profile professional players, including Rio and Anton Ferdinand and Jason Roberts. They felt more needed to be done to eradicate racism from the game.

Those were very difficult days; the organisation was being scrutinised from every angle but eventually that allowed many to fully understand

Kick It Out Column



FOUNDER: Lord Herman Ouseley (left) with former England manager Roy Hodgson

the nature of our work, on limited resources, with a small dedicated team that was working throughout all areas of the game.

Kick It Out continues to increase its work with professional players,

to advise them on equality and inclusion matters, the 'Next 20' initiative sees 20 players, both male and female, spread those messages throughout the pro game.

Our collaboration with the Foot-

ball Supporters' Federation (FSF) on the 'Fans For Diversity' campaign has helped reach out to fans' groups, particularly to help them connect to the clubs they support and to be accepted within their own fan bases.

Our educational programme has seen an increased amount of work with schools, universities and community groups. It has also seen the launch of a group called A.S.P.I.R.E. for young ambassadors. Members of the group are aged between 16 and 21 and help provide a youth perspective to Kick It Out's work.

Equality Inspires workshops, delivered within the Premier League Academy Programme, provides equality education and life skills to players from under-11 right up to the development squad, alongside sessions for coaches and parents.

Reporting procedures have significantly improved in recent years and the development of the Kick It Out app has added to that. Our stats for last season will be released soon.

The Raise Your Game concept looks to address the underrepresentation within football's workforce. A successful number of mentoring events help guide individuals in their

pursuit to work in the industry.

Football has the power to bring people closer together, to unite, to break down perceived barriers but it needs to continue to be at the forefront of challenging perceptions and tolerance. The work of Kick It Out has broadened considerably as we look to do just that.

Whilst hatred continues to exist and grow in society, it will always remain in the game but we will continue to do what we can to educate and support the growth of the under-represented. Our initiative for this season is entitled 'Call Full Time On Hate' as we look to intensify our efforts across football.

* Troy Townsend is KIO's education and development manager

