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Another One Bites The Dust – The Curse of Aaron Ramsey

Rob Gandy article for Fortean Times Forum

Robin Williams, the great American actor, comedian, film producer and screenwriter, tragically committed suicide on 11th August 2014. The reasons for this, discussed in various media, have varied but appear to include depression, the effects of the drugs he was taking for Parkinson's Disease, financial worries, and a downturn in his acting career. However, surely the strangest cause attributed to his death is "the Curse of Aaron Ramsey"!

"Who is Aaron Ramsey?" many will ask – certainly outside of the United Kingdom, but particularly in America. They will find that he is a Welsh footballer, born in 1990, who plays midfield for Arsenal in the English Football Premier League and the Wales national football team. Arsenal signed him for £5 million in 2008 from his hometown club Cardiff City. (I know that Americans will call him a soccer-player rather than footballer, but for the purposes of this article I am sticking to referring to the sport by the name given to it in its country of origin). They will then inevitably and rightly ask the follow-up question: "What has Aaron Ramsey got to do with Robin Williams?", and the answer is "Nothing". But in its 13th August 2014 issue, the esteemed British newspaper *The Daily Star* headlined: *Robin Williams dies, Aaron Ramsey scores – has the Arsenal star's curse returned?*

The 'curse' is supposed to be that whenever Aaron Ramsey scores a goal, the death of a celebrity occurs, with the piece going on to say: "The strange phenomenon became apparent throughout 2011 and 2012 when a big-name celebrity died within days of the midfielder scoring a goal for Arsenal. And hours after the star scored in his club's Community Shield victory on Sunday, the tragic death of comedy actor Robin Williams was announced. Many on Twitter have talked of the curse returning, while others slammed the disrespectful nature of the coincidence. There has not been a case of the curse since November 30, 2013, when *Fast and Furious* actor Paul Walker died in a car accident. Ramsey scored two goals against Cardiff that day. But after the midfield dynamo scored 14 more goals last season, the curse was forgotten. Previously, four celebrities passed away as the Welshman scored four goals for his club"¹.

Four major celebrity deaths are then listed as being linked to Ramsey finding the net¹:

- Osama bin Laden was declared dead on May 2 2011 and Ramsey bagged a goal against Manchester United the day before.
- Apple guru Steve Jobs died at his home in California on October 5 and Ramsey hit headlines by scoring in North London derby against Spurs the weekend before.
- Libyan leader Colonel Gaddafi was captured by rebels on October 20 that year and Ramsey was there to bag an injury-time winner against Marseille in the Champions League.
- And finally Whitney Houston was found dead in her bathroom on February 2012. Just hours before, the Gunner has struck against Sunderland.
- Others believe he may have killed off other celebs with his goals - including legendary basketball player Ray Williams and Russian billionaire Roman Berezovsky.

Now I know that it is questionable as to whether some of the above characters should be described as 'celebrities', but there is no doubt that they are all famous people, even if infamous might be more appropriate for Bin Laden and Gaddafi. So how on earth did this 'curse' come to prominence?

Nick Enoch asked the question about the alleged phenomenon in the *Daily Mail* on 15th February 2012², which was only four days after Houston died on 11th February, with the deaths of the other three celebrities occurring over the previous eight and a half months. As you need a minimum of three events to even be thinking about a pattern, it is clear that it must have been perceived by someone sometime between Gaddafi's and Houston's deaths.

At the time that reference was made to the 'curse', Ramsey had not been a prolific goal scorer: his goal at the time of Bin Laden's death was only his sixth for Arsenal in three seasons, which had admittedly been disrupted by a serious leg break. His seventh goal for Arsenal was when Jobs died; his eighth was when Gaddafi died; and his ninth was on the day of Houston's death. Spooky! Added momentum was given to the 'curse' when Taiwanese animators NMA produced a humorous but controversial cartoon clip of Ramsey as the 'celebrity slayer' - "Aaron Ramsey's 'Kick of Death'"³ - which went viral on the internet.

Fortunately, there is nothing in the 'curse', and there is a very simple explanation. On average, the number of deaths every day in the UK is just over 1,500⁴ and in the USA it is over 7,300⁵, so if you include the number of deaths on the day before and the day after Ramsey scored a goal, then you treble these numbers to 4,500 and 21,900 respectively. It is virtually certain that there will be some celebrities included in such numbers, however they might be defined. There are specialist websites that list famous people that have died each day: The Life In Legacy website⁶ is primarily USA focused, but has lists of deaths for each week going back as far as 2007, with around 30-40 people recorded for each week; the IMDB website has pages for 'Most Popular People With Date of Death'⁷ in a given year; and Wikipedia has 'Lists of Deaths By Year' going back to 1987, with generally over ten deaths recorded for each day⁸. So there are inevitably going to be around a couple of dozen celebrities, or people famous for one thing or another, die on the three days surrounding an Aaron Ramsey goal. Just pick the one who is most famous and add him or her to the 'curse'!

