



Love and Blood: At the World Cup with the Footballers, Fans, and Freaks

Jamie Trecker

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Every four years the thirty-two-team, sixty-four-game World Cup captivates the planet's populace for a month. Work absenteeism skyrockets. Political campaigns grind to a halt. Fans mortgage their houses to buy tickets. And teams employ every means possible—even consulting witch doctors and astrologers—in their quest for national glory.

Veteran soccer commentator Jamie Trecker traveled to Germany for FIFA World Cup 2006. Here, reported from the restaurants, trains, bars, town squares, hostels, press boxes, and brothels, is his unvarnished account of the games and parties, great plays and fistfights, gossip and tacky souvenirs that turn the largest sporting event on earth into a true world bazaar. With equal measures insight and irreverence, Trecker captures the passion, politics, controversies, and economics that make soccer a reflection of the world.

Love and Blood: At the World Cup with the Footballers, Fans, and Freaks Details

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From Reader Review Love and Blood: At the World Cup with the Footballers, Fans, and Freaks for online ebook

Rose says

LOVED this. A must read for all football fans. It doesn't seem like it should be that interesting, but it's very well written and quirky - and funny! Not something I would recommend if you're not a football (ie. soccer) fan.

Myke says

I couldn't put this book down, but not because I enjoyed it. I struggled to figure out why I couldn't put it down, and I figured it was because of the subject matter..., soccer. And, it's current, even better.

Too bad the book didn't measure up. He stated, somewhat early, in the book that "The American media typically only reports on the sport (soccer) when something bad happens."

I thought that quote summed up the whole book, because apparently there is nothing good to report on in his eyes, it must be all bad.

When I read the title I think of passion and excitement for the sport, something positive and exciting is going to be in this book. Wrong! He pretty much spent the whole time bashing Germany (when he wasn't giving the history of every locale he stepped foot in), their organization of the tournament, the players, the fans, the tournament itself, the US national team and the USSF, oh and FIFA..., christ he killed them.

I just wondered where and when this guy was/is a FAN, of the beautiful game?

I guess at the end of the day he's just another media writer, and has never really played the game.

Even if he does love the game, I'm not convinced that he loves the World Cup. I'm glad his employers spent a shit load of money to send him there so he could come back with this crap.

Oh and the book itself was very poorly written, he was repetitive at times (just to get to the end of a chapter), and was just all over the place. I didn't think the chapters had anything to do with its content save a few sentences. And wtf was with all the footnotes? A constant distraction and had little to do with anything.

There were some pages that were pretty much just all footnotes, at that point, I think you could try to work it in the text itself.

Josh C. says

This is a weird one. Trecker obviously understands soccer and its culture deeply — this isn't a Chuck Culpepper clueless-American gawpfest. So that's good. And a travelogue in 2006 is pretty much constitutionally mandated to serve up plenty of grit. This could have been two separate, better books, though — a fan origin memoir with cultural background of the game that I'd love, then the World Cup travelogue with the DFW/HST flourishes let run free.

As is, it felt like every time he started to tell us about something interesting in the game's history the exposition got edited down into a footnote so we could cut back to tripping over another scuzzy German brothel on his World Cup trip. Too bad.

Apratim Mukherjee says

This book describes in detail the 2006 Football World Cup. From Berlin to Stuttgart and Munich to Leipzig, fan fests, beer gardens, hooliganism etc find a place in the book. There are chapters on popularity of soccer in USA and corruption in management of the sport which are a sort of eye opener for the reader. The language is simple and includes a lot of cuss words (for which I deducted a point). Though a decade and two world cups have passed, the book is still very enjoyable for an average football fan.

