



How Soccer Explains the World: An Unlikely Theory of Globalization

Franklin Foer

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Soccer is much more than a game, or even a way of life. It is a perfect window into the cross-currents of today's world, with all its joys and its sorrows. In this remarkably insightful, wide-ranging work of reportage, Franklin Foer takes us on a surprising tour through the world of soccer, shining a spotlight on the clash of civilizations, the international economy, and just about everything in between. How Soccer Explains the World is an utterly original book that makes sense of our troubled times.

How Soccer Explains the World: An Unlikely Theory of Globalization Details

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From Reader Review How Soccer Explains the World: An Unlikely Theory of Globalization for online ebook

Alex says

Alright, so anybody that knows me knows what a freak I am about the beautiful game. Having said that I have to admit that I was more than a bit disappointed by this book. Now, the reviews that it had received weren't entirely terrific, nonetheless, it was a quick and interesting read at work. I can't say I didn't learn anything, but the author's thesis was tenuous at best and he never really "proved" (for lack of a better term right now) how, exactly, soccer "explains the world."

There was a good bit of history provided within and most of the stories were interesting, but it's quickly obvious to someone who rabidly follows the game and attendant cultures (as there is no monolithic football culture) that the author is only a marginal follower and reminds me of the come-lately Chelsea fair weather fans. I mean seriously, in his story on Barcelona he makes it clear where he's coming from and he fits the stereotype I already had in my head regarding self-professed Barca fans (at least amongst Americans): he's a liberal yuppie and comes off as a bit self-righteous and snobbishly "cosmopolitan." Now I'm more than a little cosmopolitan--the fact that I'm an American who follows soccer proves it a bit I think--but Jesus, mate, could you be a bit more predictable? You're the footballing equivalent of an American in a Che t-shirt. I will admit that I'll always support Barca v Real Madrid (fucking fascist bumpkins), but let's not get carried away.

Foer's attempt to tackle what I'll dub the "Italian Conundrum" falls short a bit, though it is probably the most thorough chapter in the book. Unfortunately the book was written before the Calciopoli scandal that broke just after the 2006 World Cup and the continuing crises that Italian football (and the country in general) has been experiencing. Italy is fucked up and corrupt as any reader's of Roberto Gotta's columns on soccer.net can attest.

I guess I have the benefit of a bit of hindsight on these matters allowing me to view the game and its progression in the years that have followed the book's publication. However, that does little to change the fact that although Foer attempted to support his theories of globalization with soccer-related anecdotes, he actually makes the case against himself by demonstrating that football remains quite culturally specific despite the influx of capital and the increase in non-European born players. Time will tell, of course whether the upper echelons of the game come to represent the ideals of globalized capital (which is certainly arguable), but in less grandiose terms, football remains beholden to more parochial attitudes for better or worse. If Foer wasn't so blinded by his yuppie-ism and was actually a fan of the game, I think he would have noticed this.

Chris says

Warning: Despite the fact that I am a Yank, I might refer to soccer as football in this review. The term football makes more sense.

In 2000, I was making my way back from Copenhagen (Ah Wonderful Copenhagen, Beautiful Copenhagen, where I lived down the street from a waffle factory. I would get hungry just stepping outside the building), I had a lay over in Paris. The only time I have ever been to Paris. (Do you have any idea how long it took to me find something affordable to eat? And this was before the Euro). Anyway, I was there a few days before

the French won the Euro Cup (a football tournament, for those of you who don't know, along the lines of the World Cup, but just for Europe. And if you don't know what the World Cup is, I don't think I can help you).

Paris seemed to be full of drums, chanting, drunken, happy Parisians (no doubt drunk on wine), and soccer, football, balls.

It was fun!

So fun that I was willing to forget that my beloved Dutch National Team (I'm not Dutch, but Netherlands is nice, and the de Boer brothers were playing) didn't make to the finals.

I've been lucky enough to have been in Europe twice during Euro Cups. The first time was when I went to England. I was in Scotland when the Scots lost to the English in a game (yeah, I don't quite get or believe it either). What I remember most is the man dressed in full kilt playing the bagpipes after the loss. It was far more beautiful than the drunken cries I hear from the bar up the street when a local Philly team loses. (Though there was plenty of that on the Royal Mile too).

America has nothing football fans.

Foer explores the impact (change isn't the right word) football has on society and nations. He makes an argument that soccer represents an aspect of globalizations, and while sometimes this point isn't entirely proved, he tells story, after story, usually funny ones.

Foer explores the history of hooliganism.

Okay, before I go any further, I have to disgress (again). Mr. Foer, dude, Oakland Raider fans are closest to English Hooligans? What are you smoking? Philadelphia fans threw snowballs and iceballs at SANTA CLAUS (he deserved it, but still). C'mon. People are frightened to go to our stadiums. (Not because of the teams [maybe the Phils:] but because of the fans).

Sorry, just had to get that out.

Foer explores the history of hooliganism, talking to honest to gosh Hooligans, who are old, as well as looking at the Protestant vs. Catholic football rivalry.

Which is in Scotland and not Northern Ireland.

He also explains the state of football in Brazil, including a story that will disappoint Pele worshippers. That section of the book is heartbreaking. He examines racial tension in European clubs.

It is true that he is some what biased in some places, but hey, I like Baracelona too.

Nice bit on Iran, espcecially considering the current state of affairs there.

The only weak part is the section on America.

Overall, if you like football (or soccer) it is an enjoyable book.

Hippo dari Hongkong says

It's ecstasy, anguish, joy and despair.

It's part of our history.

It's part of our country.

And it will be part of our future.

It's theatre, art, war and love.

It should be predictable ... but NEVER is.

It's a feeling that can't be explained but we spend our lives explaining it.

It's OUR religion.

We DO NOT apologise for it.

We DO NOT deny it.

They're OUR team, OUR family and OUR life.

Football

.....

We know how you feel about it.

Because we feel the same...

Well, few years ago, I caught myself lost in thought after I saw and heard a classic advert about 1997-1998 Premiership season football coverage and Sean Bean a movie star whose also known as a Leeds diehard fans who narrated this advert

DANG!!! So true, so very true.. and those words hit me right between the eyes and "haunting" me ever since. For myself I will always considered those words are "holy" because somehow it's reflected my feeling about football. More importantly in my opinion reflected football as a whole.

