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CHAMPIONS OF EUROPE

REACHING HIS GOAL

Petr Cech on the people who helped him make it to the top

LET THE GAMES BEGIN

Former Olympian Mark Foster's excitement at the new season

SPANISH GOLD

TORRES HAS A TASTE FOR WINNING

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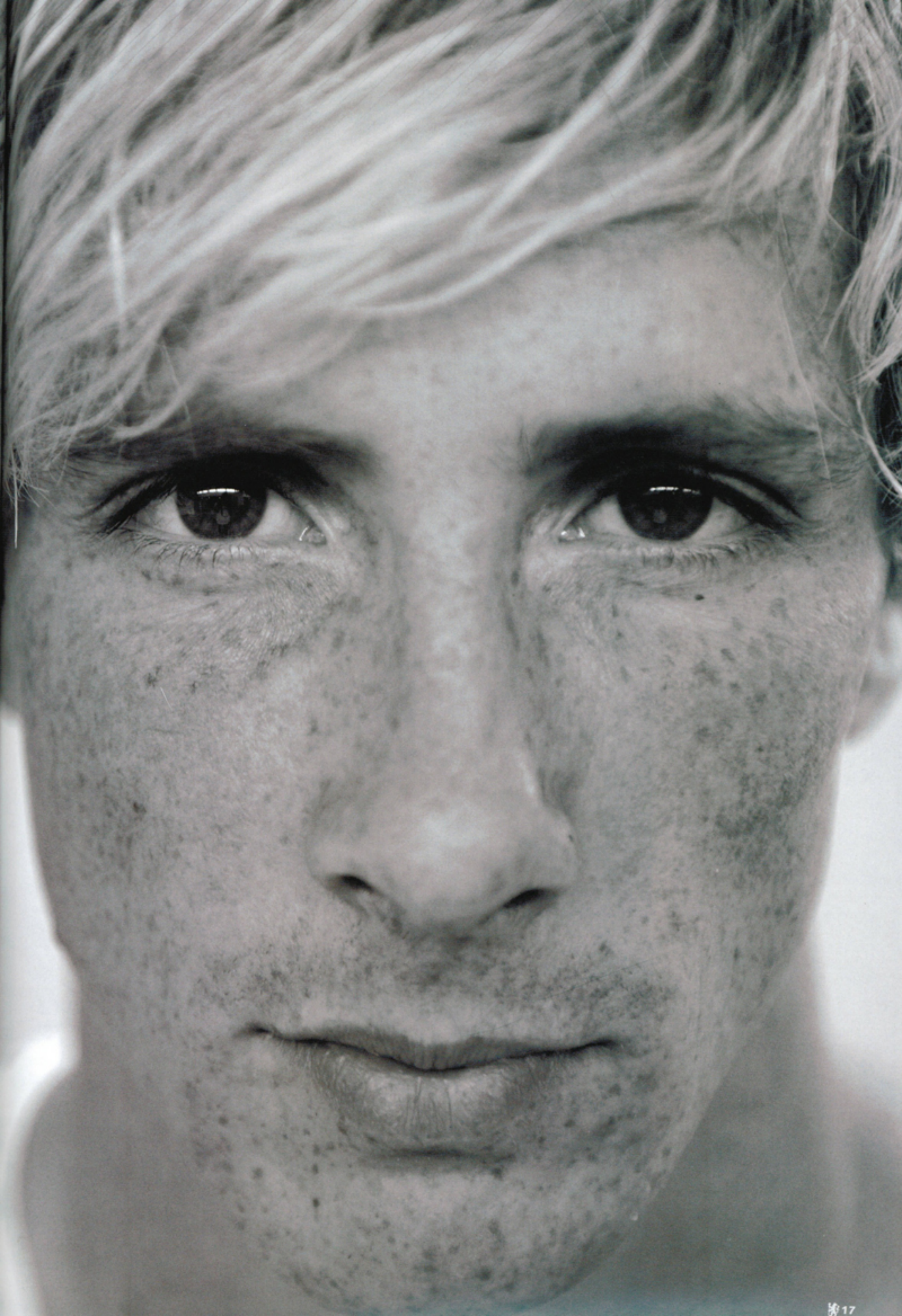


