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Bloody Confused!: A Clueless American Sportswriter Seeks Solace in English Soccer

By Chuck Culpepper



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Chuck Culpepper was a veteran sports journalist edging toward burnout . . . then he went to London and discovered the high-octane, fanatical (and bloody confusing!) world of English soccer.

After covering the American sports scene for fifteen years, Chuck Culpepper suffered from a profound case of Common Sportswriter Malaise. He was fed up with self-righteous proclamations, steroid scandals, and the deluge of in-your-face PR that saturated the NFL, the NBA, and MLB. Then in 2006, he moved to London and discovered a new and baffling world—the renowned Premiership soccer league. Culpepper pledged his loyalty to Portsmouth, a gutsy, small-market team at the bottom of the standings. As he puts it, “It was like childhood, with beer.”

Writing in the vein of perennial bestsellers such as *Fever Pitch* and *Among the Thugs*, Chuck Culpepper brings penetrating insight to the vibrant landscape of English soccer—visiting such storied franchises as Manchester United, Chelsea, and Liverpool . . . and an equally celebrated assortment of pubs. *Bloody Confused!* will put a smile on the face of any sports fan who has ever questioned what makes us love sports in the first place.



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In the throes of becoming jaded and cynical about the American sportswriting scene, Culpepper, a London-based *Los Angeles Times* journalist covering European sporting events, writes about the internationally known Premiership soccer league and its overzealous fans. The rough-and tumble British soccer sport quickly captivates Culpepper, who wrote on American sports for 15 years, as he learns the rivalries between the fans and teams such as Manchester United, Chelsea, Liverpool and Portsmouth. A humorist of sorts, he can't help making snide comparisons between the rowdy, cheering British fans and their more somber American brethren, while touting the emotional high of regional pride over big team profits. He falls under the spell of the struggling Portsmouth squad, realizing that the die-hard fans live and die with the fortunes of their players and teams, describing vivid action scenes as thrilling as any in American hockey or football. (Aug.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Veteran sportswriter Culpepper was sick and tired of his job. The world of sports was corrupt. Athletes had nothing to say. Sportswriters weren't allowed to cheer—but who wanted to? He moved to London, the center of what is arguably the planet's most popular pastime, Premier League soccer, where he bought tickets, sat with the fans, and learned to cheer again. "It was like childhood," he writes, "with beer." Pulling for scrappy Portsmouth, he found himself sharing long-suffering fans' ecstasy at the team's best season ever. There's a long tradition of Americans trying to understand soccer, and Culpepper's effort ranks among the best. Rather than explaining the rules, he discusses what makes the sport exciting, offering the relegation system (the worst teams are demoted while the best are promoted) as evidence of a more enlightened society. Even better are his explorations of fan psychology—Why do we attach our self-worth to the efforts of highly paid mercenaries?—and his own search for a new community raises another pertinent question: Can you really choose your team? Culpepper occasionally overdoes the clueless-American act, and the deletion of expletives is unduly prim, but this lighthearted look at English soccer in the post-hooligan era is a necessary update to Bill Buford's landmark *Among the Thugs* (1992). --Keir Graff

Review

"A bracing (and funny) antidote to the cynicism infecting modern sports, Chuck Culpepper's *Bloody Confused* is a love letter to fandom."

--Jeffrey Toobin

"The American sporting landscape is littered with bad trades; consider this the latest: We get Beckham, but they get Culpepper. Thankfully, with *Bloody Confused!* we get our man back on loan, if only for a couple hundred of the most splendid pages you'll have the pleasure of reading all year."

—Mike Vaccaro, author of *1941: The Greatest Year in Sports*

"Chuck Culpepper is the best, most perceptive sportswriter on two continents."

—Sally Jenkins

"What a joy this book is. Chuck Culpepper's wonderful touch brings every page alive with laughter and the delight of discovery."

—Dave Kindred, author of *Sound and Fury*

"I'm still not sure I love soccer, but I love this book."

—Pat Forde, ESPN

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