



Sport Italia: The Italian Love Affair with Sport

Simon Martin

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The Italian love affair with sport is passionate, voracious, all-consuming. It provides a backdrop and a narrative to almost every aspect of daily life in Italy and the distinctively pink-coloured newspaper 'La Gazzetta dello Sport' is devoured by over three million hungry readers every day.

Narrating the history of modern Italy through its national passion for sport, Sport Italia is a completely new portrayal of one of Europe's most fascinating and chaotic countries. Uncovering the role of major and minor sports in its social, economic and political modernization, Simon Martin connects the politics of each period with the sporting issues, personalities, heroes and villains that have shaped Italy's development. Questioning why sport is so important in Italy, he sheds light on the stereotype of a nation obsessed by football, fights, fast cars and fast women, while showing its broader contribution to mass popular culture, through film, tourism, the Ferrari and the Vespa.

Following the highs and lows of the nation's history, from Liberal Italy's sporting pioneers, to Mussolini, the 1960 Rome Olympics and the Berlusconi era, Sport Italia's marathon journey uncovers heroic defeats, national triumphs, canonised cyclists and sporting Popes, along with the drug dealers, fraudsters, terrorists and politicians that have tarnished its name.

The one thing capable of uniting Italians, sport is also revealed as one of the nation's greatest sources of division: one that has probed and occasionally widened the deep fractures within its identity. Tracing how sport became a pillar of Italian society and a political football in its own right that has changed the face of Italy, Sport Italia reveals a novel and previously unexplored element of the history of a society and its state, which will be an essential read for sports fans, historians and students alike.

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