



Eight World Cups: My Journey through the Beauty and Dark Side of Soccer

George Vecsey

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On the eve of the 2014 World Cup, *New York Times* sports columnist George Vecsey offers a personal perspective on the beautiful game

Blending witty travelogue with action on the field—and shady dealings in back rooms—George Vecsey offers an eye-opening, globe-trotting account of the last eight World Cups. He immerses himself in the great national leagues, historic clubs, and devoted fans and provides his up-close impressions of charismatic stars like Sócrates, Maradona, Baggio, and Zidane, while also chronicling the rise of the U.S. men's and women's teams.

Vecsey shows how each host nation has made the World Cup its own, from the all-night street parties in Spain in 1982 to the roar of vuvuzelas in South Africa in 2010, as the game in the stadium is backed up by the game in the street. But the joy is sometimes undermined by those who style themselves the game's protectors.

With his characteristic sharp reporting and eye for detail, Vecsey brings this global event to vivid life and has written a perfect companion for the upcoming 2014 World Cup in Brazil.

Eight World Cups: My Journey through the Beauty and Dark Side of Soccer Details

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From Reader Review Eight World Cups: My Journey through the Beauty and Dark Side of Soccer for online ebook

Cristian Figueroa says

When I was searching for a book I saw this book about Soccer World Cup. It is called Eight World Cups by George Vecsey. If you like soccer, I would recommend this book. It's interesting if you like Soccer and would like to know about the old world cups. The first world cup they tell you in this book is 1982. The world cup is in Spain. This book tells you a lot of detail for the interesting games of the world cups. It tells you about the upsets. Like when Cameroon beat Argentina in 1990. This book tells how soccer players score goals. Like the "Hand of God" in 1986. The "Hand of God" was when Maradona scored in the finals against Italy in the 1986 World Cup. The book also tells you the "Group of Death". The "Group of Death" is the hardest group of the world cup. This book has a lot of detail in it. In some of the games it tells you the build up of the play.

Daniel says

A well written personal history of World Cup events by a NYT journalist. The culture, politics, tactical and technical aspects are described in a flowing narrative.

Peter says

I read the 2014's edition of Eight World Cups: My Journey through the Beauty and Dark Side of Soccer by the sportswriter George Vecsey. The book covers Vecsey's career covering World Cup soccer and American soccer from the Men's World Cup in Spain in 1982 till the Men's World Cup in South Africa in 2010. A Goodreads reviewer named Simon mentioned that Vecsey's updated the book to include the 2014 Men's World Cup in Brazil. Vecsey spends a lot of talking about the United States' Men National Team development from a lost in World Cup qualifiers to Costa Rica in 1985 in Torrance, California which in the words of Vecsey "a few thousand Costa Ricans could outroot four times as many Americans" till the era of the Jürgen Klinsmann as the coach of the American side and qualifying for the World Cup in Brazil in 2014. I wished he spent more time on the American Women's National Team. He only spends to two chapters on the American women's team, one on the 1996 Gold Medal team in the Atlanta Olympics and the other when the American women won the World Cup when the United States hosted in 1999. Vecsey's Eight World Cup is a good introduction to the recent history of the Men's World Cup from the point of the American sportswriter.

Sean Branson says

This book was somewhat interesting as a US fan, but definitely reads as if written by somebody with only a passing interest in the game. I would recommend the book to casual observers of the World Cup (particularly

American) who are interested in reading about how the tournament has evolved.

I also must note, as a fan of DC United since the inception of MLS in 1996, I was struck by the description of Marco Etcheverry as an aging veteran in the 1994 World Cup. In actuality, he was only 23 during the tournament. Based on this oversight, I wonder how many other inaccuracies are in the book?

Marty Greenwell says

Good book but no Miracle of Castel..Liked the way it started when the author was a student attempting to make a team in Queens in HS and reverted at the end back to that school watching what the current 2014 players could do that they couldn't. How he went to pubs where ethnic contingencies watched their home nations through triumph or defeat. The "inside" of the Maradonas or Zidanes. I finished this the morning of the first real day of World Cup 2018 hosted in Russia. LIked the way he made FIFA out as a corrupt organization. How could Qatar get the 2022 World Cup with no soccer and a temp of 100+ degrees without corruption?

Leif says

Functionally, this is an American-centred memoir of men's international soccer, with occasional dashes of American women's international soccer and a consistent, if minor, flavouring of more broadly international events in international soccer. Much emerges from Vecsey's personal reminiscences and it shows: interesting events are skipped, factual data are distorted, and minor events are elevated to strange magnitudes.

