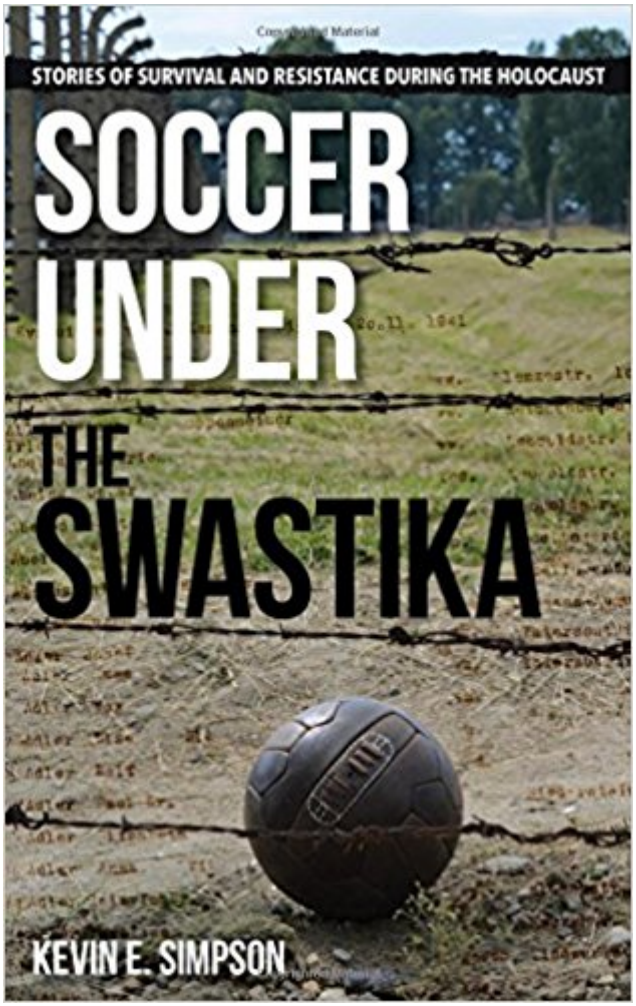
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# Soccer Under The Swastika: Stories Of Survival And Resistance During The Holocaust




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## Synopsis

In the heart of the twentieth century, the game of soccer was becoming firmly established as the sport of the masses across Europe, even as war was engulfing the continent. Intimately woven into the war was the genocide perpetrated by Nazi Germany and its collaborators, genocide on a scale never seen before. For those victims ensnared by the Nazi regime, soccer became a means of survival and a source of inspiration even when surrounded by profound suffering and death.In Soccer under the Swastika: Stories of Survival and Resistance during the Holocaust, Kevin E. Simpson reveals the surprisingly powerful role soccer played during World War II. From the earliest days of the Nazi dictatorship, as concentration camps were built to hold so-called enemies, captives competed behind the walls and fences of the Nazi terror state. Simpson uncovers this little-known piece of history, rescuing from obscurity many poignant survivor testimonies, old accounts of wartime players, and the diaries of survivors and perpetrators. In victim accounts and rare photographsÃ¢â ¬â •many published for the first time in this bookÃ¢â ¬â •hidden stories of soccer in almost every Nazi concentration camp appear. To these prisoners, soccer was a glimmer of joy amid unrelenting hunger and torture, a show of resistance against the most heinous regime the world had ever seen. With the increasing loss of firsthand memories of these events, Soccer under the Swastika reminds us of the importance in telling these compelling stories. And as modern day soccer struggles to combat racism in the terraces around the world, the endurance of the human spirit embodied through these personal accounts offers insight and inspiration for those committed to breaking down prejudices in the sport today. Thoughtfully written and meticulously researched, this book will fascinate and enlighten readers of all generations.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Most readers probably havenÃ¢â ¬â„¢t thought about the role of soccer, or any sport, in WWII. Given the horrors of the Holocaust, how could sports matter? But the game did have a part to play in soccer-mad Europe, as Simpson ably demonstrates, whether as propaganda, distraction, symbolic warfare, or acts of resistance. This thoughtful, carefully documented work offers both big-picture context and individual stories, including those of players on both sides of the Nazi terror and of some whose situations were more complicated. One particularly memorable chapter offers a more nuanced and accurate account of the legendary Match of Death played between a half-starved team of Ukrainians and a hand-picked Nazi team in Kiev. Much of the book focuses on the fact that soccer, almost unbelievably, was indeed played in concentration camps, serving as a means to 'reestablish order and restore some moral authority' to prisonersÃ¢â ¬â„¢ profoundly limited choices. SimpsonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s focus in this book in no way trivializes the horrors of war and genocide; in fact, the humanizing capacity of the beautiful game makes them all the more real.  (Booklist)[S]cholars of an assortment of fields and disciplines will find Soccer under the Swastika relatable to their own studies. Its overarching and transnational coverage of numerous demographics offers background information to help Europeanists, Latin Americanists, and Americanists learn more about the evolution of soccer and its influence on post-1945 society, culture, and politics in their respective areas. Additionally, professors could use this book as an assigned reading in courses about twentieth century Europe in general, the Holocaust, World War II, and soccer history. The general public would also find it accessible due to SimpsonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s writing style and the unique perspective of viewing the Holocaust through soccer. (Sport in American History)ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s an untold history of the truly unbelievable role football played before and during the Holocaust. A story which encapsulates the Nazi purge of once incredibly Jewish clubs like Bayern MunichÃ¢â ¬Â¦.and Dutch powers Ajax. And a love of football which just would not be vanquished, with leagues being organized in ghettos across Europe, including TerezÃƒÂ- n, the antechamber to Auschwitz. Games that were played even within concentration camps which is absolutely mind-blowingÃ¢â ¬Â¦ The book tells a slew of stories preserving the memory of hundreds of footballers who would otherwise be forgotten by history. And itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s ultimately a testament to the joy football can bring and humanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s primal connection to the game. (Roger Bennett, journalist, author, and co-host of the Men in Blazers podcast and TV show)Every lost life in Soccer under the Swastika deserves to be remembered. Soccer brings us closer to