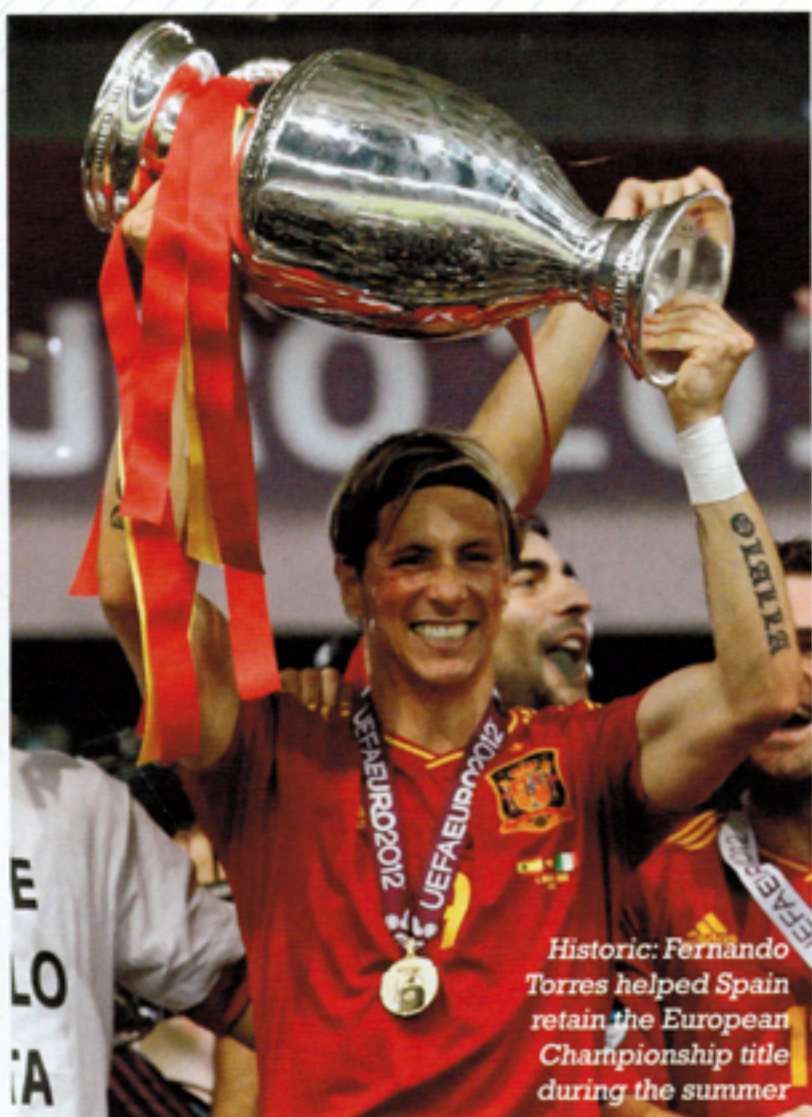
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WORDS DOMINIC BLISS
PHOTOGRAPHY DARREN WALSH

THE COLLECTOR

Having clinched winners' medals in the Champions League, FA Cup, World Cup, and two European Championships, Fernando Torres has amassed a haul that would be the envy of many a footballer – but the striker is still hungry for more





Historic: Fernando Torres helped Spain retain the European Championship title during the summer



Strike force: Torres after finding the net against Reading

As a boy, Fernando Torres, like so many of us, collected football stickers. His obsession was such that he had to complete the set – he wouldn't be happy until he had succeeded in filling all the gaps in his collection.

Now that he is one of the most famous professional footballers in the world, the Spaniard has the same outlook when it comes to silverware. That is to say, for every trophy he hasn't lifted, the 28-year-old striker imagines an empty space in his medal collection and he won't be satisfied until he fills it.

