

Although the film does not rely on serious tones as other traditional sport films do, the film becomes more serious when it needs to showcase stakes and wants to create excitement. In these instances, the film utilizes different film techniques. For example, the introduction of Massimo and Gian Piero is tense. There is no music, so the focus is strictly on the athletic skills of the players. It is also a continuous shot, which showcases authentic skill plainly. The way that the camera follows the ball, and the use of aerial shots make it seem as if we were watching a real game. The field chemistry between the two players and the grunts of opposing players as they miss the ball also add a sense of realism. Realism is also created with the use of commentators. Commentators are used to mitigate the challenges of the representation of sport. Crosson writes that: “the ubiquity of the sports commentator in sports films” “attempt[s] to respond to this challenge by seeking to emulate aspects of the televisual presentation of sport.” (54) Commentators create a tense tone by establishing stakes and creating a fast-paced rhythm, especially during the last minutes of the game, which makes the audience feel as though they were watching an actual game. Commentators in the film were only used during the championship game, which added a heightened level of importance and excitement.

Although the film is not a traditional sports film, it follows much of the same repetitive structure of sports films that has contributed to the genre’s relative success. Crosson, quoting Rick Altman, writes that: “The repetitive nature of genre films tends to diminish the importance of each film’s ending, along with the cause-and-effect sequence that leads to that conclusion” (62). Like most sport films this film is an underdog story about the Tigers. There is a big game coming up, the league championship. The team starts advancing and improving. At the championship they are met with a challenge but overcome the challenge to win the game by putting to use the values and lessons learned throughout the film. In the final moments of the championship game, Phil’s unathletic son, Sam, is able to outperform his rival on the field by using the skills he observed while sitting on the bench. The scene attempts to be tense with its choice of music and use of

slow motion, but the ending is very predictable. Sam scores the game-winning goal to no surprise. The comedic quality of the film, however, does create some uncertainty. In a scene like this, with a tense tone and much at stake, it would be very comical if things did not go as intended. I believe this would add a refreshing element of realism to the film. The message of the film would also still hold true. In the film, Phil is eager to validate himself and bring honor to his competitive father by beating him in anything athletic. Phil carefully models his parenting in a way that contrasts that of his father’s parenting, so his son does not go through the same treatment Phil experienced from his father. Phil, however, loses sense of his values as he becomes more motivated to beat his father, which results in his son experiencing the treatment from which he initially tried to protect him. Phil realizes that sports are not about winning, but rather having fun, which is how the underdog, the Tigers, are able to win the championship game. Despite the clichés and inaccurate representation of sports, those who have an interest in sports will be taught or reminded of an important lesson.

Micah Hurd wrote this article for his FORL 370 class during the Spring of 2023

The Culture of Italian Soccer and Its Global Context

by Davin Kim

The fascist regime was initially uninterested in competitive sports but during the mid-1920s, with the rise and popularity of football, football became a national institution. Football brought in a wide range of people from the spectators, the players, and the fans of the sport. As a result, the Fascist regime began to focus its attention on the Italian sporting infrastructure. In *Football and Fascism* by Simon Martin, the chapter “Fascist Football Foundations” identifies the desire to unite the nation culturally and politically as the reason for restructuring their sporting infrastructure. In addition, knowing the reasons why Mussolini joined the war—make Italy important and unified—shows how valuable and important football was in reaching the

government’s goal of making Italy a unified country nation and their way of utilizing the popularity of football to their advantage. The original governing body of calcio was Federazione Italiana del Football (FIF) that converted to the Federazione Italiana Giuoco del Calcio (FIGC). With the growth of football, more clubs were born but this would also bring many conflicts between the big and small clubs and the football league. The initial person assigned in overseeing the restructuring of football was Vittorio Pozzo, who had successful past experiences with sport that included taking an Italian squad to the Stockholm Olympics in 1912. Pozzo provided his plan for the reform but due to the voting power of the smaller teams they quickly rejected the plan as they believed that his changes favored the bigger clubs. This would be one of the many conflicts that occurred over the course of restructuring the league. Other conflicts involved financial issues and bigger clubs hoarding all the best players. This foreshadows how big soccer clubs like Juventus or Inter will be from mostly cities in the north that had large economic booms, allowing them to be able to afford the best players and build extremely strong teams.