Not just that, I tempted to tape the advert. And the funny thing is that I can't help get rid the feeling that my life going down the toilet when I find myself video-taping a 120 seconds promo for a TV channel's football coverage. DANG!!!

kalo penasaran bisa liat disini

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXac8J...>

Buku yang menarik. sangat menarik sebetulnya. Terus terang saya tidak terlalu "memperhatikan" aspek2 "globalisasi" yang ada di dalam buku ini . Secara pribadi saya lebih tertarik dengan sepakbola yang diceritakan di buku ini. Banyak sekali yang tidak saya ketahui semisal cikal bakal derby klasik *Old Firm* antara Glasgow Rangers vs Glasgow Celtic, bagaimana ribuan orang Irlandia Utara menyerbu Glasgow untuk menyaksikan Derby Glasgow. Terus bagaimana masyarakat Itali yang menggemari statistik tentang sepakbola termasuk statistik wasit. Terus kompetisi sepakbola di brasil yang carut marut dan banyak klub yang dikelola oleh pemilik2 oportunistis yang korup tapi tetap melahirkan bintang2 baru seakan tak ada hentinya, suporter spurs yang memelotkan celana mereka untuk membalas hinaan dari suporter lawan yah, hal2 unik seperti itulah.

Sayangna untuk sepakbola inggris hanya membahas dari sisi holigan dan suporternya aja. Bagaimana tragedi Heysel yang menewaskan 39 suporter Juventus dan tragedi Hillsborough pd semifinal FA Cup yang

menewaskan sekitar 98 suporter Liverpool memaksa pemerintah Inggris mengambil tindakan drastis untuk menekan kaum hooligan dan membuat stadion lebih aman dengan memerintahkan setiap klub memasang kamera dan tempat duduk di sektor North & South End, sektor tanpa tempat duduk alias tribun berdiri yang selama ini dikuasai suporter garis keras alias kaum hooligan. Kadang2 kalo liat siaran liga Inggris kita masih melihat suporter yang berdiri di tribun utara/selatan meski udah dikasi bangku.

Sayang eyang Fergie ama eMyU nya gak disebut-sebut, pdhl ketika buku ini terbit (2004) eMyU telah menjadi sebuah kekuatan baru. Dalam kurun waktu 12 tahun terakhir (1993-2004) mereka sudah merebut 8 kali juara Premiership. Total sampai saat saat itu pasukan eyang Fergie sudah mengoleksi 15 gelar juara semakin mendekati raja Premiership, Liverpool yang sudah mengoleksi 18 gelar juara. Naaah, kalo buku ini ditulis taun sekarang sepertinya seru, karena eMyU pada musim kompetisi 2008-2009 berhasil menyamai rekor Liverpool dengan merebut gelar ke 18. Sebagai fans bola terus terang saya tertarik mengenai "kampanye 19" ini, sapa neh yang duluan bisa nembus ke angka 19? Chelsea? ntar-ntar kali yah, soalnya mereka baru 4 kali merebut gelar Premiership. Ato jangan-jangan Gunner yah yang udah 13 kali merebut gelar yang bisa nyalip. Iya gitu? bisakah?

di Bab 7 menceritakan tentang sepak terjang dua klub penguasa Seri A Juventus dan AC Milan yang dijalankan dengan gaya berbeda oleh pemiliknya. tatapan mata terhenti cukup lama pada satu paragraf ini

Musim kejuaraan kali itu bisa disingkat dalam pertandingan melawan saingan terberat mereka, Inter Milan. Setelah pemain Juve terang-terangan mengganjal badan penyerang Inter dari Brasil, Ronaldo, wasit enggan memberi Inter hadiah penalty. Tak lama berselang, di sisi lapang Inter, wasit malah memberi Juve tendangan penalty atas sebuah akting penuh kepalsuan. Seorang pemain Juve tiba-tiba tergelimpang di lapangan tanpa penyebab apapun yang bisa dijelaskan oleh hukum fisika

hahaha, gw masi inget banget kejadiannya. Duh, pengen deh rasanya nyekek ntu wasit . Sayang buku ini ditulis tahun 2004 sementara skandal *Calciopoli* yang mengguncang sekaligus menurunkan pamor sepakbola Italia baru terungkap tahun 2006

Apa lagi yah? doh, udah ah, saya sudahi saja sampe disini, gak bakalan abis kalo ngomongin bola mah

“Some people think football is a matter of life and death. I assure you, it's much more serious than that.”
Bill Shankly

GANTI NURDIN HALID!!!!

esf

gonk bukan pahlawan berwajah tampan says

Memahami Sepakbola ? : Sebuah Coretan Tak Lazim

wis suwe aku ngenteni kowe
rina wengi ora nyambut gawe
persebaya kudu dimenangke
arek bonek mendem rame-rame

terj.

telah lama kumentimu
siang malam tak ada kerjaan
persebaya harus dimenangkan
arek bonek mabuk rame-rame

Riuh rendah terdengar nyanyian dari para bonek setiap Persebaya, kesebelasan asal kota Surabaya menjamu lawan-lawan mereka di Stadion Tambaksari. Bagi saya sendiri itu adalah salah satu nyanyian suporter yang orisinal dari Surabaya di tengah nyanyian suporter Indonesia yang sudah mengglobal seperti 'sore ini kita harus menang', 'di mana kau berada kami selalu ada', 'cucak rowo versi bola', 'mars slank ala sepakbola' dlsb yang hampir selalu dinyanyikan kelompok suporter sepakbola di tanah air, yang dipepori oleh kelompok suporter *kera ngalam* penggemar fanatik kesebelasan AREMA Malang, yang menamakan diri mereka sebagai aremania dan aremanita. Inilah kelompok suporter kreatif yang menular ke seluruh pelosok nusantara. Anda bisa saja merubah lirik lagu2 tersebut sesuai nama kesebelasan anda ataupun lawan kesebelasan anda. Kendatipun begitu, di beberapa tempat bisa kita jumpai nyanyian khas seperti nyanyian bonekmania di atas. Jadi mari kita mulai dari sebuah nyanyian, ya nyanyian. Seorang Ahmad Tohari pun mengawali Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk di bab pertama dengan sebuah nyanyian, sebuah 'pass over song' khas Jawa, yang digubah oleh Sunan Kalijaga (atau Siti Jenar?) : *Ono Kidung Rumecko ing Wengi*

“Football without fans is life without sex” , demikian kata Jock Stein, manager Glasgow Celtic yang membawa tim ini menjadi tim Skotlandia pertama yang merajai Eropa di 1967, sekaligus terpilih dalam salah satu jajak pendapat sebagai the greatest scottish football di tahun 2003.

Kembali ke lapangan,

Memahami (globalisasi) dunia lewat sepakbola, demikianlah tawaran buku ini. Franklin Foer mengambil sampel dari beberapa kutub dunia sepakbola, dengan permasalahan khas dari tiap-tiap mereka. Rentang waktu sekitar dekade 90-an dan awal dekade 2000-an bisa dikatakan cukup untuk menggambarkan maksud buku ini. Dalam beberapa hal saya lebih senang bila konteks-nya dikawinkan dengan negeri kita. Sebut saja ini adalah bab ke-11 dari buku ini,hehehe....