As is stated above, the 'curse' was forgotten when Ramsey banged in 16 goals for Arsenal and two for Wales in 2013/14. So, just for fun – and definitely not to provide substance for the 'curse' – I identified all the goals scored by Ramsey from when he first moved to Arsenal⁹, and selected famous people that died on the day he scored, or a day either side, given that deaths in North America could be recorded as the day before even if they are on the same day, because of time zones. I have used the above and similar internet sources, and then created my own roll-call of his 'victims'. The result is the list provided. You will see that Ramsey even brought the curtain down on George W. Bush's favourite pooch, and nearly nailed Nelson Mandela!

Interestingly, at the time of writing this article, Ramsey scored in Arsenal's 2-2 draw at Everton, and Sir Richard Attenborough, the celebrated Oscar-winning actor and director died the following day after a long illness¹⁰. Attenborough was Life President and a lifelong supporter of Chelsea FC¹¹ – Arsenal's great North London rivals

Clearly, it was easy to create this list, which simply shows what nonsense the 'curse' is. With so many deaths of celebrities each day and football matches now taking place on each and every day of the

week, it is possible to name any footballer and link a famous death to every time they score. I have every confidence that the story of the 'curse' started in a North London pub in a chat between some Arsenal supporters over a pint. Given Ramsey's limited number of goals at the time, his scoring a couple around the time of Jobs' and Gaddafi's deaths will have been very notable and generated jokey comments, reinforced by someone checking if anyone died the previous time he scored and finding Osama bin Laden. It just went on from there, with Houston's death and the NMA cartoon³ sending things stratospheric! The only difference between these celebrities and other famous people was that their deaths dominated the media for some time, just as Robin Williams' death did, and no doubt Richard Attenborough's will have done. Given the media references to the 'curse' I have no doubt that Ramsey and the Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger will simply laugh it off, yet I will be watching to see if Arsenal fans start to sing Queen's "*Another One Bites The Dust*" to celebrate every time Ramsey scores in the future.

1,386 words

References

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List of Aaron Ramsey's "Celebrity Victims"

Season	Dates Aaron Ramsey scored	Celebrity Victim!?! (Date of Death in brackets) (Ramsey was playing for Arsenal unless stated otherwise)
2008/09	21 st October 2008	John Ringham: English actor known for <i>V for Vendetta</i> (2005), <i>Woof!</i> (1989) and <i>The Secret of Eel Island</i> (2004). (20 th)
2009/10	22 nd August 2009	Elmer Kelton: Western novelist whose book <i>The Good Old Boys</i> was made into a 1995 TV movie starring Tommy Lee Jones. (22 nd)
2009/10	14 th October 2009	Captain Lou Albano: Professional wrestler in 1980s who appeared in Cyndi Lauper's "Girls Just Want to Have Fun" music video, and played Mario on <i>The Super Mario Bros.</i> (14 th) [Playing for Wales]
2009/10	14 th November 2009	Dennis Cole: American TV actor who died from liver failure. (15 th) [Playing for Wales]
2009/10	5 th December 2009	Jack Rose: Guitarist whose improvisations on 6-string, 12-string, and lap steel guitar won him a devoted cult following. (5 th)
2009/10	30 th December 2009	Rowland Howard: Australian rock musician, guitarist and songwriter, best known for his work with the post-punk group <i>The Birthday Party</i> and his subsequent solo career. (30 th)
2009/10	3 rd January 2010	Donal Donnelly: Anglo-Irish actor best known in the cinema for roles in <i>The Knack ...and How to Get It</i> (1965) and <i>The Godfather: Part III</i> (1990). (4 th)
2010/11	22 nd February 2011	Dwayne McDuffie: African-American comic book and animation writer best known as one of the founders of Milestone Media, an imprint of DC Comics dedicated to promoting better stories and characterizations for minorities. (21 st) [Playing for Cardiff City on loan]
2010/11	1 st May 2011	Osama bin Laden: Shot dead by U.S. Navy Seals in his compound in Pakistan (2 nd)
2010/11	27 th May 2011	Jeff Conaway: American actor who starred on the TV sitcom <i>Taxi</i> (1978-81), and played Kenickie in the movie musical <i>Grease</i> (1978). (27 th) [Playing for Wales]
2011/12	2 nd September 2011	John Hoover: Alaskan artist who used imagery and tales from Native traditions in contemporary works. (3 rd) [Playing for Wales]
2011/12	2 nd October 2011	Steve Jobs: Apple guru dies at his home in California after a long battle with pancreatic cancer. (5 th)
2011/12	7 th October 2011	Julio Mario Santo Domingo: Colombian magnate whose \$8.5 billion fortune made him one of Latin America's richest and most influential men. (7 th) [Playing for Wales]
2011/12	19 th October 2011	Colonel Gaddafi: Captured by rebels near his home town of Sirte and dies from his injuries. (20 th)
2011/12	11 th February 2011	Whitney Houston: Found dead in a bathroom at the Beverly Hilton in Los Angeles. (11 th)
2012/13	3 rd October 2012	Big Jim Sullivan: British guitarist, complications of heart disease and diabetes. (2 nd)