Yofish says

This guy used to write a soccer Blog for the Tribune. He got paid to go to the 2006 World Cup in Germany and write this book. It is entertaining, and a lot of it is about his experience, partying with people from all different countries, watching games in bars, dealing with the German pharmacies because they confiscated his medicine as he entered the country. Also a lot of history: of the World Cup, of FIFA, of the US soccer scene, and a little on Germany even. Surprisingly little on the actual soccer. I did like it a lot. I docked a half a point because it sort of seemed like he was trying to make it toward a more general audience--I don't think a non-soccer fan would really get it much, and it detracted from my enjoyment. He was pretty opinionated on the US public's lack of appreciation of soccer (is it really that much of a crime that US college soccer allows more than 3 subs? Really?), and that seemed just a little arrogant/condescending. But mostly it was a quick, fun read.

Really 4.5

Jim says

An account of the 2006 World Cup, as well as a series of observations on what makes the sport so great and how FIFA seems determined to spoil it. This book is worth reading, no matter if you like soccer or not.

To my mind, Trecker might be the best American journalist covering international soccer. He does a great job of describing the matches, as well as the whirl of beer-soaked partying that infused the tournament. However, this book goes beyond good sports writing and is also a brilliant evocation of the wonders and mind-numbing frustrations of travel.

Throughout, Trecker refuses to pull his punches. In chapters that have enraged some within American soccer, he gives a scathing criticism to the over-hyped, uneven play of the US team in 2006. While they were able to battle the Italians to a gritty, hard-fought tie, their earlier matches were mostly embarrassing.

Tracker goes beyond the immediate scope of Germany 2006, to look at the history and the culture of the sport. Any frustrated American soccer fan will appreciate his account of the hard work it takes just to follow soccer in this country. He gives a convincing explanation of why soccer continues to be the red-headed stepchild of American sports, giving equal blame to the yuppified "trophies-for-all" quality of youth soccer and the relatively low quality of the MLS.

Trecker's main criticisms, however, are reserved for FIFA, which seems determined to turn this greatest of athletic contests into a commercial, money-grubbing frenzy. Trecker worries that the game and the fans are becoming secondary to marketing and corporate sponsorship (by which FIFA makes a load of cash). He also discusses how FIFA runs the risk of seeing its premier event lose out to other, better-run tournaments, such as the UEFA Champions' League.

I realize that this review makes it seem that Trecker's book is mainly whinging and moaning, but it's not. He does quite a bit of kvetching, but he's also good at conveying the sheer mad joy of the game. From his accounts of the Korean fans who assume that everyone is following their side, to some of the artistry on the pitch, it's obvious that Trecker loves his subject.

David says

What a disappointment. Started strongly, then fell apart when the author seemed to lose concentration in whatever the subject actually was. More so, I was excited when I finally visited Nuremburg, as he said it was the "most depressing" place he'd been to in Europe. It was a little shoddy but still a cool Bavarian town. What the hell? Surely there are better ones about Germany's World Cup???

Gary Norris says

Jamie Trecker's book is great reading. I highly recommend it.

A note about the reviews on Amazon and similar sites: Ignore the bad reviews that have anything to do with Trecker's criticism of American soccer organizations. First, true football nuts agree: there are many problems with the way Americans are encouraged to view the sport and any organization that cultivates nonsense about the sport should be held in contempt. Many Americans believe soccer is an activity, rather than a sport, a thing that kids do and that all kids can do in order to feel good about themselves and treated fairly in competition. FUCKING NONSENSE. Rightly, imo, Trecker has been highly critical and sharply provocative regarding Major League Soccer and the American Youth Soccer Organization.

Anyway, if you are critical of youth soccer in the United States, you'll soon find thousands of soccer moms and dads from the sparkling suburban set ready to wage a campaign against anything you do. That's the source of the majority of the negative reviews.

The bottom line: Trecker is a talented writer who loves the sport. He can entertain you if you're a long time fan. In addition, he provides citations and bibliographies. SO, if you're a new acolyte to the sport, you're never lost.

As with all true soccer fans, who know the sport, Trecker can sound contrary to himself. We are a strange bunch, footy fans. But we all view soccer as a mirror, an extension, of life with all its paradoxes.

Anyway...thoroughly pleased with this book. I was upset when I finished.