Agresivitas politik ?

Bagaimana sepakbola memberi implikasi politik bagi suatu daerah? Talah sejak lama, di beberapa tempat dengan animo dan fanatisme akut pada sepakbola, adalah menjadi kebanggaan sekaligus sebuah ironi, ketika segelintir kaum memanfaatkannya untuk tujuan politik mereka. Kebanyakan penggemar bola atau masyarakat akan merasa baik-baik saja selama tim sepakbola mereka berjaya. Saya masih ingat ketika membaca berita di Jawapos awal-awal saya kuliah di Surabaya, disebutkan sekitar medio 2000 atau 2001 atau 2002 (highlander selalu pelupa) anggota DPRD II Surabaya menolak dan memberi rapor merah untuk Laporan Pertanggungjawaban (LPJ) Walikota yang waktu itu dijabat (alm) Sunarto Sumoprawiro, kecuali soal Persebaya, seluruh masyarakat dan anggota dewan memberi nilai 9 untuk persebaya !!!!

Kita bisa melihat bahkan sampai sekarang, ketika kritik begitu deras kepada klub-klub sepakbola dan pemda untuk tidak mengucurkan APBD buat biaya hidup klub sepakbola, masyarakat pun terbelah, jika tidak ada kucuran APBD -sebagian klub Indonesia adalah klub amatir yang menyusu ke pemda yang dipaksakan ikut liga, yang katanya profesional- satu sisi, banyak yang tidak setuju, alasan yang diajukan tentu saja menyangkut ketidaksiapan klub-klub untuk mandiri. Mereka khawatir kehilangan tontonan,hiburan sekaligus ikon daerah.

Pihak yang berseberangan sangat menganjurkan kemandirian klub-klub sepakbola, coba bayangkan saja kucuran dana itu tak bisa dibbilang kecil.

Rp 10,7 miliar yang diberikan APBD Surabaya untuk Persebaya lebih tinggi dari Rp 7 miliar yang dialokasikan APBD Surabaya untuk jaminan kesehatan daerah (jamkesda) yang dikelola Dinkes Surabaya. Bila digabung dengan dana APBD Pemprov Jatim bagi jamkesda Surabaya yang Rp 7,1 miliar, total dana untuk jamkesda Surabaya mendapai Rp 14,1 miliar. Dengan demikian, kucuran untuk Persebaya setara dengan 75,8% total dana untuk jamkesda. (Surabaya Post, 29 Mar 2010).

Inilah salah satu harga mahal yang musti dibayar ketika di tahun 1994 PSSI dengan alasan profesional menggabungkan dua kutub sepakbola perserikatan yang amatir dan sepakbola galatama menjadi satu dalam tajak Liga Indonesia. Adanya badan-badan sejenis PT untuk mengelola klub-perserikatan ini pun masih belum optimal.

Franklin menulis soal Arkan di kawasan Balkan dan Berlusconi di Italia yang berhasil melambungkan dirinya di kancan politik dengan 'menginjak' lapangan sepakbola dan masyarakatnya. Ada sebuah 'fenomena' menarik terkait politisasi sepakbola ini. Bila Adang Daradjatun tak jadi gubernur DKI dalam pilkada beberapa tahun lalu adalah wajar karena meski dalam kampanye-nya sering memakai yel-yel dan lagu-lagu Jakmania, komitmen dan fanatisme dia soal Persija belum terbukti. Bang Kumis Foke pun sama, dari kalangan Jakmania belum melihat gairah yang membara soal Persija, dukungan dari Jakmania-bila ada yang mendukung-lebih karena Sutiyoso aka Bang Yos yang cinta gila pada Persija.

Nah, fenomena yang saya maksud terjadi di kota Kediri, Jawa Timur. Sudah menjadi rahasia umum ketika seorang Iwan Budiarto, mantan manajer Arema Malang yang kemudian pindah menjadi manajer Persik Kediri berhasil membangun tim Persik menjadi kekuatan baru di Liga Indonesia. di musim 2002, mereka menjuarai liga divisi I untuk promosi ke divisi utama di musim 2003. Ajaib!!! baru satu musim berkiprah, mereka langsung menggondol piala Presiden ke kota tahu tersebut, setelah sebelumnya dalam turnamen pemanasan mereka menjuarai pilal gubernur Jatim. Bersama Jaya Hartono, sang pelatih dan dukungan sang mertua yang menjadi Ketua Umum sekaligus walikota Kediri, HM.Maschut, Persik menjadi simbol kesuksesan warga Kediri. Nama-nama seperti Danilo Fernando, Ronald Falgundez, Erol Fx Iba, Budi Sudarsono, Christian 'el locco' Gonzales menjadi buah bibir di sejumlah media. Tercatat selama kepemimpinan Iwan, Persik memperoleh gelar juara 2 kali, di tahun 2003 bersama pelatih Jaya Hartono dan di tahun 2007, kali ini berduet dengan pelatih tambun asal Semarang, Daniel Roekito yang di final nan dramatis sebuah gol sundulan Gonzales di akhir masa perpanjangan waktu membungkam ribuan Suporter PSIS Semarang yang nglurug ke Stadion Manahan Solo.

Anomali itu terjadi pada 2008 ketika Iwan mencalonkan diri menjadi walikota Kediri, di luar dugaan ia kalah oleh seorang dokter dalam pemilihan tersebut. Barangkali Iwan didukung ribuan Persikmania yang rata-rata berdomisili di Kabupaten Kediri bukan di Kotamadya. Siapa yang tahu? Sebuah kekalahan yang berdampak buruk buat prestasi dan keberlangsungan Persik, barangkali inilah salah satu hal yang memicunya hengkang dari Persik dan hinggap di Persisam Samarinda.

Di sebagian daerah, bila seorang walikota atau bupati atau gubernurnya seorang maniak bola maka hampir bisa dipastikan mereka akan jor-joran mengumbar rupiah bagi klub sepakbola tersebut. Bagi pemimpin daerah yang 'kurang' maniak bola, bisa dipastikan klub sepakbola kota tersebut bagai hidup segan mati tak mau, apalagi prestasinya. tengoklah yang terjadi dengan PSIS Semarang, Persebaya Surabaya sekarang!! Tak jarang para pemimpin ini yang terjerat kasus korupsi dan manipulasi. Dengan jitu Frank melukiskan hal ini, inilah gaya yang telah direduksi sedemikian rupa sampai menjadi aforisme lumrah untuk membenarkan dukungan kepada mereka, "ia memang mencuri tetapi ia menghasilkan sesuatu" (hal 130).

