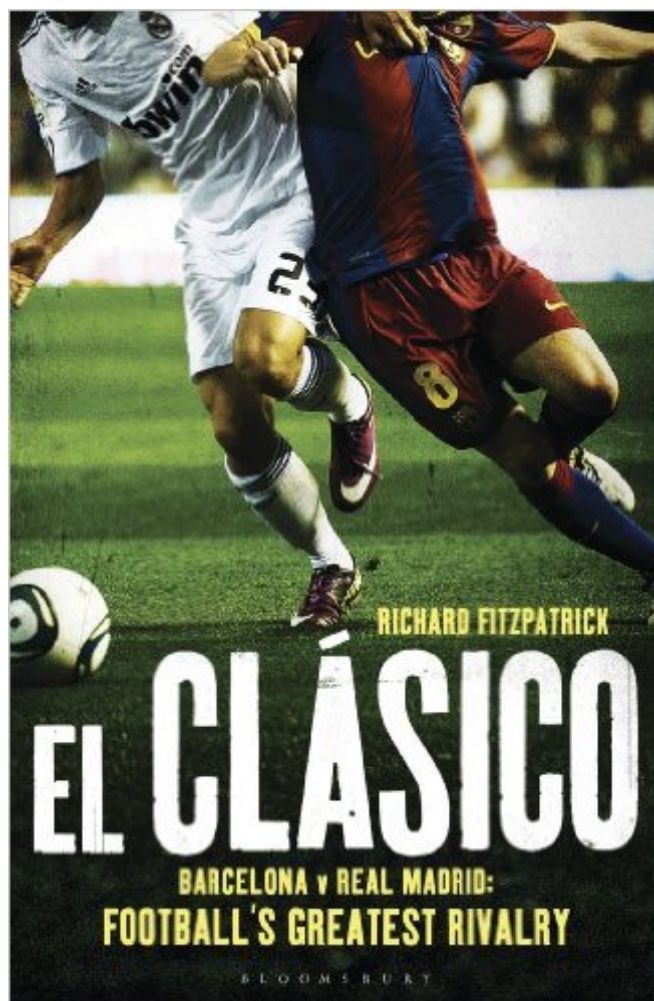


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# El Clasico: Barcelona V Real Madrid: Football's Greatest Rivalry



## Synopsis

Barcelona and Real Madrid: two of the most powerful and popular clubs in world football, and one of the world's most bitter sporting rivalries. Going far beyond the boundaries of just sport alone, this is a rivalry at the heart of Spanish life, taking in politics and culture and splitting a country in two. El Clásico gets to the heart of that rivalry, investigating the intrigue, the larger-than-life characters, the key flashpoints and their consequences. From civil war bloodshed to 40 years of fascism and links with General Franco, the clubs' shared history is the stuff of a Robert Harris novel and includes: murdered presidents from both clubs, player kidnappings, acts of hooliganism - and that's before you start thinking of the volatile football matches themselves. The book contains numerous interviews with key figures such as Luís Figo and Hristo Stoichkov (two of the main hate figures from both clubs), Joan Laporta (Barcelona's most successful president and, having entered politics, Catalan separatism's poster boy) and various ex-players, ex-managers, agents, referees, hooligans, editors, historians, sociologists, filmmakers, novelists, photographers, TV presenters and celebrity fans. The two clubs are packed with international superstar players - including the world's two best players in Leo Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo - and 10 of the starting 11 players from Spain's 2010 World Cup final victory play with either Barcelona or Real Madrid. This is a story with resonance around the sporting world, with many instantly recognisable figures to an international audience such as Jose Mourinho. But it is also a tale of a country divided by a bitter rivalry.

