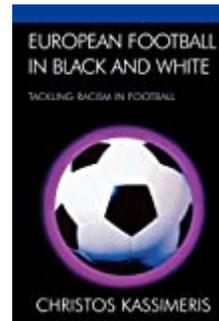




**Christos Kassimeris.** *European Football in Black and White: Tackling Racism in Football.* Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008. viii + 267 pp. \$75.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7391-1959-4; \$29.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7391-1960-0.



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## The Ugly Face of the Beautiful Game

Soccer fans held in thrall by the European Championships have no doubt observed the significant display of anti-racist statements and activities before, during, and after the matches. Indeed, in 2008, the captains of the German, Turkish, Russian, and Spanish teams jointly delivered messages of anti-racism and equality just before the kick-off of their respective semi-final games. Thus, Christos Kassimeris's book is timely and treats an important topic in both soccer and broader European society. Although the book suffers from some nagging flaws and is overly repetitious, its overall presentation of the search for racial and ethnic equality in global soccer is well researched and thorough.

The text consists of eight chapters stretching from the early history of soccer and its global spread to the manifestation of racism and ethnic inequality in the sport up to the present day. The first two chapters, which present introductory material and the history of the game and its development, are one area of weakness in the text. They serve no useful purpose but to remind readers of a point of which most are already well aware: that soc-

cer is a global game embraced and beloved by a wide variety of peoples all across the planet. Chapter 3 deals with the use of soccer as an instrument for strengthening national sentiment amongst a country's citizenry. Here Kassimeris rightly argues that the instrumentalization of soccer as a nationalist political tool can have dangerous consequences. From the fascist dictatorships of the early and mid-twentieth century to the Balkan wars and the racial taunting of players in the present, he charts the real difficulties soccer organizations and leaders have found in attaining the European Union's goal of "unity in diversity."

The remaining chapters deal with relatively contemporary history, chronicling the rash of acts of racial abuse and ethnic intolerance that began to plague European and global soccer in the late 1990s and after. Linked in some cases to ultra-nationalist groups and political parties, the scourge of racial and ethnic prejudice has proven especially widespread and difficult to eradicate across Europe from east to west. To support his claims, Kassimeris surveys evidence of racial and ethnic slurs and

attacks directed at players and supporters from soccer leagues and stadia all over the continent; indeed, his discussion, although brief, is remarkably thorough.

In chapter 5, Kassimeris treats English responses to racism and ethnic intolerance in its soccer stadia and leagues. He carefully traces the development of England's "Let's Kick Racism Out of Football" drive in 1993 and the subsequent development of the still highly active "Kick It Out" organization. With major support from leading players and all of England's soccer leagues from the Premier League on down, the program has proven highly successful in diminishing instances of racial and ethnic intolerance at soccer contests. What is more, it identified an important and persistent problem that may have helped to perpetuate intolerance—the miniscule degree of racial and ethnic diversity in team management, administration, and coaching. The program also pointed out the lack of people of Asian and South Asian descent in soccer stadia and on soccer teams, which led to the creation of community programs to encourage Asian and South Asian attendance at soccer matches and participation in local, regional, and national soccer competitions.

Following his discussion of English efforts to kick racism out of soccer, Kassimeris moves to a discussion of similar efforts and responses on the European continent,

especially those under the auspices of soccer's international governing body, the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA); its European counterpart, the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA); and the European Union. Generally, Kassimeris approves of the broad efforts of these bodies to develop programs and outreach to address and limit racist and ethnic abuses of all kinds. He especially notes the impact of the organization Football Against Racism in Europe (FARE) and its efforts to enlist players, leagues, and fans to identify and root out racism in the sport. Kassimeris is very thorough in his cataloging of the myriad programs, legislation, and educational efforts that have been undertaken and continue to unfold across Europe. His appendix is especially useful, containing a variety of EU legislative acts and other documents related to the struggle to eliminate racist and ethnic abuse from soccer.

Overall, then, despite the weaknesses mentioned, Christos Kassimeris has produced an informative work that is especially strong at covering more recent attempts to address the existence of racism and ethnic prejudice in European soccer. One can only hope that the energy and resources that have been devoted and deployed on so many levels will result in restoring the full luster of what can indeed be a most beautiful game for everyone.

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