Not many people can boast World Cup, European Championship and Champions League winners' medals. However, while there are competitions like the Club World Cup still left on the wanted list, Torres – who also looks set to win his 100th Spain cap this month – won't rest easy.

Nodding at the comparison with his boyhood sticker collections, he can't resist a little chuckle as he settles down for a chat with Chelsea magazine in the training ground restaurant.

"Yeah, it's true!" he says. "You know, it's really funny to see myself on the stickers now, because I still remember when I used to collect them when I was a kid."

"Now I want to make the most of my career because the day when you finish playing football you might look back and think, 'I did my best.'"

"And, okay, that's the first thing you think. However, if I manage to win all these other trophies, I can say that all these years of hard work and training were worth it, because winning as many things as possible is better."

"No one thought Spain would be world champions and European champions twice – I never even dreamed that would happen. Next year, we go to the Confederations Cup and I haven't won that competition, so I want to."

"When you win, you just want to do it more and more and more and more."

"After adding the Champions League and the FA Cup to this list of honours, I want more. Here, we have the chance to win more trophies this season. I think all the fans are excited about the Premier League again, after a couple of years of not winning the trophy, so I think it's a good time, especially for me, to give something back to the fans."

Of course, his ambition stems from something far deeper than a continuation of that boyhood need to complete collections. Torres is somebody who sets himself targets routinely and builds up his understanding of the game from his experiences, as well as the things he learns from those around him. He is constantly evolving and never standing still, both as a man and as a footballer, and this is what makes him such a fascinating character.

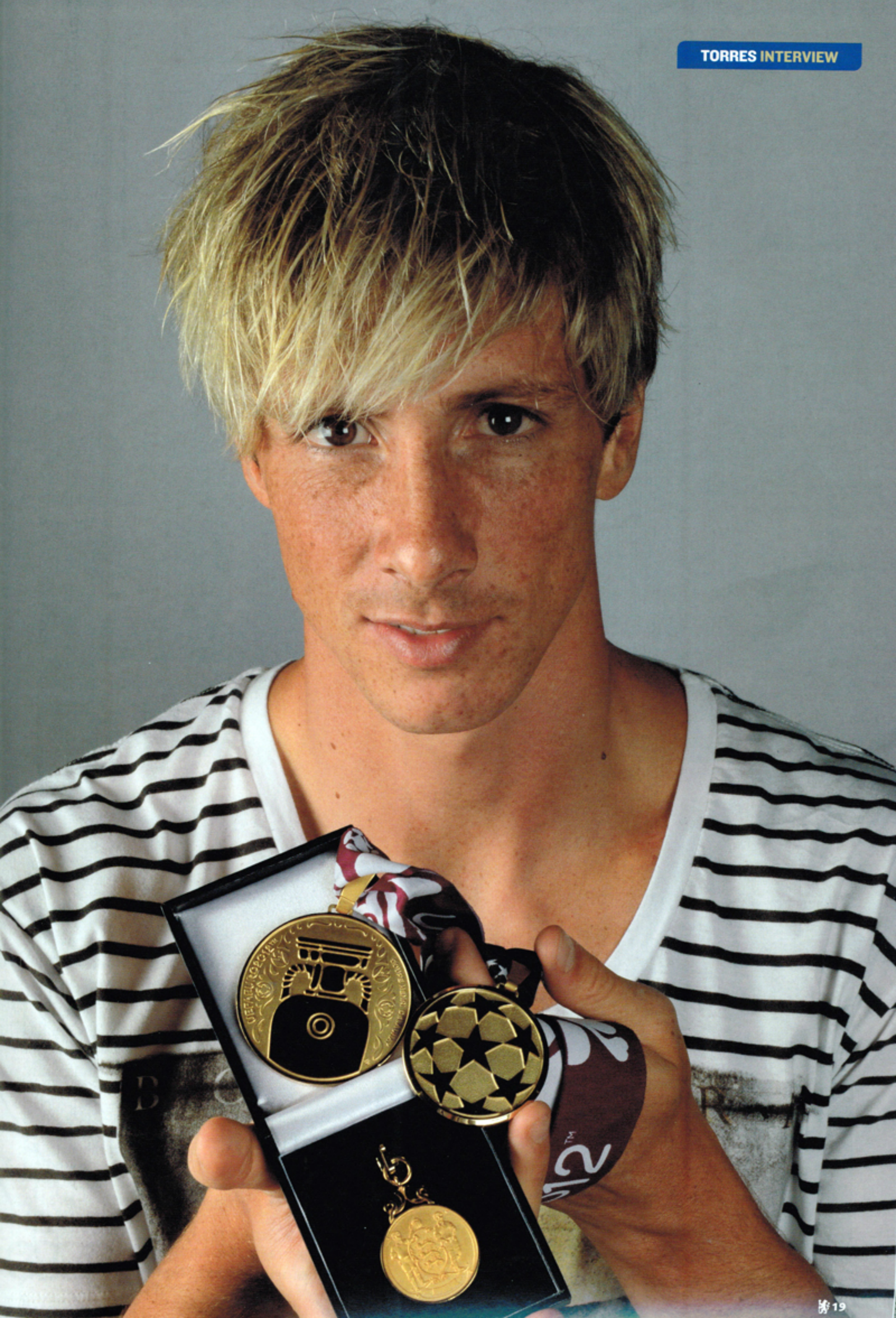
"When you play for Chelsea, you have the chance to win trophies and this was one of the main reasons why I came here," he explains. "In my first full season, we got two trophies, which is the thing I was looking for when I came, but now I have more objectives, more personal targets, and this season is very important for me."

