

his colleagues and collaborators. At one level, I have some sympathy. The tone of Ring's introduction to his *The End of the Terraces* (1998) crosses the line between the justifiably combative and the straightforwardly offensive rather too often, and is a prime example of the unnecessarily adversarial relationships often present in the world of football studies in the last decade. However, ignoring one's critics is no way of dealing with them, particularly when they have had interesting things to say and when you have produced such a thoroughly thought-provoking and useful book as this.

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Hugh Dauncey and Geoff Hare, eds., *France and the 1998 World Cup*. London: Frank Cass. 232pp. £16.99/\$US22.50 (pb); £37.50/\$US49.50 (hb).

A World Cup coming to town is serious business. New Labour's scramble for cultural capital with England's 2006 bid associates them with the national iconography of 1966, not to mention the Walker's Crisps double act, Gary Lineker and Michael Owen. Throw in the unknowing self-mockery of Westminster's chirpy cockney wit, Tony Banks, and its no wonder the FIFA heads are spinning. Will it be Germany, South Africa or good old blighty? The world nervously awaits the final decision.

As the formidable collection of writers assembled for France and the 1998 World Cup bear testament, that wait will combine multinational conglomerates, media corporations, municipal leaders, regional and national governments, football fans, clubs and national associations, the police, legions after legions of architects and builders and the wide variety of pressure groups that take form as a civil society. Gerard Houllier in the book's introduction is quite certain of the significance of the 1998 World Cup to France, 'it is without doubt the start of a new era'. The sight of President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Lionel Jospin competing to show off their depth of commitment to a game that had hitherto been marginal to French national culture, is a powerful enough symbol to convince us all that lifting a World Cup can provide the kind of moment that opportunist politicians everywhere dream of. But cynicism can go too far. The book's editors, Hugh Dauncey and Geoff Hare, quite rightly portray France's World Cup summer as a popular celebration, and one which served to isolate the previously potent Front National fascists to the sidelines of ignominy.

The potential for football to serve up as a by-product of success on the field national unity is never very far away, a potential well-documented in the

French context by John Marks' contribution. 'The explosion of national rejoicing across gender, race and class barriers – which is compared to the Liberation – offers a moment of grace to what is in many ways a fundamentally depressed nation'. Momentary, open to opportunistic political and commercial exploitation, but without those moments what hope is there left of moving on from that national depression? Precious little, short of liberation, it would seem.

The worth of an episode like a World Cup campaign is remarkably difficult to estimate in terms of long term impact. Was the status of Arab immigrants really affected by Zidane? Will we see a fundamental shift towards racial equality courtesy of the sight of Vieira and Desailly in a national team? The answer to both questions is almost certainly no, but situated in the bigger picture of deep-seated attitudes and the bewilderment that globalisation invariably leaves in its wake, a football team is as good a piece of security to hold on to as anything else. And if that team represents values of inclusion, then in and of itself that is a source of celebration. Utopia is, after all, the natural home for football fans, a point neatly made by Pierre Bourdieu in his scene-setting contribution. Add to that fateful search for the utopia of a full trophy-room the capacity for a critical conscience and football is remarkably well equipped to protect and develop not only the good of the game, but the good of society too.

Protection and development are sorely needed. As Geoff Hare records, the wholesale marketisation of football has left the sport not only selling itself woefully short, but open to a transformation that will serve to exclude all but those that corporate power desire to be present. Projecting the game to audiences in danger of being absent – the poor, women, ethnic minorities, a new generation -in favour of simply those who the sponsors want to target here and now for their product sales is the very real danger. An alliance between public and private interests, social and commercial ambitions working together, with a constant sensitivity towards all forces of exclusion, including the conservatism of football's self-appointed 'traditional' supporters, should be the strategic ambition of an event of the national and global magnitude of a World Cup.

The aftermath of France's summer love affair with 'Les Bleus' remains uncertain. France and the 1998 World Cup points to the factors that will determine the outcome of that fragmented and open-ended legacy, factors that should shape our assessment too of future tournaments. A handbook for observation, speculation and action, and a tribute to the fusion of academics' intellectualisation and fans' fantasisation, every World Cup and major championship deserves analysis of this calibre. Only then, will we begin to see the goalposts for the grass, plastic or otherwise.

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