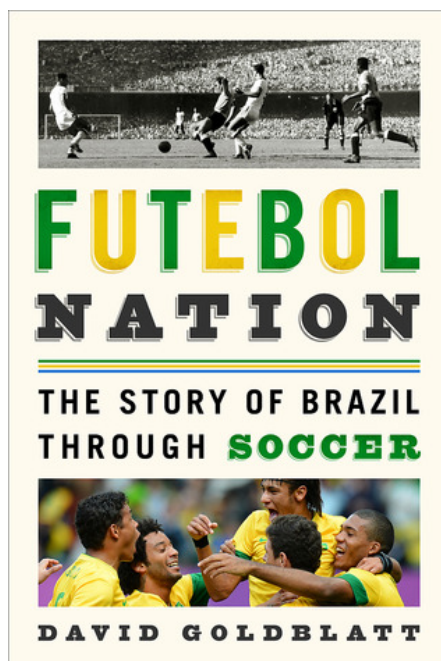




Futebol Nation: The Story of Brazil through Soccer

David Goldblatt

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No nation is as closely identified with the game of soccer as Brazil. For over a century, Brazil's people, politicians, and poets have found in soccer the finest expression of the nation's collective potential. Since the team's dazzling performance in 1938 at the World Cup in France, Brazilian soccer has been revered as an otherworldly blend of the effective and the aesthetic.

Futebol Nation is an extraordinary chronicle of a nation that has won the World Cup five times and produced players of miraculous skill, such as Pelé, Garrincha, Rivaldo, Zico, Ronaldo, and Ronaldinho. It shows why the phrase *O Jogo Bonito*—the Beautiful Game—has justly entered the global lexicon. Yet there is another side to Brazil and its game, one that reflects the harsh sociological realities of the “futebol nation.” David Goldblatt explores the grinding poverty that creates a vast pool of hungry players, Brazil's corrupt institutions exemplified by its soccer authorities, and the pervasive violence that has seeped onto the field and into the stands.

Futebol Nation illuminates both Brazilian soccer and Brazil itself; its brilliance, its magic, its style, and the fabulous myths that have been constructed around it; as well as its tragedies, its miseries, and its economic and political injustices. It is the story of Brazil told through its chosen national game.

Futebol Nation: The Story of Brazil through Soccer Details

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Emanuel Ramos says

Nice look at Brazil's history viewed through Futebol. Not as narrative driven as Bellos' book. This is more up to date, taking into account Brazil's preparations for the 2014 World Cup. Although I couldn't help but view this book in light of Brazil's lackluster performance in the WC.

Recommended.

Matt says

Since I have lived in Brazil and am going there for the World Cup in just a couple of weeks, I thoroughly enjoyed this book. I think the author did a great job of telling the modern history of Brazil through soccer, and I don't think it was a stretch to try and tell the story through Futebol. The game and Brazil and inextricably linked, and he showed that.

Learned a lot about the last 100 years in Brazil from a political and popular perspective.

Neetu says

The perfect book to accompany the World Cup fever. Read this and you can make some sense of the carnage that was the semifinal between Germany and the hosts Brazil. You have to be determined and trudge along in the middle of this book when it becomes factual and dry. But, you will be amply rewarded by the final chapters that cover the decade before the run up to Rio. The author acknowledges that "this book should have been written by someone else, preferably someone Brazilian ..." So if you are looking to complement this one, read Duarte's Shocking Brazil. Goldblatt lays the foundation of the intertwining history of soccer and modern Brazilian society. Duarte provides the heartache and passion that rewrites that history.

SB says

A very interesting book that talks about the history of Brazil through the lens of football. No other nation in the world has had football be so integral to the shaping of a nation; "Brazilian ethnicity," will forever be associated with, "football, music and dance, and all in turn with spontaneity, trickery and artistry." Football was introduced to Brazil by the English and was initially played by European diaspora in small football clubs in Rio and Sao Paulo. These would often be ethnically German (and linguistically German) teams, Italian and Portuguese teams; all made up from recent European migrants. Initially, black team members were not allowed to play and were at the receiving end of a lot of racism from the press, spectators and the teams themselves (when ironically the best Brazilian players of all time are black!)

Football started out in the rich man's European clubs with players receiving no payment for their services. This is probably how it stayed a posh man's sport, as only those who lived in Flamengo and other wealthy

neighbourhoods could afford to play for free. Slowly, a payment model was imposed onto football clubs (denounced initially for being immoral) and players began to start getting paid.

It goes through all of the political periods and how the successive governments would involve themselves in World Cups and dictate how players should play; equally, there is a story of a player who pleaded publicly (and in court I believe) with politicians to bring about change, threatening to leave for an Italian club, which he eventually did. The book leads to the present day where there is an increased amount of violence during football matches and the current state of football today.

