

**David Goldblatt, *The Ball is Round: A Global History of Football*, London, Viking, 2006;
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With the steady rise of the Socceroos toward the mantle of Australia's premier national sporting team – dramatically encapsulated through the unfolding drama of the team's 2006 World Cup campaign – David Goldblatt's *The Ball is Round: A Global History of Football* arrives at an opportune time for an Australian public ready to engage with the round ball game. Goldblatt's history of the world game is more than the players, the managers, the owners, big tournaments and matches. It is an account of money, power and politics that drive the modern game and dominate some of its traditional institutions. It documents spectators and the cultural phenomenon of football, a game that was originally played by the educated elite of English society in the mid-nineteenth-century but soon became the game of the masses during the industrial age across Britain before its tentacle-like spread to all four corners of the earth.

Whilst Goldblatt documents the rise of football amidst the poor working class and middle class of Britain, particular in urban and industrial areas; detailing the rise of stadiums, fan culture, and even violence – notably the first stadium disaster at the Ibrox in Glasgow in 1902 and the first riot, also in Glasgow shortly afterward – his history, as the title suggests, is not just an Anglophile history of an English game. Weighing in at over 900 pages, the twenty chapters are collated both chronologically and by the regions of Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia. Notably, Goldblatt achieves in showing how the many histories of football are intricately linked with sociology and economics, showing how particular movements within the game reflect greater national economic and patriotic verve. The enduring and overriding themes within

Goldblatt's work are the links made between the nation, nationalism, economies and respective footballing cultures.

Opening *The Ball is Round*, Goldblatt notes that 'around half the planet' watched the 2006 World Cup Final involving France and Italy from Berlin's Olympic Stadium on television, proclaiming 'three billion humans have never done anything simultaneously before' (p. x). A big claim indeed, but football is big: big as a game, big as a business, and big as a spectacle. Indeed, such is the global appeal and global reach of football that clubs that once-upon-a-time represented local communities have evolved into national and even more recently, international clubs (even to the extent by which supporters across the globe are well aware of what were once suburban or inter-city rivalries). Clubs such as Manchester United, Liverpool, Arsenal, Chelsea, AC Milan, Inter Milan, Real Madrid and Barcelona are immediately recognisable international sporting brands in coexistence with international conglomerates such as Nike and Adidas. It is not only the World Cup final, the game's pinnacle, that achieves such remarkable global audiences, but clashes between leading English clubs such as Arsenal and Manchester United are also reported to attract audiences of over 1 billion people. Such is the testament to the globalisation and spread of football culture to the four corners of the world. The dramatic rise in the global popularity of football, from a school game in Victorian Britain into to the world's most popular sport at the beginning of the twenty-first century, is extensively documented within Goldblatt's *The Ball is Round*.

Most interesting, is the discussion on why this quaint English pastime did not establish itself in the rest the British Empire and English-speaking world. Within Australia, Goldblatt rightly observes that the colonies' isolation ensured that a different code of football evolved in southern Australia – the rules of which were established two years before the formalisation of football's rules in England – whilst rugby later became popular in New South Wales and Queensland. Goldblatt's description of the formalisation of the Australian game of football and its choice not to implement an offside rule is rather problematic, however. Goldblatt asserts that: 'The English public-school

disapproval of sneaking and goal-hanging that the rule was designed to offset did not offend the sporting or social sensibilities of Australian colonial society where neither the chancer nor the short cut were objects of moral opprobrium' (p. 94). No evidence is provided to support this assertion, the comment appearing little more than a backhanded swipe at Australia's convict past. This, however, is one but a few slip-ups by an author attempting to address the differing footballing traditions that emerged among different cultures around the world (the difficulties the game encountered within Australia during the latter part of the twentieth-century, due to the ethnic rivalries between Australian clubs, is well addressed by Goldblatt in a later discussion). Elsewhere in the Empire and English-speaking world, New Zealand and white South Africa's panache for rugby, Canada's love of ice hockey, and Ireland's revival of its Gaelic games ensured that other sports became the national pastimes as these nations attempted to define themselves as distinctively different from Britain. Within India, football clubs represented the burgeoning nation's religious divides and cricket was seen as a far more unifying national sport. Most interesting within this discussion of the game's spread through the English-speaking world is the case of the United States. The growth of the game in the 1920s into a major sport buckled due to divides within the administration and crippling effects of the Great Depression. Whilst baseball, American football and ice hockey could fall back upon the college system for support, soccer had not established itself within schools and universities and thus the game temporally disappeared from the sporting landscape.