## Book Information

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: Bloomsbury USA; Reprint edition (September 3, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1408158809

ISBN-13: 978-1408158807

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.8 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (21 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,079,925 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #115 in [Books > Sports & Outdoors > Other Team Sports > Rugby](#) #1142 in [Books > Sports & Outdoors > Soccer](#) #6410 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Communication & Media Studies](#)

## Customer Reviews

This was a very good book, In fact I can say that this is the first book in many years that I actually

read cover to cover without skimming through some of the content due to lack of interest. I'm an avid football fan and in a recent master's program I focused my studies on analyzing the effects of football on European nationalism. The deeper I dug into the topic, the more mesmerized I was to find out to what extreme the sport is imbedded in European culture. In fact, I was able interviews with some of the same people Richard Fitzpatrick interviewed for his book, which I thought was kind of cool. With that in mind, I was really looking forward to reading this book and for the most part it did not disappoint. However, there are sections of the book which feel like you're picking up a newspaper the day after a big match and you're reading the play by play from the day before. I guess if you're not familiar with the sport or the matches being recounted then it's something that may be appealing. However, if you're familiar with this rivalry then reading almost entire chapters on the play by play of a match gets you a little side tracked. But I guess this is done to put things into context for those not familiar with those events. Pros: Easy read, unbiased for the most part and good for either the avid fan or someone trying to learn about the rivalry and its history. Cons: Just a bit too much of play by play recount. Would have liked see more of the analytical implications of the rivalry in the current political/economic climate in Spain. Also, there are sections of the book that appear to be catering strictly to Real Madrid fans.

There are so many soccer books now out there on Real Madrid, Barcelona and their rivalry, that it's a joy to find one so well done. This is IT, folks! Everything you need to know on the whys, hows and WTFs on maybe THE rivalry in world soccer today. That's an emphasis on the now in this book so it's mainly focused on the current era of Lionel Messi's Barca and Cristiano Ronaldo's Real. Of course, the author delves into the history and the roots of the rivalry in detail. but he doesn't fall into that tired old trap of spewing forth Real is still the team of Franco (although Barca are still the de facto symbol of Catalonia even if their squad hails from all over Spain let alone the globe). With the book heavily weighted on the present, it allows the past to breathe and be seen now much clearer. The author also does not stop at the main protagonists (players and managers) but delves into the fans groups, the presidents of each club, the youth academies, the alumni, the biased media conglomerates of each, the pressure on referees to give a bigger picture of the whole power game played out between these two giants of world soccer. He also shows how La Liga is suffering overall as a league entity and is not as healthy as the Bundesliga or English Premier League (well, the EPL is more a four-team oligarchy really with Manchester United, Chelsea and a rotating two others that has ranged over the years from Blackburn to Manchester City depending on whose owner has the deepest pockets). Certainly, one of the best all-around books on soccer since 2000. A must-read for

any soccer fan.

In one word Unputdownable. Richard Fitzpatrick gets the mix between football and history just right. The book is full of wonderful nuggets of background that will enhance most people's understanding of the rivalry between Barca and Real. The chapters flow by so easily that it ends too quickly - always the sign of a good read. On its own merit its an enjoyable read but I can also see myself referring to it when the future El Clasico games are on the box to refresh on the reasons behind the intense rivalry. If you have any interest in the beautiful game then this is mandatory reading.....

I would recommend this to just about any and all football fans. It is very well written and sums up the rivalry and history of both teams spectacularly, going over key moments and historical figures, how they influenced and shaped the teams and their destinies. All the time, the entire picture is put in the context of the modern rivalry of Mourinho vs Guardiola, Ronaldo vs Messi and so forth. A must read for all football fans the world over.

The rivalry between Barcelona and Real Madrid is famous round the world. Super star players like Cristiano Ronaldo and Leonel Messi inspire the fans and fuel the rivalry. And while this book does a fine job of exploring the present day rivalry, it doesn't go into great length about the origins of this rivalry. Perhaps it is too wrapped up in the fractured history of the Spanish nation state. Barca v. Madrid goes back long before modern times, and revolves around the long forgotten Wilfred the Hairy (really). Perhaps a better book would be LA ROJA by Jimmy Burns. It's not that there is that much wrong. It just that there is more to the story but I didn't find it in this book.

As a Catalan Barça supporter since childhood, I was very curious to find out what was the author's take on the subject...this is why I engulfed this book. I really loved it, even though I was familiar with many of the stories from growing up in Catalonia in the 70s and 80s. It is a very well researched book and very balanced in a subject that I'd consider very difficult to remain impartial about. This book is so much more than a book on soccer; there is history, politics and identity involved. After reading this book, I'd say next time you watch a Barça-Real Madrid match, you'll see it with different eyes!

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