One of those targets, Torres says, is to rediscover the free-scoring form he became so famous for in Madrid and Liverpool. The striker believes he has become a more rounded player at Chelsea but craves another major goal haul and thinks this could be the season in which he achieves it again, following on from his Golden Boot-winning performance at Euro 2012.

"Didier [Drogba] is not here any more, so there is more responsibility for me and I'm ready for the challenge. Hopefully, everything is going to be okay and we will work hard."

"Now, I am looking for new personal targets, which is to get as many goals as possible and, hopefully, I will score more than I did in my best season at Liverpool. We have the squad to do that and we have five more trophies to play for, so it could be a magic season."





To-roar-es: The striker shows his delight after finishing a fabulous move with Eden Hazard against Newcastle United



“LAST SEASON, WE GOT TWO TROPHIES, WHICH IS WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR WHEN I CAME, BUT NOW I HAVE MORE OBJECTIVES

With the emergence of euphemistic terms like “false nine” and “nine-and-a-half” to describe those forwards with a slightly deeper positional sense, there is something refreshing about talking to a man who continues unabashed to revel in the role of the out-and-out striker.

There is nothing pretentious, nothing complicated about the way Torres sees the game – his job is clear in his mind and his understanding of his position on the pitch is incredibly certain.

“For me, the striker has to be in the box,” he says. “Once you have to run into the channel, you have lost your position. So I try to spend more time in the box and leave this job for the wingers because, obviously, when a striker goes to the channels, the opposite winger has to come inside and finish as a striker.

“This is the job – we have to make sure we are all working in the same way. But the striker has to be in the middle and the wingers go in the channels. These are the basics of football.”

If you didn't know better, you might think those quotes had come from an old-fashioned English centre-forward and, when this is suggested to Torres, he seems quietly pleased with the comparison.

“Yeah, I used to love English football when I was growing up,” he reveals. “But, in Spain at that time, it was not easy to watch foreign football.

