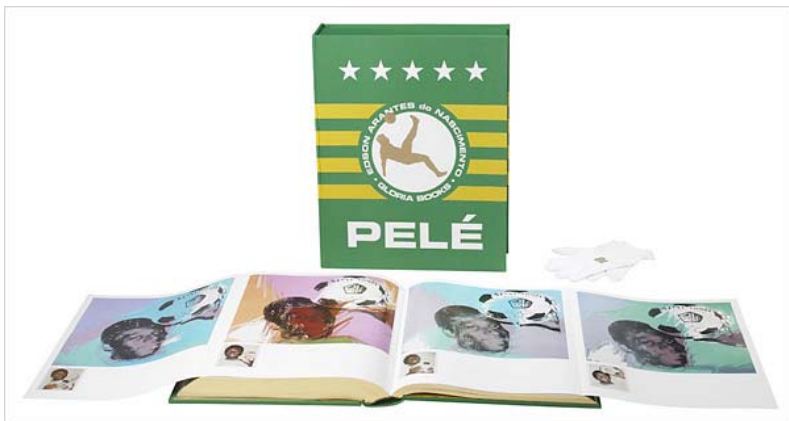


This ancient prophet is said to have come from Iran.

- Zoroaster
 - Siddhartha
 - Mohammad
-

Hefty Tribute Fit for a Sport's King

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Gloria Books

The 720-page "Pelé: Edson Arantes do Nascimento" is 2¾ inches thick, weighs 35 pounds and measures nearly 18 by 14 inches.

By RICHARD SANDOMIR
Published: November 18, 2006

"Pelé" arrived for an interview strapped to a luggage cart and wheeled around by a publisher named Ovais Naqvi, who parked the parcel in a conference room. Naqvi stripped the tape from the carton to reveal "Pelé," the megabook, resting inside a silk-covered wooden box.

Soccer

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"Pelé: Edson Arantes do Nascimento" is a tribute to Pelé, the man who entranced Brazil and the world with his soccer artistry and incandescent personality. When praise for him expanded beyond comparisons to other mortals, his admirers likened him to Saturn, or God. Pelé himself has said that God sent him to earth to play soccer and compared himself to [Beethoven](#).

So how better to celebrate the man at 66 than with a silk-swaddled tome of 720 pages that is 2¾ inches thick, weighs 35 pounds and measures nearly 18 by 14 inches? It contains 1,700 images and 300,000 words by numerous sportswriters and interviews with some of Pelé's teammates between covers in the green and yellow of Brazil's national team. Pelé was paid a fee to sign each copy of the book and will receive royalties for providing autobiographical text.

"Other than Muhammad Ali, Pelé is the only other figure who has achieved the same international renown," said Naqvi, the president and chief executive of Gloria, as he flipped through "Pelé's" glossy pages. Pelé's link to Ali goes beyond their global appeals.

In early 2004, Taschen Books published 10,000 copies of "GOAT: Greatest of All Time," a 75-pound, 20-by-20-inch book that originally cost from \$3,000 to \$7,500 (because 1,000 books came with a bizarre porpoise sculpture by Jeff Koons). "GOAT" has not yet sold out.

Naqvi served as an editorial consultant to "GOAT" and said he understood how to produce industrial-strength luxury books that he believed would produce high profits.

"I felt there was an opportunity to create a business from scratch and to focus on particular subjects," he said. He added, "Coming from an ethnic background, what Ali stood for resonated powerfully with me, but Pelé was the definitive figure in football, bar none."

Who is the current president of Iran?

- Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh
 - Ayatollah Ali Khamenei
 - Mahmoud Ahmadinejad
-

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One problem for Naqvi was that the archival material on Pelé was not as easily available as it was for Ali, and no one photographer was as closely linked to Pelé as Howard Bingham has been with Ali. And boxing photography is more intimate: It is done at ringside, whereas soccer is shot from the sideline.

Naqvi said he would have been naïve to produce a "GOAT"-sized book or print run for "Pelé" because of the Ali book's greater production cost and heft. He also said that it was easier for a buyer to tote a volume that would not potentially herniate as many disks.

Naqvi's more limited limited edition extends only to 2,500 copies. "Anything more, post-'GOAT,' is pure folly and not limited at all," he said.

Of the 2,500, 2,100 will sell for \$3,000.

Another 250 are priced at \$3,750 because the photographer Marvin Newman signed his 16-by-20-inch picture of Pelé in Central Park in 1975.

The last 150, priced at \$11,000 and signed by the surviving members of Brazil's World Cup-winning 1970 team, have sold out, Naqvi said.

Sales began in the summer in Europe and the Persian Gulf, and [BN.com](#) is now taking orders for the \$3,000 and \$3,750 editions. Mary Ellen Keating, a spokeswoman for Barnes & Noble, said no in-store sales were planned.

"This book will appeal to soccer fanatics," Keating said. She said the chain posted limited sales of "GOAT," and that she expected the same for "Pelé."

Naqvi said that traditional retail sales were a small part of a marketing strategy that was positioning "Pelé" as a sports collectible and investment for wealthy individuals and well-heeled executives.

But Paul Gardner, who wrote "The Simplest Game: The Intelligent Fan's Guide to the World of Soccer" and an instructional film series "Pelé: The Master and his Method," seemed astonished at the cost of the book.

"Pelé's popularity is still with the basic soccer fan, at the lower end of the income scale," he said. "Those are the people who love him."

A more audacious strategy in the category of lap-splitting books is "XL: Forty Years of the Super Bowl" (Kraken Sport and Media), which will be available Monday. Of its 20,000 copies, 19,600 are selling at \$4,000. A total of 400 M.V.P. copies, signed by the most valuable players in the first 40 Super Bowls (except for Harvey Martin, who died in 2001) will cost \$40,000, up from \$25,000 when the project was announced earlier this year.

It is the offensive lineman of megabooks, weighing a massive 88 pounds stretched over dimensions of 20 by 20 inches. It will be sold on [amazon.com](#), [krakenopus.com](#), [nfl.com](#) and at Saks Fifth Avenue.


"XL" (XXXL would be more apt) features never-released photographs and portraits of each of the M.V.P.'s taken on an oversized Polaroid camera by Walter Iooss Jr. at Super Bowl XL this year. Production delays kept the book from being delivered as expected in September.

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