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Fútbol!: Why Soccer Matters In Latin America



Synopsis

"Lively and fascinating. Nadel shows beautifully how soccer and politics have long been deeply intertwined, serving both to further state agendas and open up space for protest and contestation."

"Laurent Dubois, author of *Soccer Empire*

"In much of Latin America, soccer is more than a game. It is linked to each nation's identity in similar yet unique ways. Nadel offers a comprehensive look at this process."

"Joseph L. Arbeno, coeditor of *Sport in Latin America and the Caribbean*

"Thoughtful and engaging. Examining the history of the game, its powerful myths, and its engrossing reality, Nadel helps scholars, students, and fans to understand Latin Americans' passion for the world's sport."

"Gregg Bocketti, Transylvania University

"Nadel knows Latin American soccer like a professor, but he loves it like a fan, and his enthusiasm is contagious. He uses sports history to teach larger insights about Latin America. *Fútbol!* will make you smarter about the sport and about the region, too. It's a book you want to read."

"John Charles Chasteen, author of *Born in Blood and Fire*

"Here are the football cultures of Latin America in all their macho glory, but here too is the story of women's football and its challenge to Latino masculinities. Above all, here is an account of football and nationalism, erudite and engaged, that remains rooted in the realities of play."

"David Goldblatt, author of *The Ball Is Round*

"Discover the dreams, passions, and rivalries that are at stake in Latin America's most popular sport. *Fútbol!* explains why competitors and fans alike are so fiercely dedicated to soccer throughout the region."

"From its origins in British boarding schools in the late 1800s, soccer spread across the globe to become a part of everyday life in Latin America—and part of the region's most compelling national narratives. This book illustrates that soccer has the powerful ability to forge national unity by appealing to people across traditional social boundaries. In fact, author Joshua Nadel reveals that what started as a simple game played an important role in the development of Latin American countries in the twentieth century. Examining the impact of the sport in Argentina, Honduras, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Chile, and Mexico, Nadel addresses how soccer affects politics, the media, race relations, and gender stereotypes."

"With inspiring personal stories and a sweeping historical backdrop, *Fútbol!* shows that soccer continues to be tied to regional identity throughout Central and South America today. People live for it—and sometimes kill for it. It is a source of hope and a reason for suicide. It is a way out of poverty for a select few and an intangible escape for millions more. As soccer gains greater worldwide attention today, this book serves as an indispensable guide for understanding soccer's especially vital importance in Latin America."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“An engaging history of Latin America’s most prevalent sport that adds to our understanding of nationalism and imagined communities.” —Hispanic American Historical Review

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If you want to understand how & why soccer (or "futbol" as it is called in the Spanish speaking world) is very popular in Latin America, this is a book that you'll need to read. It opens up with a history of the sport in South America, which was brought there via European immigrants in the late 1800s, as well as how the sport spread in popularity throughout the Americas & how it was used to unite the countries' people, much like baseball once did in the US. There's also mini-bios on some of the greatest soccer players from this region. The book also focuses on the sport's impact on Latin countries (like Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay, & Chile to name a few) on societal issues like politics, media, & race relations (the latter, in countries like Brazil & Honduras, this is a BIG issue). The final chapter is on the rise of women's soccer & the impact it has on the sport. Overall I really enjoy reading this. The only real issue I have is the lack of any attention on Colombian soccer, which for a brief time in the late 1980s-mid-1990s, was one of the best national teams on Earth. Other than that, this is a great book on Latin America soccer. Even if you're not into the sport you'll still enjoy reading this.

The book by a history professor does a pretty good job of straddling the line between academic and popular history as it pokes around the history of soccer in Latin America. The seven chapters are loosely organized around the seven Latin American nations that qualified for the 2010 World Cup: Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Chile, Honduras, Mexico (Argentina and Brazil share a chapter, and the 7th chapter is about the state of women's soccer in Latin America). They are also more or less ordered so that they flow chronologically, allowing the reader to kind of get a sense of the game's development over time. These are further broken up by various "interlude" sections, and a number of "sidebar"-style profiles are particular players and personalities. The book frames everything though the "narrative" lens. As the author writes in the introduction, "Narratives are the stories that we, as individuals or as part of a group, tell about ourselves and our past." He goes on to further explain how and why they are used, and the word sprouts up repeatedly throughout. However, this comes across more like an academic grasping for some level of legitimacy for a project that falls outside the bounds of typical academic writing. Ultimately, each chapter is a moderately interesting morsel about the history or social structure of a country, as seen through soccer. My favorite chapter is the one about Honduras, which does a great job of answering some questions I didn't even realize I had about race in that country. Most of the other chapters focus more on politics and society, avoiding the lazy banalities of the sport being "more than a game" that these kinds of sports and society books sometimes fall into. A central historical theme that is more or less successfully carried through the book is showing how soccer and nationhood developed more or less in parallel throughout Latin America. All in all, probably too academic for the average soccer fan, but I'd definitely recommend that people with a strong interest in one of the mentioned countries dip into that chapter and see if it grabs them.

This book isn't just about soccer in Latin America. It is a well-researched study into the history and culture of the region over the past 120 years, and the role that the sport has played in it. For those who know the powerhouse nations, like Argentina, Brazil, or Uruguay, the stories will be familiar: Maradona, Pelé, Uruguay's 1950 victory in Maracanã. But there are wonderful lesser-known gems about race and politics in Honduras, political machinations in Chile in the 1970s, and the early days of women's soccer in the region a hundred years ago. Fútbol is a pleasure to read. I unreservedly recommend it to anyone interested in the sport and/or the region.

The author makes several interesting arguments, obviously based on extensive research. Began slowly but quickly picks up pace. Recently finished GOLAZO and I found this a nice compliment

to that Volume. FUTBOL goes even deeper with separate histories on MEXICO and HONDURAS. I also learned that a century and a half ago some cultures embraced Baseball instead and Football took a long time to catch on. I liked this one

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