Remarkably, the global spread of the game was not through the formal ties of Empire throughout the English speaking world, but through Britain's 'informal Empire' of industrialists, merchants, bankers and workers who had established themselves in major cities and ports-of-call across the globe. The establishment of clubs by ex-patriot communities worldwide is reflected within the Anglicised names of clubs that still exist today. In South America; Everton and Liverpool in Uruguay; Arsenal in Argentina; and Corinthians in Brazil were named in homage to English teams. Furthermore, the English origins of establishment clubs are also evident by anglicised titles across Europe. Therefore the former cricket club that tried its hand at football is known as 'AC

Milan' rather than 'AC Milano'. As some of these clubs were open only to the English ex-patriot communities the growth of Anglophobe feelings emerging in the years leading up to the First World War witnessed the emergence of rival clubs that came to represent nationalist movements of the period. Therefore Internazionale (Inter Milan) emerged to rival AC Milan by providing a club for the city's Italian footballers to ply their trade (the 'Internazionale' title referring that the team was non-English rather than non-Italian). Similarly, in Spain, Espanyol emerged to rival the Anglo-dominated FC Barcelona. The undermining and challenging of a Spanish nation by Basque and Catalonia nationalists can be reflected within some club's desire to seek royal patronage by the addition of the moniker 'Real' to a club's title. Indeed, such were the links between nationalist movements and the establishment of football as a national sport that various nations (Italy and Germany being just two examples) would dubiously claim that the sport had been developed from their own indigenous ball games from past centuries. Indeed, new words were created and adopted within national languages to address the game's governing rules in order to cast off and abandon English vocabulary within the game. Thus, Goldblatt interestingly reveals how the rise and spread of the global game became intricately linked with symbols of nation and nationhood.

Nationalism and national footballing teams could not be addressed without Goldblatt's discussion on the rise of international football. Whilst club football had been quickly embraced throughout the 'Home Countries' of England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland by the time of the First World War, their influence on the growth and development of international competitions was limited. Indeed the English FA's non-endorsement and non-participation in a World Cup until 1950 raised questions as to who was indeed entitled to the title of world champion until England's spectacular failure in 1950 ensured that England's centrality as a footballing power, like its Empire, was in decline. The world's governing organization, FIFA, was nurtured in France and whilst international football featured in the Olympics as an amateur sport, the organization of FIFA's first World Cup in 1930 was a reflection of the significant contribution made by the nations of Central Europe and South America in establishing the game at international level.

In detailing the rise of international football, Goldblatt acknowledges the significance attached to the game by footballing authorities and national governments, ensuring that national and international politics could be entwined with the game's administration. For example, following Germany's non-inclusion within the League of Nations international opposition to German participation in world football following the First World War temporarily split FIFA. Another case was the use of the 1934 World Cup to promote Mussolini and Fascist Italy. However, Goldblatt's over-enthusiastic assertion that on-field success gave certain regimes and nations a global confidence that could include territorial expansion, or that national economies and cultures are reflected in the performance of national teams, perhaps overstates the importance of the game as a worldwide social and cultural phenomenon. Nevertheless, Goldblatt supports these views through a continual line of on-field results that seemingly reflect the state of a nation (Germany's demoralising 3-2 loss to Sweden soon after the military defeat at Stalingrad in 1943 one of the more bizarre examples). Whilst patriotic national confidence did clearly swell following momentous victories – such as West Germany's 1954 World Cup triumph that became colloquially known as 'the miracle of Berne' – the influence of on-field success upon the desires of despots and dictators such as Mussolini following the nation's success at the 1934 World Cup, and Argentina's military junta following World Cup glory in 1978 are compelling theses. The most macabre and chilling example discussed by Goldblatt in this regard was the active recruitment of Red Star Belgrade's ultra-nationalist supporter groups by the military with the specific aim of fuelling, antagonizing and taking part in the policies of ethnic cleansing in the 1990s Balkan wars.

As the game progressed post-war and into the modern post-colonial era, the game was further unable to distance itself from world politics. In this regard, Goldblatt does not shy away from making his feelings known regarding FIFA's shameful decision to allow Chile to take part in the 1974 World Cup at the expense of the Soviet Union following the Soviet Union team's refusal to play a qualifier in the infamous national stadium used to house, torture and murder

Chilean political prisoners, just one example. Whilst the period from 1945 to 1974 oversaw massive expansion in FIFA – even to the extent that FIFA includes more member nations than the United Nations – Goldblatt demonstrates that despite the embracing internationalism, FIFA's administration continued to reflect the petty racism of the colonial era. This changed with the election of Brazilian Joao Havelange as FIFA president in 1974, upsetting the game's European powerbase. His presidency oversaw the brisk commercialisation of the game by attracting multi-national brands to lucrative exclusive sponsorship deals and placing strong emphasis on the sale of TV rights that helped transform the World Cup, in terms of audience and capital, into the world's premier sporting event (even surpassing the Olympic Games).

