

HRISTO STOITCHKOV

One of the most successful Bulgarian soccer players of all time, Hristo Stoitchkov can be counted among the game's elite and has already cemented his status as a sports legend. His passion and competitive drive combined with extraordinary talent and determination to succeed have led him to the heights of professional triumph.

Stoitchkov was born in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, in 1966. According to his mother, Hristo was born 'with a ball between his feet'. He made his debut in professional football with CSKA Sofia from 1986-1989, quickly becoming a national hero. In his first full season with the team he helped CSKA win the Championship and Cup of Bulgaria. In 1989 he was named Top Scorer of the league with a record 23 goals. That same season, he won the Golden Boot for Top Scorer in Bulgaria and in Europe after CSKA reached the semi-finals of the Cup Winners' Cup.

He joined European giant FC Barcelona in 1990, and in the ensuing four years, scored over 100 goals for his team. He also led them to victory in the Championship of the Spanish First Division four years in a row. During his time at Barcelona, he also helped the Bulgarian national team qualify for the World Cup for the first time.

After playing for Parma, Italy, for one year ending 1995, he returned to Barcelona, where he won multiple titles, including the Spanish Championship, Spanish Super Cup, Spanish King's Cup and the European Cup. In 1997, he played for two months for the team Al-Nasr of Saudi Arabia, where he helped them win the Asian Cup Winners' Cup. He then spent two years with Kashiva Reysol of Japan from 1989 to 1999, before heading for America, where he played for Chicago Fire from 2000 to 2001, followed by D.C. United, from 2002-2003.

During his playing career, Stoitchkov amassed numerous prestigious national and international titles and awards. He was voted Bulgarian Footballer of the Year five times and awarded the Golden Boot twice (in 1990 for Top Scorer in Europe and in 1994 for Top Scorer in the World Cup). He won the Golden Ball for Best Player in Europe in 1994 and the Golden Onze for Best Footballer in the World in 1992.

Stoitchkov's desire to share his experience and passion for the game with young players resulted in the opening of the Hristo Stoitchkov Soccer Academy in his adopted home of Barcelona, Spain.