“I remember when we could start watching the Premier League, it was at the time of the great Arsenal team and

Menacing defences: Firing off a shot against Reading





"I LIKE PLAYERS WHO CAN FIND THE SPACE BEHIND THE DEFENDERS, WHO CAN FIND A SMALL GAP TO PASS THE BALL AND PUT ME IN FRONT OF THE KEEPER"



Supply line: Hazard's creativity is appreciated by Torres

Manchester United – these were the only two sides we could normally watch in Spain. Then, I remember when Thierry Henry was at Arsenal and Ruud van Nistelrooy was at Manchester United – proper strikers. It was amazing to see the crosses from Beckham and Giggs at United, or Pires and Overmars at Arsenal. The striker was there to finish the balls, the player who is normally going to score more goals."

Turning his attention to this Chelsea squad next, Torres returns to those personal targets. He wants to be the man applying the finish to the team's intricate attacks, something he feels will be easier for him with the addition of more creative players between the lines.

"I like players who can find the space behind the defenders, who can find a small gap to pass the ball and put me in front of the goalkeeper. Juan Mata is very easy to play alongside because he has these qualities, where he finds the space behind the defender.

"We have scored a lot of goals thanks to these kinds of



Reign of Spain: Torres holds aloft the Champions League trophy with club and international team-mate Juan Mata

passes from him. We have him, plus Eden Hazard plays there and Oscar as well.

"For me, it's the most important position for the team. The No10, or second striker, is the one who is going to make the difference, the one who is going to finish the game or change it by giving an assist or scoring a goal. All the great teams have a quality No10 and we have two or three this season, so we have to exploit that.

"We have to use them, because I think you win the games in the last third of the pitch and it's exciting to have these kinds of players. I think we changed, when Robbie became manager, to 4-2-3-1, which suits this kind of player much better than 4-3-3."

With his new creative team-mates as a supporting cast and the extra tactical understanding he has gained by playing in a different system at Chelsea, Torres is hoping he can combine his experience with his hunger to top the scoring charts and use them to devastating effect after starting this season with two goals in his first three Premier League fixtures.

"I think, last season, I became a more complete player," he says. "I played in a different position and the style of Chelsea was different to the style I used to play. However, at Chelsea, all the teams are waiting for us, very deep, so it's difficult to find spaces.

"I adapted for the good of the team, but I like to play on the shoulder of the defenders, play in the space and receive passes that Hazard, Mata, Lamps or Oscar can make behind the defenders.

"You need to balance things and know what's better for the team and, at any club, this is the job of the coaching staff. They have to get the best out of us – they did last season, after Robbie came in. He understood very well what we

needed and we did very well. Hopefully, this season he is right as well.

"I would like to finish my career with all the trophies possible – I may have won the most difficult ones, but I haven't won many of the trophies you have the chance to win every season.

"The Premier League is a big target and maybe we can become the first team to win two Champions Leagues in a row. Let's dream of that – who knows?"

FERNANDO TORRES STATS

Date of birth: 20 March 1984

Place of birth: Madrid, Spain

Playing career

Previous clubs: Atletico Madrid, Liverpool

Signed for Chelsea: January 2011

Trophies won with Chelsea: UEFA Champions League 2012, FA Cup 2012

Team honours with other clubs: Spanish Second Division 2002 (Atletico Madrid)

International honours with Spain: Euro 2012 and Golden Boot winner, 2010 World Cup

winner, Euro 2008 winner and named in UEFA's team of the tournament, 2002 UEFA Under-19s Championship winner and was top scorer and named in team of the tournament, 2001

UEFA Under-16s Championship winner and was top scorer and named in team of the tournament

Youask... Fernando Torres

Fernando Torres reveals what was going through his mind when he took possession 50 yards from goal in Barcelona and names his funniest (and most annoying) team-mate

What has been your best experience since joining Chelsea?

Jack Daneshyar

Winning the Champions League was amazing. After the difficult season we had until two months before the Champions League Final, no one imagined we could finish the season with two trophies, but especially the Champions League – the trophy that everyone at the club wanted. So, by far that's been the best experience.

Who is the funniest player in the Chelsea dressing room?

