

PREFACE

THE AIM OF the international soccer blog Pitch Invasion has been to publish thoughtful, long-form pieces of writing that dig well below the headlines, and explore the culture of sport, its politics, its economics and how fans engage with and shape the spectacles that dominate daily media coverage. This writing has come from a variety of contributors, and the very best of it from 2007 to 2010 is collected here. Though based out of Chicago, Pitch Invasion's focus has been global in scope. The breadth of topics explored by Pitch Invasion's writers has been remarkable, and selecting the essays for this volume proved to be a considerable challenge.

Categorizing the content helped. The first section, Fandom, looks at supporter culture in three continents. Mike Tuckerman and Mike Innes both explore Japanese fan culture, with the former offering a broad overview of how Japanese society lends to the formation of disciplined supporter groups, while the latter looks at the travails of Omiya Ardija's fans, the "Squirrel Nation." Across the Pacific, the American Northwest has recently become a hotbed for supporter engagement. Zach Dundas gives us the story of how the Timbers Army in Portland grew from grassroots to MLS; while Benjamin Kumming examines how DIY ethos and Major League marketing play out in a considered comparison of those same Portland fans with their noisy neighbors in Seattle. But where does this group mentality stem from? Andrew Guest dips into psychology to offer an explanation of the us-versus-them phenomenon. A study of social pathology might be needed in Poland, as Michał Karaś delves into a fierce Krakow rivalry.

History is also covered on three continents. Lost North American soccer is expansively explored by Kumming and Peter Wilt, both digging up the Dark Ages of American soccer – the interregnum between the demise of the NASL in 1984 and the launch of MLS in 1996. Richard Whittall reminds us of a little-known Canadian episode in Bobby Robson's long career, and my own piece on 1967 in American soccer considers the mess that the NASL formed out of. Africa is explored in three very different historical contexts. Supriya Nair warns us of the dangers of generalizations about sport and politics; Jack Lord goes back to the days of African football's development under colonial rule; and I consider the

remarkable career of Ydnekatchew Tessema, a brilliant player, coach and most lastingly, a trailblazing promoter of African soccer internationally. JL Murtaugh, meanwhile, takes us to Europe with an analysis of the European Championship's brand identity since its inception in 1960.

Culture is a broad term, but fits for the essays by Brian Phillips, Jennifer Doyle and Vanda Wilcox on the curious origins of songs that have become supporter hymns in Bristol, London and Italy respectively. Alex Usher, Pitch Invasion's resident book reviewer, is represented with his rough guide to football books and with a particularly insightful look at Laurent Dubois' *Soccer Empire*. Eschewing the obvious comparison to the recent Zinedine Zidane film, Marc Bahnsen considers George Best on his own terms via the cameras trained on him in the German film from 1971, *Football as Never Before*.

The fourth section, Life, connects loss, love, hope and the commercialization of sport. Bobby Brandon calls for Robert Enke's tragic suicide to prompt an honest discussion about depression in sport. Two very different advocates of American soccer are remembered: punk-rock writer Steven Wells by myself, and Chicago Fire fan Al Hack by Peter Wilt. Each represented a different angle of the advance soccer has taken in the past two decades, from supporter culture to family life. How that passion for the sport can infect us is considered by David Keyes, who tells us how an American soccer neophyte became a fanatic with a trip to Saprissa in Costa Rica. Bahnsen returns to consider the commercialization that threatens international sport's organic appeal during Euro 2008, while Jennifer Doyle warns us of over-romanticizing sport's abilities to break down barriers.

Supporter activism closes the collection. How might fans engage to improve the sport they love? Dave Boyle, CEO of Supporters Direct from 2009-2011, examines what needs to change in English non-League football. His insights are well supported by Gary Andrews' series on the supporter trust movement, Shay Golub's look at Israeli fandom and Chris Taylor's consideration of club identity in non-League English football. And in Finland, Egan Richardson explores the challenges for activist fans.

The name Pitch Invasion aims to convey the passionate intensity with which fans form the culture of soccer worldwide. This is reflected in the depth and intensity of the topics collected here, and throughout Pitch Invasion's existence. I hope you enjoy this selection.

– Tom Dunmore, *Pitch Invasion Founder and Editor*