Honestly, while this is a decent enough guide to world soccer, it's just not very exciting, nor is it illustrative of the broad range that soccer extends across the globe. I'd skip it unless you're both quite new and quite interested in the American perspective on historical World Cups.

Nick says

There are better soccer memoirs out there. No real in-depth reflection. Eight World Cups summarized in 254 pages (pages 255-290 are an appendix, bibliography, and an index)? I know Vecsey is a respected sports journalist but he came across as a typical American sports journalist that "found" soccer. Sure...it seems like he came to appreciate the game but still wrote about it as if it were an assignment. I just think he could have put together a more detailed reflection of seeing eight fricking World Cups. Eight.

Daniel says

This was one of the most infuriating books I've ever read. Vecsey has been observing soccer in the U.S. since the 1980s and makes some valuable observations about those thirty years, which is why I give the book a 2 instead of a 1. But the book is rife with factual errors. For instance, he keeps calling the penalty spot the "disk," which is a term that he makes up, he says the U.S. women played a controversial semifinal against Canada in the 2011 World Cup when in fact it was played at the 2012 Olympics, and at one point he mentions that Portugal's appearance in the 2006 World Cup semifinals was their first since 1966 (true), and

then two pages later says it was their first ever, period. There are numerous further errors that I could cite. It becomes clear by the midpoint of the book that Vecsey knows much less about soccer than he thinks he does, and that his publisher has horrible fact checkers. Overall this book was a wasted of time.

Stan Usher says

I don't know how I feel about this book to be honest. I gave it 3 stars, as that was as close to 2.5 as I was allowed to rate. A story about the 8 World Cups between 1982 and 2010 from a journalist who covered every one, sounds like it should be a good read for soccer fans in general, but it instead kind of reads like a travel book of someone who has visited the different countries, even going as far as to go on about the best restaurants in each location. Another problem I had was that even though the author says he has a great affinity for the game, he has the very annoying habit of referring to the game in terms of various American sports. Now I get that he is American, and I as a converted American understand well enough, but if you are going to describe the game at least get some of the terminology correct. It is not a penalty disk it is a penalty spot for crying out loud! I enjoyed reading the bits about the different players, the life of Maradona in particular, but there was nothing really great in the book. An average read, hence the 2.5 stars.

Sheng says

Eight World Cups: My Journey through the Beauty and Dark Side of Soccer has always been a mainstay at the library I frequent and I never possessed the interest to read it. However, with the 2018 World Cup in Russia only days away now, I decided to finally pick up this book to get into the mood and hype for the biggest football tournament that is about to come.

Before reading *Eight World Cups*, I was expecting this book to be an account of all the footballing events that surrounded and happened during the past eight World Cups that have taken place in 2014 and earlier. What the book turned out to be was more of a personal account and reflection of author George Vecsey and his relationship with soccer. He talked about his early life and experiences playing soccer in school, along with his journey to watch World Cups as a journalist and with his family. These are all details that I weren't exactly interested to read about.

As a result of a more personal viewpoint for this book, there was a lot of USA-centric content as well because of the nationality of the author. Each World Cup retelling would include the USA's journey in qualifying and how they performed in the World Cup, in addition to the background and development of the domestic league and young players back at home. I was hoping for a more balanced account of the past World Cups with the exploits of more countries detailed but what I got was more of a Team USA history lesson.

Overall, I am a bit disappointed with this book because of a lack of football and World Cup-specific content and an overload of personal and USA history. Still, it was a decent enough retelling of some famous events from the history of football's largest sporting event. 3/5

Simon says

Apparently, I already read this book. I thought that I might have when I was reading it, but he added the

2014 World Cup which was nice.

Chad Post says

Nice overview of the main events of the past eight world cups, but that's about it. Not particularly insightful, nor are there any really interesting stories. And the writing is pretty pedestrian. Did help get me excited for WC 2014 though . . .

Robert says

I wanted to give this book 5 stars since it involves 2 of my favorite things: international soccer and world travel. It was an enjoyable read, but some parts of the book seemed to have some lazy and/or repetitive writing, as well as some incorrect facts. Worth the read, just not an outstanding 5-star book for a topic that had a lot of potential.

Reading Fool says

I received this book for free through Goodreads First Reads.

Now I'm ready for the 2014 World Cup. I didn't know very much about soccer before I read this book. Vecsey's writing is so descriptive that I can see the plays in my mind as I read about them. His enthusiasm and love for the sport are clear, and I went along his journey with him with joy.

Madeleine says

So long as you start the book knowing that this isn't a comprehensive summary of 8 world cups but rather one journalist's experience and aren't snobbish about American soccer, I think most soccer fans would enjoy this book. Personally, I loved it and learned a lot American league soccer and the world cup. Just over a year til 2018!
