



The Quiet Strength of Cody Gakpo

On a single emotional night at the 2026 World Cup, Cody Gakpo showed the courage and quiet determination that have shaped his whole career.

For Cody Gakpo, football has always been more than a game. It has been a long journey of hard work, patience, and quiet strength. On 30 June 2026, the world saw both sides of that journey in a single night: the joy of scoring for his country and the pain of losing.

That evening, the Netherlands played Morocco in the last 32 of the World Cup at the Monterrey Stadium. The match was tense, and the orange [supporters](#)¹ watched every moment with hope. In the 72nd minute, Gakpo scored. The game was now 1-1, and for a short time it felt like the Dutch could win. But after extra time, the match went to penalties. Morocco won 3-2, and the Netherlands went home.

What made the night so special was Gakpo himself. Only two days earlier, he had shared that he and his family had lost their baby. He was living through a deeply [painful](#)² time, yet he still chose to play. His [performance](#)³ on the pitch was calm and brave, and many people around the world admired his courage. He played not just for the team, but, it seemed, for his own heart.

Gakpo's story did not begin in 2026. He started young, joining the PSV Eindhoven youth system when he was only eight years old. Step by step, he learned to [develop](#)⁴ his skills, first in the reserve team and later in the first team. Between 2018 and 2023, he played 159 official matches for PSV and scored 55 goals. His [talent](#)⁵ was clear, and he was chosen as the Dutch player of the year.

In January 2023, Liverpool paid about 44 million pounds to sign the talented winger and forward. In England, he won the Premier League title and the League Cup with his new club. His contract runs until June 2030, and his market value is around 69 million euros today.

The 2025/26 season, however, was harder than expected. Gakpo played 36 Premier League matches but scored only seven goals. Some fans hoped for more. Even so, the club did not want to lose him. Under the new manager, Andoni Iraola, Liverpool reportedly planned to keep the player unless a very special offer arrived.

Other clubs were watching. The English press said that Tottenham Hotspur, led by Roberto De Zerbi, saw Gakpo as a key target. Reports suggested they were ready to offer about 60 million pounds to bring more variety to their attack. Whether he stays or moves, his future remains a popular topic.

At 27 years old, Gakpo has already played at the highest level for two big clubs and for his national team. He took part in the 2022 World Cup, EURO 2024, and the 2026 World Cup, becoming one of the most important attackers for the Dutch side.

His career still has many years ahead. But that one night in Monterrey will be remembered for a long time. It will [prove](#)⁶, perhaps more than any trophy, what kind of person Cody Gakpo truly is.

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VOCABULARY — KEY WORDS FROM THE STORY

#	WORD	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE SENTENCE
1	supporter <i>noun</i>	a person who likes a particular team, player, or group and wants them to succeed.	"Thousands of supporters travelled to the stadium to cheer for their team."
2	painful <i>adjective</i>	causing physical or emotional pain; making you feel hurt or very sad.	"Saying goodbye to her old school was a painful experience."
3	performance <i>noun</i>	how well a person does an activity, especially in sport, work, or on stage.	"The young striker gave his best performance of the season on Saturday."
4	develop <i>verb</i>	to grow or to make something grow and become better or more advanced over time.	"Young players need time and good coaching to develop their skills."
5	talented <i>adjective</i>	having a natural ability to do something very well.	"She is a talented musician who started playing the piano at the age of four."
6	prove <i>verb</i>	to show clearly that something is true or that someone has a particular quality.	"He worked hard all year to prove that he deserved a place on the team."

COMPREHENSION — ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1 — MULTIPLE CHOICE

Why does the writer say the night of 30 June 2026 showed 'both sides' of Gakpo's journey?

- A-) Because he played in two different positions during the match
- B-) Because he felt both the joy of scoring and the pain of his team losing
- C-) Because he played for two different clubs that season
- D-) Because he scored two goals but missed a penalty

QUESTION 2 — MULTIPLE CHOICE

What made Gakpo's decision to play in the match especially difficult?

- A-) He had recently been injured in training
- B-) He had just signed for a new club
- C-) He and his family had lost their baby only two days earlier
- D-) He was not sure he would be in the starting team

QUESTION 3 — SHORT ANSWER

Using your own words, explain why many people 'admired his courage' on that night. What does his choice tell us about him as a person?

COMPREHENSION ANSWERS

My score today ___ / 3

Q1 Because he felt both the joy of scoring and the pain of his team losing ✓ Correct (B)

The first paragraph directly explains the two sides: 'the joy of scoring for his country and the pain of losing'. The match details later confirm both parts: he scored in the 72nd minute, but the Netherlands lost the penalty shoot-out 3-2. The other options are not supported by the text.

Q2 He and his family had lost their baby only two days earlier ✓ Correct (C)

The third paragraph says that 'Only two days earlier, he had shared that he and his family had lost their baby' and that he was living through 'a deeply painful time'. This personal loss is what made his choice to play so hard and so brave, which is why so many people 'admired his courage'.

Q3 **Answer:** People admired his courage because he chose to play in a very important match only two days after losing his baby. Instead of staying away, he stepped onto the pitch and gave a calm, strong performance during a deeply painful time. This shows that he is determined and emotionally strong, and that he cares about his team and his country even when his own life is very hard. It suggests he can stay focused under great pressure and use football as a way to deal with his pain.

Explanation: A good answer should connect two facts from the text: the personal loss ('lost their baby') and the decision to play with a 'calm and brave' performance. Strong answers go beyond the facts to make a judgement about his character (for example: determined, brave, emotionally strong) and explain the reasoning. The student should use their own words rather than copying full sentences from the article.

VOCABULARY — TRANSLATION & NOTES

supporter

Common with sport and politics: 'a football supporter', 'a strong supporter of the plan'. The verb is 'support' and the action is 'to support someone'.

painful

Can describe the body ('a painful knee') or feelings ('a painful memory'). The opposite is 'painless'. The noun is 'pain'.

performance

Useful collocations: 'a strong/poor performance', 'to give a performance'. It can also mean a show in a theatre. The verb is 'perform'.

develop

Often used with skills, ideas, and businesses: 'develop a skill', 'develop a plan'. The noun is 'development'. Be careful with spelling: there is no 'e' at the end (not 'develope').

talented

Often followed by 'at' or used before a noun: 'talented at drawing', 'a talented player'. The noun is 'talent'. In the story you also meet the noun form: 'His talent was clear.'

prove

Two common patterns: 'prove that + clause' and 'prove + noun' ('prove a point'). Note the irregular forms: prove, proved, proven (or proved).

YOUR TURN — SENTENCE BUILDING

Mastery comes from practice. Write original sentences using today's target vocabulary.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

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