Name: _____ Date: _____

Five Goals in One Night

Reading level 8 (4th grade) · 815 words

On Tuesday, March 14, 2023, a soccer player scored five goals in one game. His name is Erling Haaland. He is a striker for Manchester City, an English team. That night City played a team called Leipzig in the Champions League. City won, 7 to 0. Haaland scored five of the seven. This book follows that game to show what a striker does.

A soccer team puts up to eleven players on the field, and one of them is the goalkeeper. The striker plays at the front. Coaches say a striker "leads the line." He holds the ball up so that teammates can join him. He also threatens the space behind the other team's defenders. And he is a goal threat.

Goals are how soccer is scored. A goal counts when the whole ball passes over the goal line, between the posts and under the bar. Half a ball is not enough. The goal is 8 feet tall and 8 yards wide. The team with more goals wins. If both teams have the same number, the game is a draw.

Haaland's first goal that night came in the 22nd minute. It was a penalty. A penalty kick is taken from a mark 12 yards from the middle of the goal. Haaland scored it. That was goal number one, and the game was not even half over.

Two minutes later, in the 24th minute, he scored again. A match has two halves of 45 minutes. But the referee adds extra time for any playing time lost. Late in the first half the clock read 45 plus 2, which means two minutes into that extra time. Haaland scored a third goal then.

After the break he was not finished. In the 52nd minute he scored his fourth goal. In the 57th minute he scored his fifth. UEFA's report said only two players had scored five goals in one Champions League game before, in 2012 and in 2014. Haaland was the third.

Now think about the rest of that game. A striker can score five times and still touch the ball only a few times. In October 2025, Opta counted his touches in the first weeks of that season. He averaged 24 touches for every 90 minutes. Only two Premier League players with 300 minutes or more touched it less.

So what does a striker do while he waits? Coaches talk about runs "in behind." The striker sprints toward the space behind the defenders. If a teammate plays a pass into that space, he can get on the end of it. The run can also push the defense back, which makes room for other players.

Those runs come with a rule: offside. A player is in an offside position when two things are true. He is in the other team's half. And he is nearer to the goal line than both the ball and the

second-last opponent. So a striker has to time his run.

A season is many games. In the 2022-23 Premier League season, Haaland scored 36 goals in 35 games. The Premier League said that was a record for goals in a season. The old record was 34. His 52 goals in all competitions that year were a record for a player at a Premier League club, too.

The old record was shared by two players, in two different seasons. One scored 34 in 1993-94. The other scored 34 in 1994-95. Back then, a Premier League club played 42 games a year. Today it plays 38, because the league has 20 clubs. Haaland scored more than one goal a game, which is a very big number.

Haaland's season held smaller records too. He scored ten goals in his first six Premier League games, including two hat-tricks, which are games with three goals. On December 28, 2022, two goals at Leeds took him to 20 Premier League goals in only 14 matches. Through November 2026, that is the fewest games anyone has needed. The old mark needed seven more matches.

The counting goes on. Through November 4, 2026, one report counted 121 Premier League goals for him. This season, 2026-27, he has 9 goals in 9 games so far. The season is young, so those numbers will keep changing. The record of 36 is still the highest in a single season.

He plays for Norway as well. At the 2026 World Cup, Norway reached the quarter-finals for the first time. Haaland scored seven goals, one report said, in the group games and the first two knockout rounds. In July 2026 Norway lost 2 to 1 to England after extra time.

Go back to that night in March 2023. Five goals took a penalty, a quick second, a goal just before half-time and two more after it. In between came long stretches of running and waiting. Each time, the whole ball had to cross the whole line.

Questions

1. How many goals did Haaland score against Leipzig on March 14, 2023?

A. Three
B. Five
C. Seven

2. What does it mean when the clock reads 45 plus 2?

A. Two goals in 45 minutes
B. The game is two minutes from the end
C. Two minutes into the extra time added to the half

3. When does a goal count?

A. When part of the ball is over the line
B. When the whole ball passes over the goal line

C. When the goalkeeper touches it

4. In "The run can also push the defense back," what does push back mean?

A. Make them move away

B. Make them laugh

C. Make them score

5. How many games did a Premier League club play when the old record of 34 was set?

A. 38

B. 40

C. 42

Words to know

striker: front attacker
penalty: spot kick
defenders: back players
offside: too far forward
record: best ever

Answer key: Five Goals in One Night

1. B. Five
2. C. Two minutes into the extra time added to the half
3. B. When the whole ball passes over the goal line
4. A. Make them move away
5. C. 42