

Southwark
Life

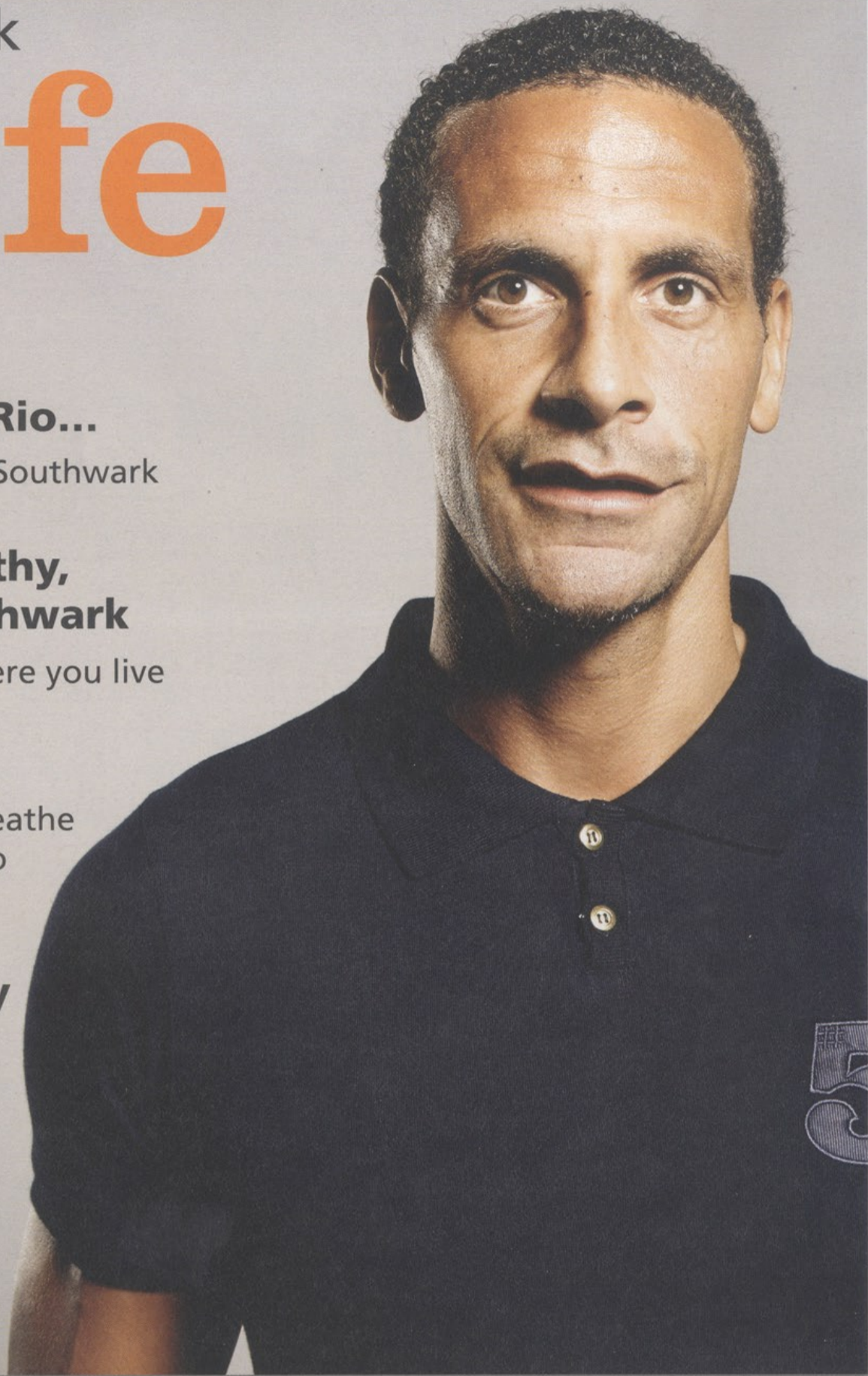
Autumn 2016

His name is Rio...
and he still loves Southwark

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LEGACY | RIO FERDINAND PROFILE

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The road to Rio

Hero to many, and famous around the world, footballer Rio Ferdinand has trodden the pitches of some of the planet's most iconic football grounds. But his love of football began here in Southwark, kicking a ball around the parks of Peckham as a boy. In this exclusive interview for Southwark Life, Rio tells us about his journey from Peckham to sporting success, his hopes for the future, and his tips for Southwark's next generation of footballers and fitness fanatics.

Your life has been an amazing journey from Peckham boy to international footballer and commentator. As a child did you dream of fame and fortune?
I dreamt of football. As a young kid growing up in Peckham I thought about little else. I was totally set on wanting to play professionally.

What was it like growing up in Peckham? Do you think there's something about Peckham that propelled local lads like yourself and John Boyega into such successful careers?

I grew up on the Friary Estate in Peckham and while yes it was tough at times I had a much more positive experience than people might expect. There's a stigma around estates – but there's also great community spirit and a sense of belonging that's fairly unique. The support of my family kept me on the straight and narrow but growing up in Peckham had a huge influence on me – it taught me to be resilient and work hard for what I wanted – which was to be a professional footballer.

You wouldn't have made it to where you are today without exceptional talent and drive, but who/what else helped you in your career?

My mum and dad instilled the drive in me and I guess that's what's helped me most in my career.

Football isn't the only string to your bow – tell us a bit more about Legacy.

Legacy is a new property group I've set up with Mark Noble and Bobby

Zamora. We all had similar upbringings and following our successes on the pitch want to help make a difference to other families and kids growing up in similar circumstances. We've got the profile and resources, but also the understanding of the issues that face these families every day – it was us once!

What really matters is good quality housing and living in a united community. So we're talking to councils, including Southwark, to work with them and deliver new communities with up to 50% affordable housing, integrated sports and community facilities and skills and apprenticeship programmes for local young people. It's early stages – but really exciting stuff.
www.legacyfoundation.co.uk

What advice would you give to children in Southwark who want to progress in sport?

Just play as much as you can. No matter what your sport just get out there and take part. Sign up with local clubs – it's great fun and really makes you feel part of something. That's exactly what we're hoping to do with Legacy – when kids have somewhere they can go that encourages and inspires them and is fun too, it's a great foundation for success.

Obesity is a huge health problem in the UK. How can people motivate themselves to get active?

Everyone has to start somewhere. Just being a bit more active each

day is a great start – and find something you enjoy.

What do you think about Southwark Council's new free swim and gym offer for all residents?

It's a great idea. Anything that encourages people to be more active is a winner in my book.

You recently spoke to Prince Harry about the impact of grief on young people. Do you have any advice for children locally who are struggling with loss or sadness?

The most important thing is to talk about things. If you have a friend or family member you can trust, talk to them about your emotions. It also helps to keep busy – try taking up a new hobby to occupy your time and keep your mind busy.

What's your favourite place in Southwark, and why?

It has to be the Friary Estate in Peckham because that was where it all started. The dreams that were born there as a kid laid the foundations for where I am today – so that place holds a special place in my heart.

