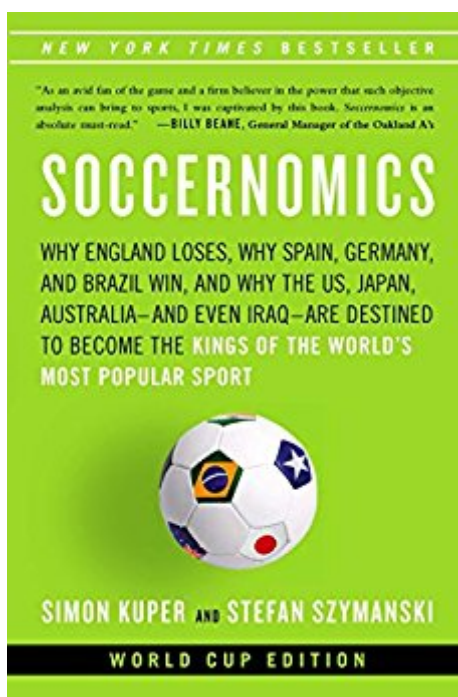


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Soccernomics: Why England Loses, Why Spain, Germany, And Brazil Win, And Why The U.S., Japan, Australia—and Even Iraq—Are Destined To Become The Kings Of The World's Most Popular Sport



Synopsis

INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER Named one of the "Best Books of the Year" by Guardian, Slate, Financial Times, Independent (UK), and Bloomberg News. Economics pioneers a new way of looking at soccer through meticulous, empirical analysis and incisive, witty commentary. The San Francisco Chronicle describes it as "the most intelligent book ever written about soccer." This World Cup edition features new material, including a provocative examination of how soccer clubs might actually start making profits, why that's undesirable, and how soccer's never had it so good.

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Customer Reviews

I am an American who never played any significant soccer and only watched my children play through about junior high. My interest has only developed after age 65 from watching US national teams and uefa Champions league on TV. So maybe I dont know much about soccer, but I have done a lot of statistical analysis of complex data sets over a long university career. I think the book includes lots of interesting observations about soccer. My main complaint is the authors uncritical use of regression analysis to try to find cause effect relationships. Regression is based on

correlations between pairs of variables, and more correlations between variables crudely adjusted for the effects of still more variables. The results may depend critically on minor changes in the data sets analyzed which affect the order in which variables are incorporated into the analysis. And of course correlation does not establish cause and effect. I was entirely unconvinced by their long paragraphs describing results of regression analysis, and started skipping reading most of these sections. So if I evaluate only the sections free of regression results, I would raise my score to four stars.

This is a good book. One that most any fan should consider for their reading list. It does have a few problems, and a number of the conclusions the authors reach have gaping logical flaws. Specifically, they spend considerable time (correctly) reminding readers that there is a difference between causation and correlation, yet they proceed to make the exact same mistake on multiple occasions, particularly as relates to salary vs. transfer investment, a core discussion point of the book. They also spend a quite exhaustive (and frankly nauseating) amount of time explicitly making the point that this book is the soccer version of "Moneyball". The entire first chapter is basically a ham-fisted advertisement for this claim. But those are the complaints. There are many good reasons to read this--- it is engaging in its narrative, and educational even to those already familiar with many of the concepts. And the anecdotal evidence (often a weakness in books of this genre) is actually mouthwateringly good.... many tidbits that simply aren't part of the mainstream coverage of the sport, even for those who geek heavily on soccer blogs. Probably, this is "must read" if you really study the global game. But you will take umbrage with some of the conclusions. Maybe that's normal-- we all have a unique passion for the beautiful game.

This mashup of Freakonomics and Moneyball, with a focus on European/EPL clubs and a brief foray into the world of World Cup economics, ranges from fascinating (Why do clubs tend to overpay for transfers? Can you use statistical analysis to outwit goalkeepers at the highest levels? Do rich clubs always prevail over poor ones?) to repetitive and mundane (most of the last half of the book). Some of the statistics in the latter part of the book feel either inconsequential or sloppy, including two adjacent tables that seemingly contradict each other. Highlights include memorable tidbits about key personalities -- you'll get your fill of anecdotes about Johan Crujfff (though if Dutch football is your passion, there are other, better books). But if you're a U.S. fan of Major League Soccer, you will find little about that league's financial shell games. The authors dismiss MLS as boring, allegedly because the teams are too balanced, possibly because the transactions tend to

involve numbers that are orders of magnitude lower than those of European and EPL teams, and maybe because they're Eurosnoobs. That's ok. They aren't very kind to MLS, but they don't devote much space to insulting it either. Summary: if you're at all interested in the economics of soccer, you'll find some captivating material in this book. Once it starts to drag, you can begin skimming. You'll still walk away with some stats with which you can regale your soccer-loving friends over a beer as you commiserate about your cheapskate (MLS) club's fifth consecutive loss.

Came highly recommended and it's certainly worth a read, but I found it dry and bouncing around in places. Definitely worth a read if you're all about the business side of the sport, but it can be a bit heavy at times, covering issues like racism and such.

I finished this book (400+ page) within 2 weeks as part-time reading. As a trained data analyst and recent convert soccer fan following Bundesliga for one full season, this book is quite fascinating as it has combined my profession and hobby! My satisfaction derives partly from the fact that I understand most of the statistical techniques described. For a person who is not number-savvy, some explanations in the book may look clueless and even daunting. This book walked a right balance between funny description of soccer history (mainly European side) and data-driven conclusion on several myths, although most league-related data are from English Premier League. The conclusions on transfer market, profit of hosting a World Cup, even fan psychology (esp. related to suicide) are worth reading, but being a data analyst myself, I would like to caution the certainty of any form of regression analysis. It also gave a good history on how data mindset is slowly getting into the soccer field - much like MoneyBall in MLB. The most useful and solid country-related conclusion: England should never lament itself as "underachiever" - which is actually some residual of the "imperial manifest destiny" complex. Instead, it should go into any tournament understanding it is a second-tier team, if not 3rd-tier. The recent EURO 2016 also testified this conclusion: England was beaten by Iceland in the Round of 16. Highly recommend for readers who would like to know more about soccer, fans and countries, esp. those with basic literacy of advanced mathematics. I did check FIFA and UEFA websites while reading to see if they have data analysts vacancy open :-)

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