Kartolo(i) menjadi Cartolas

Frank menulis dengan bernas soal sepakbola di dunia ketiga, dengan mengambil analisis persepakbolaan Brasil.

Ketika Portella dan saya duduk mengobrol, ia tidak bisa menutupi rasa pesimisnya akan masa depan sepak bola Brasil. Tapi ketika melihat portella bermain bola, ia seperti menyangkal argumennya sendiri. bahkan orang yang sudah ketuaan ini pun masih bermain dengan penuh gaya. mereka mengumpan sambil melakukan gerak tipu, menendang dengan tumit, mempertunjukkan keahlian menggocek bola dengan kecepatan tinggi. Meskipun budaya korupsi tetap bertahan, fanatisme Brasil terhadap sepakbola sepertinya tidak bisa surut. Sumber daya alamiah sepakbolanya tidak terlihat akan habis. Sepak bola sudah terlanjur menjadi bagian hakiki dari kepribadian bangsa. Saat kesebelasan Portella mencetak gol, bapak-bapak separuh baya ini mencium emblem seragam mereka dan saling berpelukan, tumpang tindih di lapangan. Bahkan di kalangan akuntan, sopir taksi dan teknokrat pemerintah, momen-momen seperti inilah yang membuat mereka ingin berlutut memanjatkan puji syukur kepada Sang bunda Kemenangan.(hal 135)

Tidak ada lelucon yang lebih absurd daripada sepakbola kita. Lihatlah pengurus PSSI, sejak saya masih di dalam kandungan seorang Nugraha Besoes sudah menjadi pengurus, dan sudah berapa generasi dia menjadi sekretaris PSSI??. Ketuanya?? menyebut namanya saja sudah haram. mereka berdua bener2..... tai babi. Dalam hal ini saya sepakat dengan aremania yang menyanyikan :

...
di neraka gak ada aremania
di neraka gak ada aremanita
di neraka yang ada pssi bangsat
dihukum cambuk malaikat
...

sepakbola, social conscience?

Namun lihatlah, tengoklah, dengarlah dan rasakanlah, apa yang ditulis Frank soal kebobrokan elit sepakbola di suatu klub atau negara, tidak mengurangi iman penggemar bola pada sepakbola itu sendiri. Bagi sebagian masyarakat Indonesia, disadari atau tidak ada dua agama besar di negeri ini. yang pertama adalah bulutangkis dan yang terbesar diantaranya adalah sepakbola. ya, football is our religion, demikian tulis Andi Bahtiar Yusuf, kolumnis bola dan sutradara 'the Conductors' yang mengangkat cerita seorang Yuli Sumpil, dirigen aremania.

Benarlah yang ditulis Frank, estadio Maracana adalah sebuah katedral, penuh dengan berbagai kenangan akan pahlawan, martir dan santo pelindungnya :Pele (hal 123) dan mujizat, keajaiban-keajaiban yang terjadi di dalamnya.

Adalah benar dan menjadi kewajiban penggemar bola menjaga agar sepakbola menjadi semacam social conscience bagi suatu masyarakat. Jadi, secara provokatif dan spekulatif (hahaha) benahi sepakbola terlebih dulu baru negara akan beres. basmi korupsi di sepakbola terlebih dulu, ini akan menjadi bola salju dalam pemberantasan korupsi di negeri ini. Suksesnya revolusi sepakbola menjadi simbol suksesnya revolusi suatu bangsa.*halah*

Inilah agama yang mempersatukan agama-agama macam Islam, Kristen, Katholik, Hindu, Budha dlsb. Inilah komunitas yang mempersatukan bermacam lapisan dan kelas masyarakat. Masih segar dalam ingatan kita akhir pekan lalu, ketika tim Thomas kita bertanding di final melawan China, betapa ribuan suporter Indonesia memerahkan stadion Bukit Jalil, laiknya istora Senayan saja!!! *gosipnya salahsatu gudrider ada yg nonton langsung hlo :) -ngelirik ceuceu* sebagian dari mereka mungkin mahasiswa, mungkin pula para buruh migran, jika benar maka mereka bukan cuma pahlawan devisa, mereka adalah pahlawan sejati. tapi itu khan bulutangkis, bukan sepakbola? ah..khan sama, sama2 dua agama besar. hehehe

Sebuah pertanyaan menarik diajukan penulis, menyinggung ciri penting dari globalisasi : kecenderungan untuk mengagungkan segala hal yang bersifat 'asli', bahkan ketika mereka sesungguhnya layak untuk

ditinggalkan di masa lalu.(hal 94) Jadi jika sudah begini apakah kita mau membuang begitu saja mars slank ala aremania berikut :

....

disini aremania mendukung singo edan
singo edan pasti juara
disini bukan bonek-bonek jancuk

...

atau membuang nyanyian bonekmania dan viking berikut :
viking-bonek kita sodara
viking-bonek kita sodara
arema/persija jancuk dibunuh saja...

Ah, saya mau nyanyi 'yen ing tawang ono lintang' saja hahahaha

Jadi menurut anda kalau ada pertanyaan, pertandingan bola mana di muka bumi yang paling seru? dulu saya selalu menganggap laga barca vs madrid sebagai pertandingan paling yahud, selain derby dela capitale antara Lazio vs AS Roma. Tapi semua itu berubah setelah saya menyaksikan sebuah tontonan pertandingan yang paling menarik sekaligus menghibur di bulan April atau Mei tahun 2000, ya 10 tahun lalu, saya dan seorang teman berbekal harga tiket 1000 rupiah, di Lapangan Wijaya kusuma (?) Purwokerto, dalam sebuah laga eksebisi di tengah-tengah turnamen amatir antar kampung Piala Kapolres (kalo tidak salah, ingatan jadulers emang cemen hehehe). Pertandingan apakah itu?? yay...itu adalah pertandingan sepakbola antar waria Wonosobo vs Cilacap (klo tak salah lagi :p). Seruuuuuu!!!! beruntung yang bertanding bukan tim Bandung, saya khawatir klo yang maen tim bandung pasti ada satu diantara mereka yang pakai kaos pinky.huahahaha

Oh iya, sepakbola di Asia belum dibahas Frank di buku ini, ia mengambil Iran sebagai contoh sepakbola di dunia Islam dan Brasil sebagai dunia ketiga. Yang perlu dibahas lagi barangkali sepakbola dan wanita. banyak pahlawan sepakbola wanita macam Mia (bukan Miaaa) Hamm, Martha dan kesebelasan Putri Mojolaban. hehehe.

(gonk)

cat.