An incredible and interesting book, I read this while I was in Brazil and during the World Cup and definitely found my experience the richer for having done so :)

Martijn says

Insightful, but I expected it to be more about the beautiful game itself and less about the politics of Brazil.

Jennifer says

A bit of a pioneering book this one. I wondered what a similar book on the US and American football would tell us. I was drawn to read this through Tim Vickery's work with the BBC. This book has a brisk pace, flying over periods at speed, leaving intriguing questions unanswered at least in the first 2/3 of book (but he has good bibliography and notes for further reading). That prose can be academic and it could use more illustration but the story he is telling is fresh and interesting. It also provides a solid foundation for understanding the current state of Brazil and its football. In the final 1/3 the pace slows and the prose is enlivened, perhaps because it is more recent and he could draw on personal experience and a range of source materials. I applaud his ambition in writing this and illuminating the less than transparent politics of the sport.

Paul Carr says

This history of Brazil, told through soccer, starts slowly but gains momentum and interest as the Brazilian teams become more familiar. Goldblatt deeply and impressively uses the sport as a microcosm of the good and (especially) bad in Brazilian culture and government.

Luis Henrique Sacchi Guadagnin says

Some minor mistakes, easy to spot for Brazilians. Could be misleading for foreigners, though. The general tone of criticism is sometimes unnecessary and superficial. Despite that, all in all, a good account of football in Brazil until 2014. Needs an update for the last 4 years, they were very important.

Indah Threez Lestari says

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Buku ini terbit persis sebelum World Cup di Brazil, jadi belum mencantumkan sejarah baru, kalah 1-7 dari Jerman di kandang sendiri...

John says

Read this during the 2014 World Cup--fortunately not in Brazil watching live... This is a fascinating look at Brazilian history through football; so much of the nation's history and identity is intertwined with this British import. From Pele and Garrincha to newer stars, and the corruption of elites/governments before and leading up to hosting the cup, anyone with more than a passing interest in Brazil or soccer should enjoy this book. It was crushing to watch Brazil lose to Germany 7-1 (nearly 7-0); only time will tell whether this has an impact on Brazil's psyche similar to the 1950 "maracanaço" when Brazil was shocked by Uruguay in their brand-new stadium. GOOOOOOOLLLLLLLL!

James says

Really struggled with this. It's was more a political history of Brazil tied in with a some football. I expected more info on Brazilian championships and the national team, particularly as often listed next to books of that style for Spanish, Italian and German football (although that isn't he authors fault)

Julian Douglass says

A good book that gives the history of a nation which many seem to have little understanding of except in modern times. What I like about this book is that he tells the story of Brazil in parts and thematically. Each chapter has a section on the soccer of the era, the politics of the era, and the culture of the era. Also, Mr. Goldblatt shows that some of the problems facing Brazil have been occurring throughout the nations history and not pretending like it is a new idea that has been happening over the past couple of years. Very interesting book that shows how a nation and a sport is connected. The only problem with the book was that while he wanted to write a linear history of Brazil, it sometimes became thematic, especially when he included events that were outside the era in which he was writing about. Another minor issue was that he would give away what happened in Brazil in one section, then go back and repeat the history in another. Overall, good book and a good way to get a brief history of Brazil and soccer.

Martin Vickers says

It took a long time for me to be absorbed into Futebol Nation and I confess I almost gave up on it a third of the way through. Only Garrincha, Pele and the teams of 1950-1970 kept me going. There were a lot of facts about Brazilian politics, culture and how they interacted with football, rather than stories of the football itself. It lacked flow at times and if it was a wine it would of been a very dry white which I don't like.

The final third about Brazil in the modern era where David Goldblatt is able to write as a journalist rather than an historian was brilliant as well as truly shocking and disturbing. His words are full of energy, anger and despair and you can see why he wanted to write the book. The level of corruption and violence which dominates football and politics are entwined together and all at the expense of the working class who seemingly suffer what they must. If he would of started with the 2014 World Cup and then used this to trace the roots of the problems rather than the other way around it would of made it a better book.

There is a wider context here too. Joao Havelange former president of FIFA was a mentor to Sepp Blatter and is the father in law to Ricardo Teixeira and they are all an ever present in the books on FIFA corruption 'Foul' and 'The Ugly Game'. Brazilian football not only dominated on the field but took its corrupt way of controlling football which David explains has been an ever present at the local level and turned the world governing body into what we see today.

Rob says

Reviewed for The Two Unfortunates soccer blog [here](#).

Thomas Lancaster says

For those of you interested in Brazilian's political history and how they used soccer or futbol as a vehicle to promote the government's agenda.
