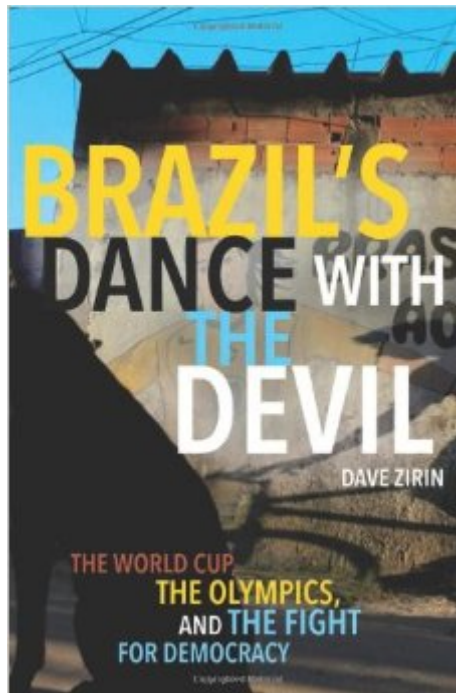


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Brazil's Dance With The Devil: The World Cup, The Olympics, And The Struggle For Democracy



Synopsis

One of the Boston Globe's "Best Sports Books of 2014" As the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games approach, ordinary Brazilians are holding the country's biggest protest marches in decades. Sports journalist Dave Zirin traveled to Brazil to find out why. In a rollicking read that travels from the favelas of Rio de Janeiro to the fabled Maracanã Stadium, Zirin examines how athletic mega-events turn into neoliberal Trojan horses.

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Customer Reviews

I'm hardly an expert on soccer, but I thought it might be fun to follow this year's World Cup after visiting Brazil last year, just before the Confederations Cup protests. After reading this, I think I have a good idea of what the street demonstrations were all about (certainly not the 20 cent bus fare increase the mainstream US media were fixated on.) The book is much more focused on the history of Brazil and the politics of soccer than it is on the game itself. On the whole, this is justified and anyone who still thinks that soccer can be thought of separately from politics will benefit from reading Zirin. Zirin offers a concise sketch of Brazilian history from the founding of the country under Portuguese rule, through the story of slavery, independence, the Vargas years, the military dictatorship, through the rise of Lula and Dilma Rousseff. From what I know of Brazilian history, he does a superb and accurate job and he has clearly consulted and learned from the classics in this area. The second half of the book is more soccer-centric. Zirin will not win any fans at FIFA (or the IOC for that matter). His thesis is that recent World Cups and Olympics have been essentially what he calls "neo-liberal Trojan horses and sporting shock doctrines", taking a cue from Naomi Klein's

"The Shock Doctrine." The evidence Zirin presents is quite convincing that the corporatist agenda has been the driving factor in these spectacles. The best part of the book, for me at least, was his discussion of the drive to eradicate the favelas and Vila Autodroma in Rio. Pure greed in action.

The author of Brazil's Dance With the Devil, Dave Zirin, must love sports, as I do, as billions of us do, or he wouldn't keep writing about where sports have gone wrong. But, wow, have they gone wrong! Brazil is set to host the World Cup this year and the Olympics in 2016. In preparation Brazil is evicting 200,000 people from their homes, eliminating poor neighborhoods, defunding public services, investing in a militarized police and surveillance state, using slave and prison labor to build outrageous stadiums unlikely to be filled more than once, and "improving" a famous old stadium (the world's largest for 50 years) by removing over half the capacity in favor of luxury seats. Meanwhile, popular protests and graffiti carry the message: "We want 'FIFA standard' hospitals and schools!" Brazil is just the latest in a string of nations that have chosen the glory of hosting mega sports events like the Olympics and World Cup despite the drawbacks. And Zirin makes a case that nations' governments don't see the drawbacks as drawbacks at all, that in fact they are the actual motivation. "Countries don't want these mega-events in spite of the threats to public welfare, addled construction projects, and repression they bring, but because of them." Just as a storm or a war can be used as an excuse to strip away rights and concentrate wealth, so can the storm of sporting events that, coincidentally or not, have their origins in the preparation of nations for warmaking. Zirin notes that the modern Olympics were launched by a group of European aristocrats and generals who favored nationalism and war -- led by Pierre de Coubertin who believed sport was "an indirect preparation for war.

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