

Q+A with Gerard Siggins author of Atlantis United

Where did you get the idea for your new book, Atlantis United?

I wanted to write a sports book that wasn't confined to one sport, or one school, and the idea of a type of Hogwarts for sporty kids developed. But my pupils aren't magical, or even gifted, in fact they're really rubbish at the games they love – like I was!

Atlantis United is a mysterious place! How do you come up with a place like that? (Visualise?Draw?Outlines/Plans/Maps??)

I had a plan to sit down and draw a map of the place but never got around to it. I love the story of Atlantis, and on a visit to Clew Bay in Mayo heard the legend of the 365 islands – and the 366th that appears every four years on 29th February. I wondered where it went for the rest of the time and I had my island!

What's the best thing about writing about sport?

Getting to work in something you love – not only do you get in free but sometimes people even pay you to do it!

What was your favourite sport in school? And now?

I played almost every sport in the world – except the ones that involve engines, boats or horses! I think it's really important to try as many games as you can till you find one you enjoy. If you're good at it that can help, but enjoying it is most important. In school I loved soccer most of all, and now I am totally hooked on cricket.

What do you believe is the greatest quality in a sports star?

I think sports stars have to work really hard to get -- and stay -- good at their chosen sport. So capacity for hard work is vital. I think sports people should also try and stay rooted in their communities and their values. I hate the ones that get cocky and leave their friends behind.

If you had to go to a mysterious island cut off from the world – what three things would you take?

1. Lots of books (I suppose a fully-stocked e-reader would be handy), 2. Lots of music (a fully-stocked music player), and 3. something to write on!

You wrote seven books in the Rugby Spirit series, was it hard to move on and start another series?

Not really, although it was hard to say goodbye to Eoin and his pals. I always intended to finish his story at a certain stage in school, but I was reluctant to stop! The first three books take place over one school year each, but the last three are squeezed into 12 months! The add-on for World Book Day, Rugby Roar, takes place immediately after Rugby Heroes, in Eoin's summer holidays.

What's next in the Sports Academy series?

I've started on No2 but I can't give away too much. Each of the five kids is the central character in one book, so the footballer Joe was the 'star' of Atlantis United, while the rugby player Kim has the major role in the next one. She's my favourite at the moment!