

Kevin Leyland, Author of **Devil Worship: A Fan's Voyage with the 2008/2009 Manchester United Red Devils**

Interviewed by his Publisher, Mike Strozier

1. Please describe how your book, *Devil Worship*, came to be and what made you write it.

Answer: The creation of *Devil Worship* was a nine month process as authoring the book corresponded with the Red Devils' season. The final version the reader has in the book is roughly only half of the size of the original manuscript, which chronicled about sixty United games across the course of the season.

There was no true catalyst for the book's production. Honestly I just wanted to see if I could write about something that I cared so deeply about. At times the composition of the work seemed like a laborious task, but for the most part I found that writing about my experiences was truly a pleasure. The fact that someone else determined that my story was worth sharing with the rest of the world is a dream come true for me.

2. Please describe your book in overview, the story, people, etc.

Answer: The book's plot is simple. My experiences throughout the course of the 2008/2009 Manchester United season are described in detail as each chapter corresponds with a game on United's schedule. The most compelling encounters of the campaign were ultimately the ones mentioned in the book.

My friends and family mean a great deal to me and consequently they become important characters in the book. My obsession with the sport often dictates my social calendar and the reader will quickly find out that my friends would rather attempt to partake in my love for the Red Devils than attempt to derail my need to watch the club every single gameday.

3. Can you explain why the Red Devils are an important team to you? What makes you such an ardent fan of this team?

Answer: Soccer has played an important part of my life since the age of five. Some of the most powerful personal relationships in my life all came about as a result of the people I met playing the sport that I love so much.

Manchester United became a huge part of my life during my high school years. I used to arrive home from school just minutes before UEFA Champions League games aired live on TV here in The United States. I always loved the passion and enthusiasm displayed by English fans and consequently decided that I must support a club team from that country. The fiery charisma of head coach Sir Alex Ferguson and the team's "never say die" attitude is what ultimately led me to follow the Red Devils above all others.

4. Can you recreate some of book here, one part of it that you find most memorable?

Answer: My most memorable experience during the course of last season actually took place while I was vacationing for my birthday down in Australia. I don't want to spoil the chapter as the game I witnessed Down Under turns out to be one of the most pivotal of the entire season, but I will provide some of the highlights in the following paragraph.

I end up watching the game at an Australian casino, where kickoff does not begin until around 2 AM or so local time. The casino quickly becomes packed with United fans and anti-United fans, who wish for nothing more than

to watch the Red Devils fall flat on their faces. The drama that ensues over the next ninety minutes was almost indescribable. I discuss an encounter with a Liverpool fan from Iceland and this person ends up playing an important role in that chapter.

5. Is this your first book? Have you written other things?

Answer: This is my first book. I have experience writing for a soccer website, but nothing of the size and stature of this work. I'm hoping this book will be well received and consequently give me an opportunity to write others, but at this point the future is uncertain. Nonetheless I'm very proud of how everything turned out. Everyone at World Audience put in tremendous work to help make the book the success I believe it will become.

6. What are your goals for your writing career?

Answer: That question is extremely difficult to answer at this stage of my life. I'm only 27 and have yet to figure out exactly what sort of career goals I have, especially when it comes to writing. I would love to become an influential soccer writer here in The United States because I genuinely believe the sport is destined to skyrocket in popularity in the coming years. Perhaps that goal will prove unattainable, but there is nothing wrong with believing that dreams might come true at some stage of one's life.

7. Please tell us a little bit about yourself.

Answer: I am a 27 year old first-time author living in Atlanta, Georgia. I received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Spanish and a Bachelor of Business Administration Degree in International Business from The University of Georgia. A business job helps pay my bills at the moment, but I'm hoping to pursue a full-time career in writing in the next few years.

I'm a sports fanatic and love watching all kinds of events on TV. College football here in The United States is extremely popular and usually my alma mater puts out a good team every fall. I head up to Athens to watch the Georgia Bulldogs football team play football games almost every Saturday in the fall. It's also a great way to catch up with so many friends I made at college.

8. What do you think will happen to the Red Devils in the future? Will they win the World Cup? What you are doing next to follow the team?

Answer: Nobody knows what the distant future will hold for the Red Devils, but I expect the club to challenge for every major honor for at least another five years or so. The retirement plans of head coach Sir Alex Ferguson will play a pivotal role in deciding the team's fate. I expect the team to experience a slight dip in fortunes once Ferguson finally calls it quits and I'm predicting that day will come before 2015. (Manchester United does not compete for the World Cup trophy. Countries, not club teams, challenge for that trophy).

I'm currently continuing my rituals and superstitions that provided the team with much success last season. I've also had numerous requests from friends to go and watch a game at Old Trafford, Manchester United's home stadium. Currently I have other travel plans scheduled (including heading to South Africa for the World Cup next year), but I would relish returning to Manchester in the next two or three years.

9. How would you describe the Red Devils style of play, what separates them apart?

Answer: Manchester United's style of play is the ideal blend of beautiful, attacking offense and ferocious, physical defending. Some teams score more goals than the Red Devils and some teams concede less, but United usually has the most consistent combination of high-scoring offense and stingy defense.

I think the biggest thing that sets United apart is the team's ability to score late goals when the team needs them the most. The hallmark of Sir Alex Ferguson's Red Devils squads during his nearly twenty-five years at the helm is the insatiable thirst for victory at all costs. United never give in and always play until the final whistle. The club has

become so famous for scoring crucial game-tying or game-winning goals in the final minutes that I'm almost astonished these days when they don't score late on. This intense focus and hatred of losing is usually what leads United to trophies come the end of the season.

10. Who are the most important players on the team and why? How big a role does the coach play, what is his name, and describe his style for the team.

Answer: Last season's most important player for United was Cristiano Ronaldo, the reigning FIFA World Player of the Year. Ronaldo was the protagonist during most of the Red Devils' triumphs last year, but unfortunately the Portuguese native wanted to move on to the Spanish league this summer. Ronaldo signed with Real Madrid this offseason and his absence has left a monumental void in the Red Devils' midfield this season.

This year's superstar is a young Englishman named Wayne Rooney. Rooney was very instrumental in the Red Devils' campaign last season, but Ronaldo's departure has added significant pressure to Rooney's workload. Rooney is now the main man on the squad and his performances have to be out-of-this-world if the Red Devils expect to become the first team in the history of English soccer to win four consecutive English top flight league titles.

Nobody plays a bigger role at the club than head coach Sir Alex Ferguson. Ferguson took the reins of Manchester United all the way back in 1986 and his incomprehensible trophy haul likely makes him the greatest manager in the history of English soccer. The charismatic and often times animated Scotsman will do everything within his power to will his players to victory. Ferguson is a very paternal character and he consistently refers to his players as "boys" to reflect his role as head of the United household.