Like reading the history of Australia through football … easily the best book I’ve read on the topic. Francis Awaritefe, former Socceroo

This is more than a book about soccer – it is the story of Australia’s national identity.

Soccer is the most popular sport in the world, yet it is often regarded as a third-rate game in Australia. Soccer has more participants than any other football code, yet its professional competition lags behind both the AFL and the NRL. In terms of age, gender and cultural diversity, soccer has long been the most democratic sport in Australia, yet it has also been the most despised. The game has always been connected to debates around citizenship, identity and multiculturalism.

In The Death and Life of Australian Soccer, Joe Gorman chronicles the rise and fall of Australia’s first national football competition, and reveals the sport’s vibrant multicultural history. He takes us on to the pitch for some of the most memorable moments in Australian soccer and, drawing on archival research and interviews with players, supporters and club officials, he tells forgotten stories of the game.

Gorman takes an unflinching look at issues including Australia’s engagement with Asia, multiculturalism, crowd violence, player unionism and privatisation. With rare intimacy and detail he tells the story of how a visionary journalist and the nation’s leading soccer statistician quietly recorded it all over decades.

Timely and fascinating, The Death and Life of Australian Soccer is no ordinary sports book. It is the riveting story of Australia’s national identity, and offers new ways of understanding the great changes that have shaped our country.

PRAISE FOR THE DEATH AND LIFE OF AUSTRALIAN SOCCER

‘This remarkable book is packed full of the characters, passion, failure and success that define Australian soccer and its place in our proud sporting culture.’ Tracey Holmes, journalist and ABC broadcaster

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‘Joe Gorman’s ability to draw out the rich stories of the sport’s past is unparalleled.’ David Squires, Guardian football cartoonist

‘A magnificent achievement … laced with both poetry and a forensic understanding of detail.’ John Didulica, chief executive of Professional Footballers Australia

JOE GORMAN was born in Brisbane, raised in the Blue Mountains, and has lived in Sydney and Melbourne. He has written for the Guardian, the Sydney Morning Herald, the Age, the Courier-Mail, Overland, New Matilda, Sports Illustrated, Penthouse and SBS. He has appeared on ABC television and radio, and on Al Jazeera. The Death and Life of Australian Soccer is his first book.

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