



## Winning at All Costs: A Scandalous History of Italian Soccer

By John Foot



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The 2006 World Cup final between Italy and France was a down-and-dirty game, marred by French superstar Zidane's head-butting of Italian defender Materazzi. But viewers were also exposed to the poetry, force, and excellence of the Italian game; as operatic as Verdi and as cunning as Machiavelli, it seemed to open a window into the Italian soul. John Foot's epic history shows what makes Italian soccer so unique. Mixing serious analysis and comic storytelling, Foot describes its humble origins in northern Italy in the 1890s to its present day incarnation where soccer is the national civic religion. A story that is reminiscent of Gangs of New York and A Clockwork Orange, Foot shows how the Italian game — like its political culture — has been overshadowed by big business, violence, conspiracy, and tragedy, how demagogues like Benito Mussolini and Silvio Berlusconi have used the game to further their own political ambitions. But *Winning at All Costs* also celebrates the sweet moments — the four World Cup victories, the success of Juventus, Inter Milan, AC Milan, the role soccer played in the resistance to Nazism, and the great managers and players who show that Italian soccer is as irresistible as Italy itself.

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#### Review

"A stand-up job of taking a complex foreign phenomenon and making it both simple and entertaining."

"Shows how football and Italian society are inextricably intertwined, and is full of fascinating vignettes."

#### About the Author

John Foot teaches modern Italian history at University College London. He writes for the Guardian, the London Review of Books, and the TLS and is the author of books on Milan and modern Italian history.

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