With all of the conflict the Italian journalist Bruno Roghi asked himself “What will become of Italian Football?”, before prescribing a ‘tonic of discipline, to free matches from the incendiary hyperbolic passions, to make it a healthy and chivalrous game that tempers the energies of the race” (Martin, 2005). He worried about the consequences of the exaggerations and negative clashes that football can bring; although the chants and dramatization of sports like football can be exciting and energizing, it should be kept with respect and honor. “As calcio’s popularity increased, large and sometimes volatile crowds became regular features, with some fans encouraged to travel to away matches by subsidies from the clubs” (Martin, 2005). This quote mentions the “volatile crowds” which shows that there were hardcore spectators even during the rise of the Fascist regime, similar to what we will see later around the 1970s, when these volatile crowds would eventually become the Ultras-fans who often go great lengths and do extreme actions in order to support their team. In addition, this

becoming a “regular feature” shows how the crowd and Ultras are part of what creates unique experiences in football, with the love and passion for the sport. It also mentions how fans are even encouraged and sometimes paid to travel. We read about the atmosphere and culture surrounding the fans’ travels today in Park’s *A season with Verona*. Park states that he would rather travel long distances to watch Verona matches over the Olympics: “I swear to God I have not watched a single event of the Olympic Games on TV, not one, and would not travel a single mile to watch them live” (Parks, 2012). In *Football and Fascism*, a local sports newspaper even suggested that the lack of support for Bologna was a factor in their loss against Verona.

Football and Fascism also talks about a series of controversies and possible scandals involving referees, one of them known as Sanguinetti, lacking legitimacy in several games. This created a lot of tension between teams, fans, and the league and ultimately jeopardized the integrity of the national game. This was also a great opportunity for the regime to go in and take control of the league, by implementing plans and setting regulations. This led to the future of football having to align with the goals of the Fascist regime. “In what was arguably the most significant act in the history of calcio, Ferretti appointed a panel of three experts, on 7 July, radically to restructure the statutes of Italian football in accordance with the realities and demands of the new political era. Calcio needed to subordinate its activity to Fascism’s new concept of physical education” (Martin, 2005). Here we can see the importance of physical fitness on the regimes ideology and how soccer would promote the idea of physical education, as we read in Giani, “The First Women’s Football Club In Italy,” which mentions how the regime actually wanted to support women sports: “In fact, Fascism was trying to support female sport practice, in order to gain stronger future mothers, who were going to give birth to stronger Italian sons (and soldiers, ready to gain Mussolini his long-awaited Empire)” (Giani, 2018). Although in another article on the same topic, “Story of women football players who challenged Mussolini brought to light”, by Tebano, we also learn how women were often excluded or restricted

from playing sports like football for several reasons—either to protect their health or their role of women as wives or mothers. Pende, the head of the Institute of Individual Biotype and Orthogenesis in Genoa under the Fascist regime, declared: “I believe that from a medical point of view, no damage may be caused either to the aesthetics of the figure, or to the female abdominal area, in particular the reproductive organs, by the controlled playing of football, provided this is not at a competitive level, which would involve excessive physical effort and muscle movements, always harmful to the female body” (quoted in Tebano, 2020). Eventually the regime officially took full control of the league by appointing new officials, members, and referees. Another significant process of this restructuring was the formation of the first national division. This allowed the regime to make the competition more serious in hopes of giving importance to the element of “nationalism” and creating stronger clubs. “Unfortunately, this increasing professionalization of the game had not improved the financial position of the individual clubs, which had been a key factor in the 1926 crisis” (Martin, 2005). With football becoming more competitive, there was a need to create highly skilled professionals. “Part of this expenditure was accounted for by the increasing importance of the players themselves and the development of a transfer system. In 1930 some footballers were reputed to be earning an average wage of 500–600 lire per month, while those who moved away from their home town or city were remunerated with up to 1,000 lire relocation expenses” (Martin, 2005). In this quote we can see some of the key features that define modern sports, where skilled players are paid a salary to play at the highest level.

The vision of the Fascist regime to promote the idea of nationalism resulted in preventing professional players outside of Italy from being able to take part of Italy’s national team, but we can also see how there were restrictions based on the region where players resided in Italy in order to promote more local talent and regional clubs. “The restorative tonic that [was proposed] for some time was to prevent footballers from joining clubs outside of their region, province of birth or place of

permanent residence” (Martin, 2005). These restrictions caused some concern for some people: “acknowledging the measure’s potential for reducing the professionalization of calcio, Arpinati feared it would also arrest the game’s technical development and its propaganda role” (Martin, 2005). The limitations of players being able to choose where they can join and play caused issues in trying to balance the professionalization of football and the role of football in promoting propaganda. It created more harm by making football less competitive and with less talented players, ultimately creating weaker teams that won’t help in creating a national team that can win. “Any law preventing clubs from purchasing players from outside of their region might have inhibited the ambitious ones from improving. The degree to which the Italian game had raised its standards nonetheless contributed to the misguided notion that it no longer needed or could benefit from the influx of foreign players” (Martin, 2005). Fascism desired to promote Italian nationalism and keep the integrity of the “Italian championship” by limiting or outright excluding foreign players from being able to play and being less reliant on foreign talent. Ultimately this law hurt Italian football because they lost a lot of opportunities with many talented South Americans with Italian genealogical links. “The 1926–7 season was designated a transitory period in which clubs were permitted to sign two foreign footballers, although only one was able to play in each match. The following season there were none and by 1928 the FIGC’s annual publication was able to clarify the formerly grey area: ‘In the Italian championship only players of Italian nationality and citizenship are allowed to compete’” (Martin, 2005).

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