themÃ¢â ¬â •kicking a ball, sitting in the stands cheering, or listening to match commentaries on the radio, they are recognizable people like us, albeit in an unrecognizable time. The distance between them and us grows inexorably, their faces begin to fade, and a book like this helps to restore their humanity. (Simon Kuper, journalist with the Financial Times, award-winning author of Football Against the Enemy, and coauthor of New York Times bestseller Soccernomics)Soccer under the Swastika by Kevin Simpson is a masterpiece of historical importance. As a former athlete who has competed internationally in general and as a Jewish soccer player in particular, I believe this is a book that must be read. This is a book that shows the power of our sport to both inspire and sustain hope during the darkest of times. It is a story of the Ã¢â ¬Å“beautiful gameÃ¢â ¬Â• in a very different context. I encourage you to read it. (Shep Messing, former NY Cosmos and US Olympic soccer team goalkeeper and television analyst)For me, it was a journey to my familyÃ¢â ¬â„¢s roots, who were lost in Auschwitz, and on the way, some celluloid memories of them, playing soccer before they perished. Finally, a book in English that can answer all the questions, reveal all the myths and tell the story of soccer under the Nazi boot in Europe during World War Two. (Oded Breda, filmmaker, program director of Beit Theresienstadt Memorial (Israel), and nephew of murdered Liga TerezÃƒÂ- n prisoner-player Pavel Breda)Rarely are the spirits of a subject and a book about it as well matched as in Kevin SimpsonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s vivid, absorbing, and very well contextualized account of Soccer under the Swastika. Clearly a labor of love by an author who knows Ã¢â ¬Å“the beautiful gameÃ¢â ¬Â• inside and out, the story told in this book will consistently engage and recurrently move and trouble its readers. (Peter Hayes, Theodore Zev Weiss Holocaust Educational Foundation Professor Emeritus, Northwestern University)This is a book about the co-existence of the beautiful game and the worst evil. It is a heartbreaking, painful book, but it is also a work of history, which is why it needs to be read. (Stefan Szymanski, Stephen J. Galetti Professor of Sport Management, University of Michigan, and co-author of Soccernomics)

Kevin E. Simpson is professor of psychology at John Brown University. He has published widely in sport psychology and in the teaching of the psychology of the Holocaust, among other topics. Simpson has received fellowships and grants from such institutions as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Holocaust Education Foundation of Northwestern University. He is a former college soccer player.

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Dr. Kevin Simpson has produced a work with "Soccer Under The Swastika" that provides welcome depth to the complexity of World War II, allowing for a more personal, and thus more powerful, understanding of what took place in Europe from 1933 to 1945, much like other recent efforts have. (Robert M. EdselÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The Monuments MenÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• or Simon Kuper's "Ajax, the Dutch, the War: The Strange Tale of Soccer During Europe's Darkest Hour" come to mind.)There's no shortage of literature about World War II, but books like "Swastika" provide incredible detail that's missing from macro approaches to the war or the Holocaust.One tragic story among many documented by Simpson involves Hartog ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“HanÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• Hollander, an early European pioneer in sports broadcast journalism. In the 1930s, when the Dutch national soccer team played, families gathered around their radios to listen in as Hollander relayed the action.Hollander reported from the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, the Nazi games, receiving a signed certificate from Hitler himself, a notable achievement for a Dutch Jew. It turns out, the letter meant little. Hollander and his family were murdered upon arrival at the SobibÃƒÂ r death camp in Poland, along with 2,400 others on a transport.Simpson's book illustrates Jews confronted with choices that were really no choice at all. It was as if pure evil, like a heavy tapestry, descended, choking off all light.But we learn that's not entirely true either... inside these camps, something else happened. Despite the death and indescribable suffering of millions, games remained a part of life. Camps organized their own soccer matches, even forming leagues that were quite competitive considering many Jewish footballers were already inside.ItÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s a bit jarring to the senses that something as comparatively trivial as sport took place in camps where such evil also occurred. And, frankly, IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢m still not sure how human spirit musters the will to organize football matches (or the orchestras or chorales that performed) in the first place. Yet, more than one survivor described it as a way of reclaiming just a sliver of humanity amidst the most inhumane of environments.The generation that survived is quickly passing away, which is what makes books like this all the more important, putting ink to paper, and in the process, placing a very human face to the victims of one of the worldÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s greatest evils.

The story of the Holocaust is one that we can never stop telling or we will be doomed to see those horrors repeated. In his book, Simpson does an incredible job of personalizing the story of the European side of WWII... I found it incredibly powerful. I saw WWII through a whole new - and very interesting - lens.Somehow, the picture of those moments of normalcy as Jews gathered to play soccer in the concentration camps - sometimes against their captors - highlighted the horrors of

concentration camp life even more. How does a society get to the point where exterminating people on the basic of their genealogy is somehow accepted? How do you play a game with a person one day and the next send them to the gas chamber?The book is fascinating. You will love this book if you love history or sports or both. And as the last survivors of the concentration camps pass on, I believe we must keep telling their stories so that atrocities like this are never allowed to happen again.

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