



## Series Titles - September 1995

Article Author:

[Steve Rosson](#) [1]

[94](#) [2]

Article Category:

Other Articles

Byline:

Some of the latest chosen by **Steve Rosson**.

Some of the latest chosen by **Steve Rosson**

<!--break-->

The latest sporting cliché seems to be that when you're entering a competition you have to 'hit the ground running'. Well 'Colour Jets' have certainly done that with their first four which are simultaneously released in hardback and paperback. The sporting analogy is appropriate, as included in the set is Michael Rosen and John Rogan's **Even Stevens FC** (A & C Black, 0 7136 4187 8, £5.99; Collins, 0 00 675084 2, £3.99 pbk). Now this football tale got a puff from Wendy Cooling in **BfK 93** so I'll say no more about it except that number two son (a football fanatic) told me I had to put it in my top three this time as it is 'wicked'.

My own favourite is **Francis Fry Private Eye** (A & C Black, 0 7136 4188 6, £5.99; Collins, 0 00 675027 3, £3.99 pbk). Sam McBratney and Kim Blundell's detective has got the lot - trench-coat, fedora, overflowing waste-paper basket and revolving office chair - but boy is he dim! On the trail of a stolen parrot, he discovers that more and more tropical animals are disappearing but the reader will twig the 'baddie' long before he does. As usual from 'Jets' there are speech bubbles, press-cuttings and other printed stuff to hurry the story on and the big, bold, colour illustrations are a treat. When Fry does finally stumble over the 'villain', there's a nice green twist at the end.

Returning to football, another book worth a second look is David Ross's **Why We Got Chucked Out of the Inter-Schools Football Competition**, illustrated by Jacqui Thomas (Antelope, 0 241 13398 X, £5.99). Where Michael Rosen's book is the stuff of fantasy, this one is rooted much more in reality with various participants in Skimpole Street School's nightmare performance relating their part in the 22-0 defeat (this in a match abandoned at half-time). Everything that could possibly go wrong, does go wrong - the reserve goalie, a pair of arguing twins at centre-back, the sponsor's son needing to be selected, a dog invading the pitch and biting the referee's backside, an irate mum wanting to come as sub and scoring a goal, specially spiked samosas at half-time to give the opposition the trots!!! What did I say about reality? The multi-narrator style works well and footballers everywhere will recognise and smile at Charlie Gibson, the prima-donna player.

I don't know if **Jo-Jo the Melon Donkey** by Michael Morpurgo (Heinemann 'Banana', 0 434 97502 8, £3.99) is based on an old Venetian story but it feels like it *ought* to be. On the surface it's a simple enough, fairly predictable tale. Jo-Jo comes to Venice every day with his master, laden down with melons; the Doge's daughter sees him, befriends him, and wants her father to buy him in preference to all the magnificent horses she's offered for a birthday present. When father will not hear of it, she arranges to run away one night with the donkey. A storm breaks and Jo-Jo, with the help of the four golden horses in St Mark's Square, saves the citizens from a terrible flood. Simple yes, predictable yes, but beautifully told and Tony Kerns's illustrations are quite marvellous, especially the three large pictures of the city in flood - all brown and grey and slashing rain, and in stark contrast to the sunny colours of the opening pages.

Berlie Doherty gives us the school play as therapy in **The Golden Bird** (Heinemann ?Banana?, 0 434 96799 8, £3.99) illustrated by John Lawrence. Andrew hardly speaks since the death of his dad but some inspired casting by Mr Swain has the desired effect. In amongst the hurly-burly of rehearsals and costumes, Andrew watches the birds in the playground and studies their movements - he begins jutting out his head, jerking it from side to side, looking down his nose as though it was a beak, hunching his shoulders and rippling his arms up and down. Does he actually fly at the final performance? Well, that?s for the reader to decide, but *he* certainly feels as though he does and, more importantly, his life has taken off again.

Tim and Robin wake one morning to find the house has been burgled in **Trouble on the Day** (A & C Black ?Jumbo Jets?, 0 7136 4179 7, £5.50) by Norma Clarke and Peter Kavanagh. They manage to get a glimpse of the robbers and their van, but as this is Aunt Tina?s wedding day, they?re soon into preparations and suitably appalled by the ghastly page-boy outfits they?re forced to wear. The story seemed to be going in too many directions at the same time but it all falls nicely into place at the reception where the crooks arrive, having been hired as replacement DJs by the overbearing Uncle Charlie. Observant sleuthing by the boys leads to an arrest and there are some well-drawn characters, including a no-nonsense Mum, a battle-axe of a grandma and the raucous Uncle Charlie.

**The Witch?s Birthday Present** by Carolyn Dinan (Hamish Hamilton ?Cartwheels?, 0 241 00157 9, £5.99) will provide fun for younger readers. Expecting the traditional cat as a present from her sister, Ada Witch is disgusted to find she?s given a dog instead. Her spells to make the necessary change all go disastrously wrong ... and, after a few days at sister Winnie?s while the spell wears off, she learns one or two lessons.

Page Number:

7

---

**Source URL (retrieved on Jan '20):** <http://savfikh.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/94/childrens-books/articles/other-articles/series-titles-september-1995>

**Links:**

[1] <http://savfikh.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/steve-rosson>

[2] <http://savfikh.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/94>