(i) kartolo, seniman ludruk Surabaya

David says

The title is completely misleading. There is no theory about globalization and soccer is not explaining the world at all. That out of the way, what Foer does is provide a series of vignettes or showing examples of how globalization has impacted the game in a few specific examples (ranging from the Glasgow Rangers and FC Barcelona to the Iranian and American national teams) focusing on changes in the culture of those teams over that last 60ish years. He provides anecdotes in each chapter that show how a team's culture has changed or not changed through the globalization of the game.

Foer does a good job within each chapter and each chapter is interesting, but he fails to connect all the dots.

Basically the only big change in soccer due to globalization is the importing (or exporting in the case of Brazil) of players from other countries. These players then sometimes clash with (as with the Nigerians on Red Star Belgrade) or assimilate into (as with Hristo Stoichkov on FC Barcelona) the societies in which they now play. But the society itself doesn't change all that much. The Old Firm (Celtics and Rangers in Glasgow) is still largely a clash between Protestants and Catholics even though neither team is religiously homogeneous anymore and the Brazilian and Italian systems are still as corrupt as ever.

In short, this is an interesting read more for the explanations of the different local futbol cultures than for any "theory of globalization." Worth a read if you are a fan of or even curious about the sport.

Will Johnson says

Reprinted from my website *Secure Immaturity*:

Hello mates!

I gave this book a quick read. The cover's title and the gravitas the book gives off makes you feel like you really are reading something amazing here. Think about the opportunities in a book that examines the world's greatest game in such a massive way! But the dubious length (a paltry 250-ish pages) and the rather broad approach quickly shot down my joy. Foer's greatest strength here will be an ignorant audience. Those who don't know football, and that is many in the United States, will be easily tricked by Foer's words. Foer claims he is shooting for a happy ending since he warns his book starts bleakly. But the happy ending never comes nor does an in-depth study of globalization or nationalism, Foer's favorite words! He uses them quite constantly but never really hits on any points that rock your social, economic, or political core. He takes very tiny moments and expands them, or rather, explodes them to epic proportions to fit his thesis. Any football fan knows the Old Firm matches are quite amazing and full of history but Foer takes a bit of creative license.

Also, quite shockingly, Foer only focuses on three or four clubs in England for more than a few pages and all of them are given a negative vibe. Manchester United simply 'buys' championships. Tottenham and Chelsea are made up of zealous blue collar goons and racists. These are 'elements' of these teams but not their only qualities.

And Foer makes the mistake of thinking that soccer in regions where there is little knowledge can outweigh the fact that the stories aren't too interesting. The Nigerian revolution in the Ukraine is indeed interesting but not 50-page interesting. The Jewish leagues in the 20s is quite interesting and begs you to go 'what-if?' but once again: 50 pages?

In the end, the author sounds too pretentious to be taken serious. He is playing to the ignorant and ignoring the intelligent Americans who know what the hell is going on in the football world! After reading the dark, twisted first chapter about Serbia and Croatia I talked to a friend from that region about it. She was shocked at how biased the book was. Granted I have only one viewpoint per side but I have to take the former resident's word over the authors who spent only as long as a few weeks there and visited at least a decade after the events described. Avoid this book but if you have to read it please keep other sources ready to check the facts!

miaaa says

Warning: next writing is written under the state of cracking emotion. Any confusions and flaws it affects should not be taken for granted.

And it's not a review!

What is so special about football, that it pains so much when you lost and taking you so high when matches are won. And it kills you to see your beloved club is brought down by ignorant fools who know nothing about the game of passion.

Right now, when I'm writing this, I was torn in two out of madness. The real me is always a Blue and that's why I easily get attached to Arema. I was raised in various cities, due to my father's dedication to serve the church, and never really had a city or town to call home. Until I went to Malang, East Java. I love the city, found best friends who I proudly nicknamed soulmates, got myself an adopted family, speak the language as if I was born to do that, and to know Arema who embodies everything I wished from football.

Arema Indonesia just won the Indonesian Super League 2009/2010 season. I should be happy, well the Blue me wants to dance all nights and telling the world, 'Hey look here, at this amazing club, practically a self-funded club without begging from the regional state's budget and collectively raised fund for the team's operational vehicles! Watch this Real Madrid, we the fans are the real Arema the blood of this club, not like the plasticos you're signing with multi-million euros but for which major trophy? Did you see this Chelsea? No Abramovich with his magic wand to exploit wells and cashing money as if they were leaves throughout the fall season!'

But the other me, Ophelia, is always a Red. I still remember the day when we're looking at a group of people holding scarfs up, singing their hearts out as if there's no tomorrow. That was the first time we saw the Kop sang You'll Never Walk Alone, from a TV half the world away and it lasted only for few seconds. What amazed us most was that the team was lost! Our first encounter with Liverpool FC who embodies everything I know about football.

Liverpool FC won trophies, has a long history with a list of great managers and players, and superb fans who always be there not only in great nights but also in the lows when everything shattered into pieces, notably Heysel and Hillsborough tragedies. Then two businessmen who aware of nothing regarding the history nor understand the passion that binds the club to the fans came along with their blatant lies.

Since their arrival, they're bleeding the club dry. £110,000 That's how much interest payments must be paid - per day- for the debts piled by the owners. £50.3M has been spent on cost associated to the 'new stadium' but no sign of it whatsoever. £51.5M is the amount of debt in a year to July 2009, and as of July 31 2009 the total debt of LFC' parent company -Kop Football Holdings- were £472.5M. Data taken from this Well Red Magazine edition

And as the final blow, Rafael Benitez left the club by mutual consent. Mutual consent my a**! The board more likely showing him the door without goodbye nor thank you. The great gaffer since Shankly and Paisley is finally worn down by the infights or civil war according to Oliver Kay, a respected football journalist. Must read piece from Olie Kay

Next Jose Mourinho wants Stevie G to join him at Real Madrid, Inter piling cash for Fernando Torres, Chelsea wants Benayoun and Barcelona just needs to call up Mascherano's agent. I don't know why Aurelio leaves the club, probably he didn't want to be associated with LFC with such devastated state anymore.

So who do we have left? Only Jamie Carragher, who sharply stated, **"If anyone doesn't want to be here, no problem. No-one is bigger than Liverpool Football Club. People always talk about players leaving and saying 'this is the end of Liverpool'. No chance. Better players than the ones we have now have left and we have replaced them."**

No doubt every club wants a team of Carra, as the Kop song said:

We all dream of a team of Carraghers

A team of Carraghers

A team of Carraghers

Number one is Carragher

Number two is Carragher

Number three is Carragher

Number four is Carragher.....

