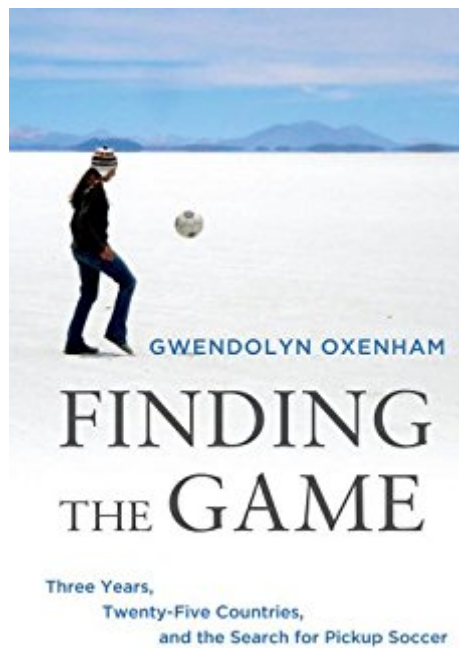




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Finding The Game: Three Years, Twenty-five Countries, And The Search For Pickup Soccer



Synopsis

Across two dozen countriesâfrom back alleys to remote beaches to the roofs of skyscrapersâan eye-opening journey into the heart of soccer. Every country has a different term for it: In the United States it's "pickup." In Trinidad it's "taking a sweat." In Brazil it's "pelada" (literally "naked"). It's the other side of soccer, those spontaneous matches played away from the bright lights and manicured fieldsâthe game for anyone, anywhere. At sixteen, Gwendolyn Oxenham was the youngest Division I athlete in NCAA history, a starter and leading goal-scorer for Duke. At twenty, she graduated, the women's professional soccer league folded, and her career was over. In *Finding the Game*, Oxenham, along with her boyfriend and two friends, chases the part of the game that outlasts a career. They bribe their way into a Bolivian prison, bet shillings on a game with moonshine brewers in Kenya, play with women in hijab on a court in Tehranâand discover what the world looks like when you wander down side streets, holding on to a ball. An entertaining, heartfelt look at the soul of a sport and a thrilling travel narrative, this book is proof that on the field and in life, some things need no translation.

Book Information

File Size: 1128 KB

Print Length: 301 pages

Publisher: St. Martin's Press (June 19, 2012)

Publication Date: June 19, 2012

Language: English

ASIN: B006ZL1K3Y

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #384,043 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #33

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Travel > Specialty Travel > Sports #50 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Sports & Outdoor > Soccer #176 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Sports > Soccer

Customer Reviews

Gwendolyn Oxenham says that she loves to read and it's apparent in the way she writes. Two summers ago I discovered *Paleda*, the documentary that covers the same experience that is the book's subject. I loved watching *Paleda*, but being a soccer person first, reading her account in *Finding the Game* made a more profound impact on me. I went into both works with the benefit of loving soccer. But an appreciation of the sport isn't a prerequisite for being both entertained and enlightened by Oxenham's adventures traveling the globe with her friends and finding those spaces where life happens beyond our awareness. While, ostensibly, they were searching for a ball being kicked around outside of the stadium lights or the reach of organized activity, what they found were hopes and joys, often in places where hopes and joys seem to be in short supply. While Oxenham's account opened my eyes to some of life's inequities, it didn't leave me feeling sorry for her subjects. She captured the beauty in their lives as well. It takes a very good writer to interpret and present the emotions of everyday life, both the writer's own and those of the people she encounters. I imagine doing so in an unfamiliar culture makes this even more challenging. Oxenham was able to do so in the process of telling a wonderful story. I really loved reading this.

When I first heard the premise of the film "*Pelada*", I was immediately jealous. Not just that two Americans around my age were traveling the world playing pick-up soccer, but more so, I was jealous of their courageous spirit and sense of adventure. You see, I have always been a soccer person. I played soccer in college, have traveled to 3 World Cups, and worked on the business side of the sport in various ways for 7 years. But never in my wildest dreams would I have come up with as crazy an idea as what Gwendolyn and Luke did...putting off career and stability to travel the world in search of the beautiful game, in parks, on rooftops, and around street corners. The good news is though, with both "*Pelada*" and now "*Finding the Game*", I didn't have to. In "*Finding the Game*", Gwendolyn Oxenham brought me on their journey showing that a simple soccer ball can cross language barriers and create friendships with people you never would know otherwise...with bootleggers in the slums of Nairobi, hip hop artists in Marseille, and even prisoners in Bolivia. She made me want to go to these places and play soccer with these people. Plus, the Ruud van Nistelrooy story is pretty awesome as well! "*Finding the Game*" not only fills in the gaps of the movie "*Pelada*" (which is a must-see), but it stands on its own as incredibly well written and as great evidence of turning a dream into reality. I highly recommend this book!

Grabbed my attention instantly and never let go! This book delivers a fascinating view from a most

unique perspective of how the world's game is experienced through a vast array of cultures. While the book provides as an excellent postscript to the film "Pelada" (an absolute must-see), it can be enjoyed independently as well. Each chapter provides new stories, games, experiences and people which draw in the reader; generating a deep interest and compassion for the individuals who love the game. The author's journeys, physical and emotional, are captivating and motivating: chasing the game and fully exploring its meaning to so many people all over the world while evaluating what impact those stories have on the author's emotions. The script is smart and inspiring-challenging the reader to look within and connect with their passions. I highly recommend this book for soccer lovers, travel enthusiasts, people interested in learning about other cultures and, perhaps most of all, those looking for inspiration. An outstanding read!

I played really competitive football (soccer) from an early age in many different countries and loved the experience. Around 19 years old I realized that I wasn't good enough or ambitious enough to make it in the higher leagues. This story made me realize just how much I love playing regardless of the standard and how that no matter where you travel you can always find people to play with and talk about the game with them. I really enjoyed Pelada the movie and I hope there is a directors cut with all the countries that got taken out of the movie. This book is really well done. I enjoy the author's telling of the story and I admire her and her partners for having the get-up-and-go to make it happen. I read this in two nights and highly recommend it. If they are ever up near San Francisco and are looking for a game, I hope they get in touch. Great read!

You don't have to like the sport of soccer to love this book. However, it is a must read for all soccer lovers. The reader is brought along with the writer as her group travels the globe experiencing all the love, passion and unbridled joy that soccer in its simplest form brings to people all over the globe. As simple and innocent as their mission to experience the most basic form of futbol there is. The reader finds themselves caught up in all the complexities of the world we live in, as Gwen and her group travel the world and experience some of the; scariest, depressing, beautiful, amazing, etc. places on our planet. In the end, the only thing that mattered was the bonds formed with people they met and the experiences they shared. All because of a ball that people love to kick around.

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