Jake Whiteside

David Luiz – the funniest and the most annoying! [Laughs]

Who is the toughest centre back you have played with and against?

Ryan Fahy

I remember when I played against Chelsea, with Liverpool in the Champions League semi-final, and JT and Ricardo Carvalho really impressed me. They both worked together and they were really strong.

Then I would say Sergio Ramos, who I play with for Spain. He combines attacking and defending perfectly.

How does it feel to win both European Cups and the FA Cup in one season?

Marcus Kempton

If you had told me in January that I was going to win both the Champions League and Euro 2012, as well as the FA Cup, I would have thought you were crazy. Football is like this – it changes from one day to the next and you just have to believe and work hard, then you will be rewarded. If you give up, then you won't win anything – you have to keep believing always.

What did you think of Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink and Claudio Ranieri at Atletico Madrid?

Rod Goddard

I was 16 at that time and it was a terrible



Synergy: Torres and Juan Mata



Tough opponent: Facing John Terry



Respect: Torres admires David Beckham

season for us – we were relegated. But I remember Jimmy as a legend there. Even though we were relegated and he missed a penalty in the game where we went down, he scored 24 goals and was top scorer in the league. Thanks to him, we were alive until two games to go, so I think everyone remembers him well, even if it was a bad season.

Ranieri had done really well with Valencia and he was a big name in Spain when he came to Atletico. I think he did some really good things for the club in what was not an easy time. The Italian managers we had in that time, both Arrigo Sacchi and Ranieri, did a lot for the development of Atletico. The next year, I moved into the first team there.

What was going through your head after you collected the ball on the halfway line in the Champions League semi-final against Barcelona in the Nou Camp? How did it feel when the ball hit the back of the net?

Julie McMahon

I just thought the goal was too far away. Someone was moving the goal further and further away as time went by in that game. I received the ball on the wing from Mikel and I looked up and I was seeing no defenders – all their players were in our box! So, I thought I just needed to knock the ball as far as possible past Busquets and Mascherano, who were in front of me, and run because I would be alone in their half.

I tried to do that, but the ball hit Busquets' chest and rebounded back again. Then I saw the ball had fallen to Ashley and he just wanted to get rid of it, so I just kept running, thinking, "Maybe it is coming to me."

The Barcelona players didn't see me there and when I received the ball I could see the goal was 50 or 60 yards ahead. The first thing I thought was, "Just keep the ball." When I looked back and saw no one was coming after me, I kept going and dribbled past the keeper. It was the longest run I have ever done!

If you could meet any famous person, dead or alive, who would it be and why?

Caroline Petersen

I'm a big fan of David Beckham and I always



“
***When I looked back and saw
 no one was coming after
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 dribbled past the keeper.
 It was the longest run I
 have ever done!***
 ”

have been. He had a really big impact, for me, when he was at Manchester United and then moved to Real Madrid, for everything he represents.

I had a chat with him when we played against MLS All-Stars in Philadelphia during pre-season and he always spoke very well about me when I was a kid. I would like to know him because he is a very important person – he changed a lot of things and opened a lot of options for footballers.

What do you think from what you've seen of our new signings?

Oswald Clement

We have seen Eden Hazard, Oscar and Marko Marin arrive in the summer and, for me, it's exciting that Chelsea wants to sign this kind of player.

Juan Mata was our Player of the Season last term and he was a different kind of player for

us – one that we had never had before. When he asked me about coming to Chelsea, I said “please come” because I like that kind of player.

Now Hazard, Oscar or Marin can also play this kind of position and they are going to give us something different, so we can play in a different way depending on the game as well as change the style of play during a match if we need to. They will be really important for us.

Each month we will be offering fans the opportunity to put their questions to the featured player in Chelsea magazine.

Keep your eye on the club's official Twitter feed @ChelseaFC to find out who the next player will be and your question might appear on these pages.

You can also email any questions to cfcmagazine@trinitymirror.com