We all dream of a team of Carraghers

A team of Carraghers

A team of Carraghers

Number five is Carragher

Number six is Carragher

Number seven is Carragher

Number eight is Carragher.....

We all dream of a team of Carraghers

A team of Carraghers

A team of Carraghers

Number nine is Carragher

Number ten is Carragher

Number eleven is Carragher

Number twelve is Carragher.....

We all dream of a team of Carraghers

A team of Carraghers

A team of Carraghers

Number thirteen is Carragher

Number fourteen is Carragher

Number fifteen is Carragher

Number twenty-three is Carragher.....

Thank you for Istanbul 2005

Thank you for FA Cup 2006

Thank you for Camp Nou CL 2006/2007

Thank you for Giuseppe Meazza CL 2007/2008

Thank you for trashing Real Madrid 4-0 at Anfield CL 2008/2009

Thank you for Old Trafford 2008/2009

Nunca Caminarás Solo, Rafa

Steven Peterson says

This is a quirky work; it ends up proving more satisfying than one might have imagined. The subtitle: "An Unlikely Theory of Globalization." That subtitle provides a takeoff point for the book. The author notes that (Page 5): "On my travels, I tried to use soccer--its fans, its players, and strategies--as a way fo thinking about how people would identify themselves in this new era."

He explores the role of soccer by a series of case studies of teams--in Serbia, Scotland, Brazil, England, Jewish teams, the Ukraine, and so on.

In the end, I am not sure how well he links these various nationalistic loyalties to teams with globalization.

However, this is an intriguing book that gets one to thinking about much larger issues.

Sander says

I wouldn't say it's about the theory of globalization. However, it's really great book about the impact that football has on cultures around the globe. In each chapter, the author follows different football clubs from different countries and cultures. The soccer is linked with religion, mafia, politics, power and corruption, hooliganism, nationalism, race, class and so on. So somehow it's really logical that football can explain cultural differences and why some people in Liverpool support Everton and another half of the city supports Liverpool or why some people in Belgrade support Red Star and others Partizan. Football is much more than a sport at least when you are interested in all that happens behind the curtains of the most popular sport in the world.

Lilly says

Foer (brother of Jonathan Safran Foer, for those of you keeping track at home) puts his pen to the paper to explain world affairs to his american audience through the one lens they might identify with -- sports.

Unfortunately, the sport he chooses is soccer. Which American's don't give a shit about. But guess what? They don't give a shit about world affairs either, so it's a brilliant marriage.

(For you curious folk out there, he takes on major questions- racism, gender discrimination, fundamentalist Islam, you name it.)

But forget the politics. As you whip through the pages you're gonna learn what you need to be a self-respecting soccer fan. That alone is worth the price of admission. What is a hooligan? Why do people care about Arsenal and Manchester United? What the hell is going on with Italian football?

I thought my eyes were fooling me when I saw this book sitting in the bookstore. I still pinch myself. And to be completely honest, it didn't disappoint, not a bit.

Caroline says

As a recent college graduate, unemployed, and slightly depressed during the summer of 2006, the World Cup in Germany was my saving grace. Hours upon hours of soccer games helped pass the idle days spent in bed fretting about the future.

Thus, by no means am I an expert of soccer. I've come to really enjoy the build up and release of tension that punctuates the games course of action. Not any less important is my fervent appreciation of very fit foreign men in shorts.

When I picked up "How Soccer Explains the World..." I had hoped to get an education in the game's nuances and some Thomas L. Friedman-esque knowledge of globalization. Overall, the book fell a bit short.

Not all of the connections were well thought out or well articulated. What you have is a man with an admirable passion for the sport, but without a clear thesis. This can be seen in the chapter regarding Jewish soccer players and how they disprove the idea that Jews do not excel in athletics. The section is hodge podged together with snippets of one stellar jewish soccer player, and how jews are often times victims of racism. The reader's focus is easily muddied trying to follow the thin strands that don't necessarily tie together in the end.

While certain chapters fell way short, others were more successful. The glimpse into Hooligan life, nationalism (Irish vs. English), and the Americanization of soccer were all well executed.

It was quick and easy to read and worth picking up if you are looking for some light transit reading.

Jim says

First of all, it's played with the feet, but I'll call it "soccer" even though it pains me to do so. Like the author, I too am a soccer geek and a mediocre player. (I was a much better coach.)

The title promises more than the book delivers, but titles are often the work of publishers' promotion departments. (It's a minor quibble.) The book does a good job of showing how soccer is intertwined with issues of ethnic and sectarian identity, class conflict, politics and culture. It does this in a light, entertaining way, giving out facts in small doses.

One of my favorite parts of the book was where Foer tried to explain why Americans hate soccer. I think that it's true that most American sports fans see it as low-scoring and boring, a game for little kids and women and yuppies, where competition is deemed "bad" and everyone gets trophies. First of all, two words: pitchers' duel. Second, what's wrong with kids playing sports they actually enjoy? Third, what are you, a bunch of misogynists? Fourth, yuppies? Have you been to an NBA game lately? As for the "everyone is a winner" mentality, that has less to do with soccer and more to do with American society. I think the larger reason that Americans tend to dislike soccer has to do with American attitudes toward the world. We expect the world to

like what we like and do what we do, and it disturbs us when they have their own ideas. Some Americans don't like soccer for the same reason that P.J. O'Rourke says Americans don't like foreign policy: because Americans don't like foreigners.

If you hate soccer, this book probably won't change your mind. If you do like soccer, you'll probably like the book. Although soccer may not explain globalization, the way a group of people relate to the sport can illustrate how they relate to the world.

Selena says

How Soccer Explains the World: An Unlikely Theory of Globalization has been on my shelf for years and it was the mention of soccer that kept me from reading it. Despite being from Eastern Europe, I am completely ambivalent toward soccer.

And yet Franklin Foer uses soccer as a brilliant example to discuss hooliganism within soccer, nationalism and corruption. He writes about specific soccer teams (mostly in Europe but also Brazil) and how team rivalries show themselves to be much more complex than what they seem.

As soon as I started reading the first story, I was taken aback with how wonderful Foer is. It probably helps that I lived through the Yugoslavian war and know that soccer rivalries were used for nationalistic purposes - and in fact - the die-hard fans were organized under the Serbian party and are responsible for two thousand known deaths. Foer perfectly captured the obsession and quite frankly, the hatred that existed during those years.

Each chapter is set up to explain a certain aspect of globalization and uses two teams (usually rivals) to explain it. What made this book particularly interesting is that he went to these countries and talked to the hooligans that lived it, getting their accounts of things. It wasn't a dry history, instead, it provided an insider's view. Aside from the incidents with Red Star Belgrade in former Yugoslavia, it was interesting to see how soccer is tied in to so many corruption schemes, money-laundering operations and nationalist groups. It even mentioned this through soccer groups that I've heard of like Manchester, Chelsea, Barcelona, Real Madrid, Red Star Belgrade and players like Ronaldo.