2012/13	22 nd March 2013	<p>Ray Williams: American professional basketball player, died after suffering from colon cancer. (22nd)</p> <p>Boris Berezovsky: Russian business oligarch, government official and mathematician, found dead at his home in England. (23rd) [Playing for Wales]</p>
2012/13	14 th May 2013	<p>Billie Sol Estes: Texas king of con men who became notorious with the scandal that broke out during President John F. Kennedy's administration involving phony financial statements and nonexistent fertilizer tanks, for which he served several years in prison. (14th)</p>
2013/14	21 st August 2013	<p>Elmore Leonard: American crime writer behind novels including <i>Get Shorty</i>, <i>Out of Sight</i> and <i>Rum Punch</i>. (20th)</p>
2013/14	27 th August 2013	<p>Mike Winters: British comedian, who with his brother Bernie, pioneered television comedy. (26th)</p>
2013/14	6 th September 2013	<p>A. C. Crispin: Science Fiction author who wrote popular tie-in novels to <i>Star Trek</i> and <i>Star Wars</i> and helped to run the online watchdog "Writer Beware". (6th) [Playing for Wales]</p>
2013/14	14 th September 2013	<p>Salustiano Sanchez-Blazquez: World's oldest man (112), a Spanish-born, self-taught musician, coal miner, and gin rummy aficionado from western New York state. (13th)</p>
2013/14	18 th September 2013	<p>Ken Norton: The world heavyweight boxing champion famously broke the jaw of Muhammed Ali in the first of their three fights but lost the next two. (18th)</p>
2013/14	22 nd September 2013	<p>Dr. David Hubel: Half of a scientific team that won a Nobel Prize for explaining how the brain assembles information from the eye's retina to produce detailed visual images. (22nd)</p>
2013/14	28 th September 2013	<p>John Calvert: Hollywood illusionist whose magic tricks won him numerous fans and several film roles, including three movies during the 1940s in which he played the detective known as the Falcon. (27th)</p>
2013/14	15 th October 2013	<p>Sean Edwards: 26-year-old top British racing driver, who was leading the season's Porsche Supercup championship, was killed instantly when his car hit a barrier and burst into flames in Queensland, Australia. (15th) [Playing for Wales]</p>
2013/14	19 th October 2013	<p>Lawrence R. Klein: Economic theorist who predicted America's economic boom after World War II and was awarded the 1980 Nobel Prize in economic science for developing statistical models used to analyze and predict global economic trends. (20th)</p> <p>Noel Harrison: British actor and musician, son of the late actor Rex Harrison (d. 1990), who recorded the Oscar-winning ballad "The Windmills of Your Mind," the theme from the 1968 heist movie <i>The Thomas Crown Affair</i>, which won the best-song Oscar. (19th)</p>
2013/14	2 nd November 2013	<p>Editta Sherman: Photographer who made portraits of celebrities and lived for 61 years in a studio penthouse above Carnegie Hall until forced out in 2010 in a landlord-tenant struggle. (1st)</p>

2013/14	6 th November 2013	<p>Clarence (Ace) Parker: Oldest member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame (101) who spent part of his career in baseball. (6th)</p> <p>John Cole: Former BBC political editor who was chief reporter during the Thatcher era and covered major stories including the Brighton bombing and the Miners' strike (7th)</p>
2013/14	30 th November 2013	<p>Paul Walker: The <i>Fast and the Furious</i> star died after he lost control of his Porsche which crashed into a telegraph pole and burst into flames. (30th)</p> <p><i>(Plus maybe, perhaps Nelson Mandela & FT favourite Colin Wilson who both died on 5th December? – I know it's stretching it!)</i></p>
2013/14	20 th April 2014	<p>Alistair MacLeod: Award-winning Canadian author best known for his short-story collections and novel <i>No Great Mischief</i> (1999), which won the prestigious 2001 IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. (20th)</p>
2013/14	11 th May 2014	<p>H. R. Giger: Swiss artist who designed the creature in Ridley Scott's sci-fi horror classic <i>Alien</i>. (12th)</p>
2013/14	17 th May 2014	<p>Dr. Gerald M. Edelman: Leading theorist on the workings of the brain who shared a 1972 Nobel Prize for a breakthrough in immunology and later contributed key findings in neuroscience and other fields. (17th)</p> <p>Miss Beazley the Scottie: Former President George W. Bush's beloved Scottish terrier. (17th)</p>
2014/15	11 th August 2014	<p>Robin Williams: American actor, comedian, film producer and screenwriter, committed suicide. (11th)</p> <p>Lauran Bacall: American actress, and famously the wife of Humphrey Bogart, died following a stroke. (12th)</p>
2014/15	16 th August 2014	<p>Sylvia Hassenfeld: Matriarch of the founding family of the toy company Hasbro, maker of GI Joe, Mr. Potato Head, and the Transformers. (16th)</p>
2014/15	23 rd August 2014	<p>Sir Richard Attenborough: Oscar-winning actor and director died after long illness. (24th)</p>