Eric says

This book focuses mainly on the last World Cup, but it does well to discuss the basics of football in an entertaining way that is very easy to understand. I recommend this to folks who want to learn something about the beautiful game. If you don't know too much about soccer, this is a good place to start.

Jan says

I suppose if you're not a soccer fan, then there's no particular point to reading this book, the author's account of his time at the 2006 World Cup (held in Germany). However, if you have any kind of interest in soccer at all, you might enjoy it because he does a good job of explaining the intricacies of the sport, the Cup, and the governing board (FIFA) for a "beginner" audience.

I happen to love soccer, so I really liked this book. Trecker is a sports journalist, so he had access to things (like the games themselves, haha) that a lot of fans didn't have. He also loves soccer, unlike most sports journalists in America, so he has a lot to say. The book was an easy read, and I personally found it interesting. The 2006 World Cup was the first one I really paid attention to - I even took time off during it so I could go to pubs and watch games - so I enjoyed reading a perspective of it from "ground zero," so to speak.

The one unexpected outcome of reading this book for me is that I no longer have any interest in seeing a World Cup in person. If Trecker is to be believed (and I think he is), it's one big drunken bacchanalia, which definitely isn't my thing. I think my husband is relieved. Going to World Cup is expensive!

Anna says

I was so excited to read this and relive my trip to the Germany World Cup in 2006. However the author spends too much time on the history of soccer, the unpopularity of soccer in the US and the FIFA politics to really cover the events of the 2006 World Cup in depth. He also reveals that due to medical problems he was incoherent for much of the time at the games and provides reports on the games as he watched them on TV while in Germany...One quote "I had pulled an all-nighter in Munich, covering France's 1-0 win over Portugal* - a game so unremarkable that I am sparing you the description of it." Wasn't that the point of the book?

Diana says

I finished this book this morning on my way to work. It's a really good account of one man's trip to the 2006 World Cup.

Trecker added just enough history and team information to make this so that non-soccer fanatics would enjoy

it as much as soccer fans. Also, who knew Jamie Trecker was funny? I always thought he was a dick. But now I'd probably buy him a beer if he showed up at the Globe some Saturday/Sunday morning for an Arsenal/Everton match!

A nice, easy read for the "el".

Nathan S says

This book was highly enjoyable, especially during the World Cup. Had sat on my bookshelf for sometime and glad I a) pulled it out of a bargain bin and b) finally read it. The only dislike was the author did jump around from time to time but he made up with his footnotes and references at end. Recommend to any Soccer and sport fan!

Dave says

A good read even if you are not a huge soccer fan. It does a nice job discussing world soccer personalities and politics. Also, the descriptions of Germany during the Cup - moods of citizens, post-Cold War West vs. East issues, architecture, etc - is quite excellent. I would have liked more details on stories on the streets during the Cup which he kind of glossed over.

Paul says

Americans don't appreciate soccer - or football, as we know it's really called. So it's tough for an American sports writer who clearly is passionate about the game to communicate that passion in a couple of hundred pages only. But you know, Jamie Trecker has a darned good go at it. His book has two strands, one his eye-witness experiences covering the 2006 World Cup in Germany, getting drunk with fans, getting crushed in stadia, getting involved in good natured scuffles and getting bored sitting on trains BETWEEN getting crushed in stadia and getting involved in good natured scuffles, and two, an attempt to give a potted history of the game and an explanation of the social impact it has everywhere but these shores. Not surprisingly at times it's a stretch - after all, the game has been 'more important than life or death' in most countries for a hundred years or more - so it must feel a little like a whirl for the uninitiated. But for anyone who knows and loves football, it's a delight to see an American who 'gets it' like we do. Like most fans, I wish I could attend a World Cup - no, actually let me restate that. Based on Trecker's slightly depressing, but realistic view of how corporations have taken over the game itself in the new millenium, I wish I could be involved in a World Cup Party. For now, though, this book feels like a good alternative.