You do not need to be a soccer buff to enjoy this book nor to understand it (though maybe the significance of the Ronaldo reference will be beyond you). Foer adequately explains any funny soccer terms that he uses (which isn't many). I was worried, getting into this book, that it would focus on the technical aspects of soccer would overwhelm me, but I was wrong.

Franklin Foer, brother to Jonathan Safran Foer, is known for sports coverage and his work as the editor of the New Republic (a prominent politics and culture magazine). It only makes sense for him to use his knowledge of sports to help explain certain aspects of the world.

'Franco, Mussolini, and a high percentage of all modern dictators have made the link between sport and populist politics countless times. To Berlusconi's left-wing critics, the resemblance to these tyrants is not coincidental (page 186).'

Completely unrelated, but apparently everyone in the Foer family is a successful writer. Bastards.

Pat says

There are no theories, only stories. The title is misleading. It doesn't support its thesis, but is still a good read.

I really like the segment that talks about the rivalry between Real Madrid and Barcelona, especially since the author is a Culé. Not everyone who supports Real Madrid are fascist. And the popular belief that they are Franco's mascot is not true, when they are a puppet. Imagine if Real Madrid went against Franco, what would have happened? We probably wouldn't have a Real Madrid now.

Maybe there are still Real Madrid socios that supports the fascist movement, but they're less vocal now. Just like how there are still nazi supporters in German football clubs. They're slowly uprooting them now, but it will take years to completely get rid of them. Same in Madrid, it will take time. Especially since they're in the capital. It will be much harder, but not impossible.

It's entertaining, and very informative. A great read if you like history!

Aloke says

The right book at the right time. I'm not a big soccer fan but I love the World Cup. I couldn't pick out a Chelsea from a Real Madrid player in a police lineup but every four years, with the help of 538 and the Guardian World Cup podcast, I will shamelessly bluff my way through conversations about things like Neymar's theatrics, strengths and weaknesses of VAR and whether England has the easier side of the draw.

Foer mostly talks about club sides (as opposed to national teams) but I thought it was fascinating. He even has a somewhat convincing explanation for why soccer has not taken off in the USA. Hint: how many NASCAR fans watch soccer too?

Shuhan Rizwan says

World Cup read.

The theme is very interesting, but the implementation is not what I expected.

Aaron Arnold says

I'm hardly the first person to point out that the book's title is overblown; a better one might have been "How soccer reflects the world". However, that's not nearly so snappy, and wouldn't have sold as many copies, so I won't quibble. While this 2004-vintage book could use some updating, for the most part many of the aspects of soccer as a global sport that Foer identifies haven't much changed: soccer is still beset by hooligans, trapped by ancient rivalries, riddled with corruption, and burdened with uneasy relationships to global and

national politics, religious divides, the challenges of modernity, and questions of identity. Soccer is unique in that it's the only truly transnational sport, which makes it a good lens to magnify various interesting cultural traits for closer inspection. While it's unlikely that soccer will ever get its hooks into American culture the way it's done in most other countries, it's worth thinking about why the US is so globalized in terms of people yet so insular in sports, and what our own half-embrace of soccer says about our attitudes towards the world.

Hooliganism takes up much of the first part of the book. To me it's probably the most interesting aspect of soccer fandom, since in American sports you just don't have the kind of organized violence that you have in other countries. Sure, you have fans with a reputation for being jackasses (Philadelphia Eagles) or for shocking the bourgeoisie (Oakland Raiders), but the gangs of thugs that are endemic in many countries are simply absent here. Foer discusses the Serbian hooligans of Red Star Belgrade, whose leader Arkan became a major figure of Serb nationalism under Slobodan Milosevic. The members of the Red Star fan club Foer talks to sound like some cool guys:

"Draza especially relishes describing a game against Partizan the previous season. Thirty minutes before kick off, the Ultra Bad Boys had quietly gathered their toughest guys at one end of the stadium by a small outcropping of trees. Each thug carried a metal bar or wooden bat. They formed a V-shaped formation and began to rampage their way around the stadium, beating anyone in their path. First, they attacked the visiting fans. Then, they slugged their way through a horde of police. The Ultra Bad Boys attacked so quickly that neither the cops nor the Partizan fans had time to respond. In their path, they left lines of casualties, like the fresh tracks of a lawnmower. 'We made it around the stadium in five minutes,' says Draza. 'It was incredible.'"

"Incredible" is one word for it, and I'm glad that America chose tailgating over gang warfare. Even in "more civilized countries" like Scotland, sectarian strife manifests itself in soccer. The economic transformations that lead Glasgow to become the British Empire's "second city" in the Victorian era brought Irish immigrants to work in the factories and dockyards, and animosity between the Irish Catholics and the Protestant Scots manifested itself on the pitch as well, to the extent that the Protestant club Rangers FC was founded in 1872, but didn't hire a Catholic, Maurice Johnston, until 1989. And this in one of the most educated places in the entire world! Perhaps every society has its parochial elements lurking beneath the face it tries to show to the world, as Foer suggests:

"Scottish society is a paradox. It has more or less eradicated discrimination in the public sphere. Catholics have their fair share of representation in the universities and workforce. Nevertheless, bigotry against them persists. There was no civil rights movement to sweep away anti-Catholicism - discrimination only faded thanks to globalization. Glasgow's shipyards and steel mills, which had practiced blatantly anti-Catholic hiring, folded in the wake of the '73 oil shocks. Much of the industry that survived came under the ownership of Americans and Japanese, a new economic order that came from 'places where they are not nearly so obsessed with defending Derry's walls against the Whore of Babylon,' as the critic Patrick Reilly has put it. Catholics gained their social equality without forcing Scotland into a reckoning with its deeply held beliefs. That's why Scottish society continues to harbor, and even reward, Donald Findlay, Rangers fans, and their ideology."

The next few chapters discuss globalization as both a progressive force, and also as a way to further entrench existing elements of corruption. In Brazil, where even heroes like Pele get into legal trouble, and Ukraine, where imported Nigerian players add new life to a moribund culture, as in England, foreign players add an outside element that challenges traditional notions of soccer clubs as the emotional property of the cities they're based in. I somewhat sympathize with the "localists", as I think it's weird when Americans develop

completely arbitrary attachments to EPL teams, and I wonder what foreigners must be thinking when they start deliberately becoming fans of odd NFL teams like the Jaguars. Isn't there still room in the world for some sense of proprietary local interest, something that belongs to a single place specifically because of uniqueness? As Foer recounts during a discussion with a Chelsea fan about how the influx of money and foreign talent into the traditionally small-market Premier League has done to the formerly working-class atmosphere of the matches:

"Unwittingly, Alan boiled down the essential cultural argument against globalization made by No Logo author Naomi Klein, the McDonald's-smashing French farmer José Bove, and countless others: multinational capitalism strips local institutions of their localness, it homogenizes, destroys traditions, and deprives indigenous proletariats and peasants of the things they love most. It's easy to understand how this argument would apply to English soccer in general and Chelsea in particular."