As noted earlier, one of the most significant and indeed interesting discussions within Goldblatt's study is his examination of the increasing influence of money and political power within the modern game. The extent and potential power of lucrative sponsorship deals is shown by Nike's virtual ownership and power over the Brazilian squad that eventually lost the 1998 World Cup final to France. Money, power and politics provide football with real concerns heading into the future. The power of the major European clubs and their influence in obtaining major portions of the TV rights and sponsorship pie from the lucrative UEFA Champion's League has come at the expense of smaller clubs and healthy competition in domestic leagues. Despite the UEFA Champions League seeing the standard of football on the pitch reaching new heights, such is the grip the major clubs have in divvying up the profits based on TV audiences, the situation arose that when Porto won the UEFA Champions League title in 2004 they received less than half of the money rewarded to Manchester United, whom they had knocked out in the second round of sixteen. Such disproportion of the financial pie is increasingly affecting national leagues, as teams that regularly feature in the tournament have begun to monopolise domestic titles on the back of the financial rewards gained by European Champion's League qualification. Most compelling is Goldblatt's discussion on the tenuous financial positions of clubs battling for greater sponsorship dollars and a greater market share amidst spiralling

player wages. This has become an increasingly important issue with the current economic crises, of which the full ramifications for many clubs are yet to be seen. Of further concern regarding the modern game are the problems of corruption and the continual battles to stamp out racism on the field and in the stands, which in certain parts of the world have more and more become the playground of right-wing ultra-nationalist groups.

Key players, managers, matches and developments in rules, game play and tactics are all covered within Goldblatt's extensive analysis. Fascinating is the discussion of early versions of the game, and of the growing development of tactics and team formations in the years before the First World War. Herbert Chapman is given due recognition for his role as one of the first modern football managers who introduced to Arsenal in the 1920s and 1930s a modern professionalism and revolutionary tactical game plan. And the contribution made by South American football cultures and levels of professionalism, and the introduction into the football vocabulary of distinctive game styles from differing global footballing cultures – 'football as art', 'anti-football', and 'total football' – make compelling reading. However, these fascinating diversions into the evolution of how the game was actually played are brief, and arise occasionally during the chronologically ordered chapters.

The work may have profited from an individual chapter discussing this important on-field aspect of the game. Certain rules and regulations are either overlooked or the assumption is placed upon the reader to be knowledgeable of these aspects of the game's history. For example, we are told of a German cup final in the 1920s in which no provision was given for the event of scores been level at full-time. What transpired were hours of extra-time in which players collapsed from exhaustion. This fascinating tale does not however lead to a discussion on the influence of FIFA in establishing universal rules, or address aspects of the game such as the employment at major tournaments of extra-time, penalty-shootouts, and the embracing and then abandoning of the golden-goal. And we are only told briefly, for example, that the introduction of the red/yellow card disciplinary system took place at the 1968 Olympic Games tournament in a discussion on the achievements of FIFA President Sir

Stanley Rouse. Furthermore, almost no discussion is granted to the referee and the differing interpretations of the rules by (not to mention managers, players and fans' attitudes towards) the loneliest man on the pitch that developed in the differing footballing cultures. A focussed discussion on these important aspects of the game would have been worthwhile.

There are also a few moments when Goldblatt's enthusiasm and seemingly encyclopaedic knowledge of football fails the reader. One particular case is Goldblatt's references to the Superga disaster when discussing Italian football during the post-war period. Whilst I immediately understood his point knowing of the Superga disaster – a plane crash that killed the entire Torino AC squad in 1949 – many readers, particularly within Australia and of a younger generation, may not know this or understand its traumatic significance (p. 427-428). Furthermore, whilst it may seem straightforward to question Goldblatt's continual ability to link the cultural importance and ability of football to reflect nations, nationalist and social movements, his enthusiasm and ability to form a strong narrative for such a grand undertaking should be appreciated. That Goldblatt is a fan of the game clearly shows by his passion for the subject. *The Ball is Round* is certainly an extensive work of reference and guide for those studying the intertwining histories and role of sport in nation-building and nationalism, not to mention those who like Goldblatt himself, are fans of the game. A fine effort – even for a Tottenham Hotspur fan.

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