



Brilliant Orange: The Neurotic Genius of Dutch Soccer

By David Winner

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Brilliant Orange: The Neurotic Genius of Dutch Soccer By David Winner

Brilliant Orange is a book about Dutch soccer that's not really about Dutch soccer. It's more about an enigmatic way of thinking peculiar to a people whose landscape is unrelentingly flat, mostly below sea level, and who owe their salvation to a boy who plugged a fractured dike with his little finger.

If any one thing, *Brilliant Orange* is about Dutch space and a people whose unique conception of it has led to some of the most enduring art, the weirdest architecture, and a bizarrely cerebral form of soccer--Total Football--that led in 1974 to a World Cup finals match with arch-rival Germany and more recently to a devastating loss against Spain in 2010. With its intricacy and oddity, it continues to mystify and delight observers around the world. As David Winner wryly observes, it is an expression of the Dutch psyche that has a shared ancestry with the Mondrian's Broadway Boogie Woogie, Rembrandt's The Night Watch, maybe even with Gouda cheese.

Finally here in paperback, *Brilliant Orange* reaches out to the reader from an unexpected place and never lets go.

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Editorial Review

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Starred Review Soccer fans will not want to miss this chronicle of the rise of Total Football (soccer, of course, is known as football everywhere but in North America). What is Total Football? Here you have to get a little philosophical; you have to learn to handle phrases like "a new theory of flexible space" to wrap your mind around the idea that a football pitch isn't merely a big rectangle. The Dutch, who invented Total Football about three decades ago, are, according to Winner, a nation of special neurotics. Because space is always at a premium in their small country, they've learned to use it in wildly innovative ways. This is seen in their architecture, their art, their society--and their soccer. While other teams were playing the traditional every-player-in-his-position style of game, the plucky Dutch team called Ajax began playing a whole new game based on position-switching: defenders would suddenly become attackers and vice versa, thus substantially reducing the amount of repetitive back-and-forth running. This technique was revolutionary for its time (the 1960s), and it propelled Holland to the top of the soccer world. This extremely well written and exciting book, like Nick Hornby's immensely enjoyable *Fever Pitch* (1993), catches us up in its enthusiasm and puts us right there in the grandstands cheering for the Dutch coaches and players who changed the game of soccer forever. *David Pitt*

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Review

"[An] articulate analysis of Dutch football culture - ESPN

"the definitive guide [to Dutch soccer]" -- "Slate"

"One of the definitive books of the game." -- "The Times" (London)

"One of those strangely informative books that will... entertain those who have little interest in either soccer or the Netherlands." -- "The Economist"

"This extremely well written and exciting book, like Nick Hornby's immensely enjoyable ", catches us up in its enthusiasm and puts us right there in the grandstands cheering for the Dutch coaches and players who changed the game of soccer forever." -- "Booklist" (starred review)

"Wry, obsessional, digressive, deep...this is football as art, metaphor, cultural signifier." -- "The Guardian"

About the Author

David Winner is the author of *Brilliant Orange: The Neurotic Genius of Dutch Soccer*, also published by Overlook.

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Tommie Matthews:

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