Of course, another term for "our thing" is "cosa nostra", and few countries do attachment to local traditions, including corruption, better than Italy. The chapter on Italian soccer uses the rivalry of AC Milan and Juventus as a way of contrasting the power of new money against old money, the open corruption of Berlusconi against the genteel behind-the-scenes string-pulling of the Agnelli family, and newer empires like Berlusconi's media properties against the traditional businesses like Fiat owned by the Agnellis. Is there really a good guy in this battle, even if it's unlikely that the average fan sees the conflicts between the clubs in those terms? Foer doesn't seem to think so, and even his dinners with polite Italian leftists leave him unhappy with the entire terms of the debate. He seems happier in the next chapter discussing FC Barcelona, who he sees as heralding a new type of soccer fandom that jettisons much of both the crass materialism of modern soccer and the ugly parochialism (as a side note, Italians have a fun word for parochialism: "campanilismo", which literally means that your world is limited to what's near your town's campanile, or belltower). Though his adulation is a little out-of-date (the club did start selling ads in 2006, a mere 2 years after this book went to print), and they might not be quite the avatar of humanism he makes them out to be, much of what he admires about the club remains true:

"But if Barca's enemies objectively considered the club they despise, they would find an important reason to stand up and bathe it in applause. Critics of soccer contend that the game inherently culminates in death and destruction. They argue that the game gives life to tribal identities which should be disappearing in a world where a European Union and globalization are happily shredding such ancient sentiments. Another similar widely spread thesis holds that the root cause of violence can be found in the pace of the game itself. Because goals come so irregularly, fans spend far too much time sublimating their emotions, anticipating but not ever releasing. When those emotions swell and become uncontrollable, the fans erupt into dark, Dionysian fits of ecstatic violence."

The final chapter is about soccer's popularity in the US, which I found very relatable. Like Foer, I played youth soccer and wasn't very good at it, immediately losing interest after middle school. Unlike Foer, but like most Americans, my soccer fandom is limited to the World Cup and that's about it. I can name some players and some teams, but I can't bring myself to follow MLS or even the EPL, so the intricacies of CONCACAF standings or rankings for the Supporter's Shield are beyond me. Fandom is primarily inherited, and my parents brought me only a vestigial interest in sports, so I had to pick up my Longhorns fandom myself (hook 'em Horns!). As Foer acknowledges, soccer fandom in the US is mainly limited to either Hispanics or upper-class whites, without the crucial working-class white support that forms its base in other Western countries, or the cross-class fandom of non-Western countries. Perhaps the emotional role soccer plays elsewhere has already been filled by our other sports - baseball has the heritage, pro football has the glitz, college football has the traditions, hockey has the aggression outlet.

Even 13 years after this book was published, mild American success in the World Cup has not brought much many kids into the crucial middling levels past youth soccer and below the pro tier; it seems like the parent-child transmission of soccer fandom instead of baseball or football fandom will take major deliberate effort. Is it worth it? There are scads of sociology studies puzzling about what the American attachment to football says about our culture (Jonathan Chait wrote a particularly good one, with the unfortunate and misleading title "In Defense of Male Aggression"). I wouldn't say that soccer is like the metric system, in that our aversion to an international standard imposes real costs on people beyond the extra risk of player concussions; maybe the American disdain for soccer is just a higher-order version of the same phenomenon that makes highly-educated Scottish lawyer spew anti-Catholic vitriol, or a Serbian wax nostalgic for beating rival fans with chunks of metal. America has avoided much of the good parts of soccer, but also much of the bad, and any theory of how soccer relates to the rest of the world would have to explain its failure to take root here. Perhaps it's just how we are, and perhaps there's still room for parochialism in a world hastening to homogeneity.

Ben says

Aside from the misleading title, this is an excellent book. It's important to point out, I think, that this book does not *explain* globalization by means of soccer. Instead, it shows the ways in which many of the various facets of globalization can be seen in microcosm within the world of professional soccer. For people who are soccer fanatics and who know very little about the world around them, the title may therefore be true; but I think for the average person, there's more to be learned about soccer than anything else. At least, that was the case with me.

But - and I say this as a non-fan of pretty much every sport, including and perhaps especially soccer - what I learned was fascinating. Since soccer is a worldwide phenomenon, it has become a part of a terrific number of very different cultures and traditions. In a way, this book might more accurately be billed as a kind of whirlwind tour of the world with soccer as the guide.

Whatever the book is, it is ultimately a look at parts of the world that most people often don't think about, using as unusual a lens as the game of soccer; it's hard to imagine anyone who wouldn't learn quite few new things from reading this book.

Taters says

An educational look at several cultures viewed through the lens of the soccer teams/business/fans of those areas. A little simplified, but what sweeping survey style book is not?

Alekh Agrawal says

Football is a game played by more nations on this planet, than probably many other games put together. That FIFA has more affiliated members than the United Nations is proof enough of the global reach and impact of the beautiful game. While these figures almost feel cliched, Franklin Foer goes on to analyse how is it that a sport passionately followed by billions goes on to change the thread of life on earth. Because something so widely accepted cannot just be a mere footnote in the larger scheme of things.

The book takes us on a whirlwind ride from the dusty pitches of South America, teeming with rich talent, to the highly advanced and mega corps of Europe afflicted with unforgiving rivalry. In the process the book revolves around many significant issues such as antisemitism, globalisation, pseudo nationalism and their effects on football and vice-versa.

The author admits that the purpose of the book is to explore the nature of the game in cultural terms more than its economical impact. So while he does wonder at the failure of global giants such as Manchester United and Real Madrid's failure to wipe out local allegiances, he also studies the role played by many clubs across the world as an expression of local identities.

For a football fan, the reading varies from euphoria to surprise, bringing him/her closer to the game than just the big name worshipping. But the real impact of Foer is felt on a newcomer to the world of football. His lucidity of expression (possibly coming from being a political journo in Washington) and immense research helps put across the emotional connect of the game and its oxymoronic power to liberate cultural boundaries, at the same time creating venomous divides. Overall Foer succeeds in explaining the connect of the game at a much higher level than sport.
