

The Miracle of Castel di Sangro: A Tale of Passion and Folly in the Heart of Italy

By Joe McGinniss

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The Miracle of Castel di Sangro: A Tale of Passion and Folly in the Heart of Italy By Joe McGinniss

Master storyteller Joe McGinniss travels to Italy to cover the unlikely success of a ragtag minor league soccer team--and delivers a brilliant and utterly unforgettable story of life in an off-the-beaten-track Italian village.

When Joe McGinniss sets out for the remote Italian village of Castel di Sangro one summer, he merely intends to spend a season with the village's soccer team, which only weeks before had, miraculously, reached the second-highest-ranking professional league in the land. But soon he finds himself embroiled with an absurd yet irresistible cast of characters, including the team's owner, described by the *New York Times* as "straight out of a Mario Puzo novel," and coach Osvaldo Jaconi, whose only English word is the one he uses to describe himself: "bulldozer."

As the riotous, edge-of-your-seat season unfolds, McGinniss develops a deepening bond with the team, their village and its people, and their country. Traveling with the miracle team, from the isolated mountain region where Castel di Sangro is located to gritty towns as well as grand cities, McGinniss introduces us to an Italy that no tourist guidebook has ever described, and comes away with a "sad, funny, desolating, and inspiring story--everything, in fact, a story should be" *(Los Angeles Times)*.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
We already knew Joe McGinniss could chill our blood (*Fatal Vision*) and arouse both our pity and distaste for the Kennedys (*The Last Brother*), but who knew he could be so funny? (Well, maybe readers who remember *The Selling of the President* back in 1968.) Even those who have no interest in soccer--the majority of Americans, he ruefully admits--will relish the author's vivid account of a team from Castel di Sangro, a tiny town in Italy's poorest region, that against all expectations made it to the national competition. Whether he's chronicling his ordeal at possibly the least-inviting hotel in Italy (the heat doesn't come on until October, no matter the temperature; he is assigned to a room up four flights of stairs though there are no other guests), or sketching a colorful cast of characters that includes the team's sinister owner and an utterly unflappable translator, McGinniss prompts roars of laughter as he reveals an Italy tourists never see. He also saddens readers with a shocking final scene in which he confronts the nation's casual corruption, which taints men he's come to respect and even love. Although not a conventional memoir, this stirring book reveals as much about the author's passionate character as about the nation and the players who win his heart, then break it. --*Wendy Smith*

From Library Journal
McGinniss's obsession with soccer was born during the 1994 World Cup competition hosted by the United States. When travels acquainted him with several Italian fans even more addicted to il calcio (the "game" or the "kick") than he was, a fascination with this behavior motivated him to follow the team from Castel di Sangro, a tiny city in the Abruzzio region, through the season. This is a quirky, wonderful tale that is undoubtedly better in this excellent reading by Dick Hill, who brings characters and Italian phrasing to life, than in the print version. The first miracle was that Castel di Sangro made it to S'erie B through a sudden death shootout ending a playoff game. The second miracle? Can they stay in S'erie B, or will they be relegated back to C1? Surprisingly enough it matters: to the players, their fans, the author, and finally to the listener. This is real-life tragicomedy/adult soap operaAfunny and moving. For an understanding of il calcio, its followers, Italian professional leagues, and life in rural Italy, this is it. Very adult phrasing in two languages. A must for serious sports collections, a delight for any sports devotee. Highly recommended.ACliff Glaviano, Bowling Green State Univ. Libs., OH
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From Booklist
Castel di Sangro is a tiny town in the Abruzzi region of Italy, definitely not listed in the travel guidebooks. It is also the home of an obscure soccer team that miraculously managed to move up in the league in a nation wild about what the world outside the culturally chauvinistic U.S. calls football. Their triumphs were just inconceivable. The miracle of Castel di Sangro captured the imagination of McGinniss at a time in his life (mid-50s) when he was admittedly "psychically ripe" for the obsession. He traveled to the town and lived with the team for a year, watching their journey upward through a structure as complex and rigid as that of the Mafia or the Vatican. And McGinniss captures the fanaticism of soccer fans and the idiosyncrasies of the team members, such as the publicity-hungry manager Gabriele Gravina, married to the niece of the team's owner, the mysterious Godfather-like Signor Rezza. McGinniss travels with the team throughout Italy, describing the different cultures as well as the technicalities of the sport. The *scrittore americano* attracted as much publicity as the team by a press amazed that an American loved and understood the sport. As the team approached the final game that could move it to the top level, *il sistema* required that they lose. Why? It could have been debts owed, favors owed, whatever. The players cautioned McGinniss against publicizing

the fact that they had thrown the game. But after investing a year of his life, McGinniss is disappointed in this ultimate proof that he can never understand the culture, no matter how much he loved the game. One doesn't have to be a soccer fan to enjoy this fascinating book. *Vanessa Bush*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

David Hogan:

Reading a guide tends to be new life style with this era globalization. With reading through you can get a lot of information that will give you benefit in your life. Along with book everyone in this world could share their idea. Textbooks can also inspire a lot of people. Plenty of author can inspire their reader with their story or maybe their experience. Not only the story that share in the ebooks. But also they write about the information about something that you need case in point. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach your young ones, there are many kinds of book which exist now. The authors in this world always try to improve their skill in writing, they also doing some research before they write for their book. One of them is this The Miracle of Castel di Sangro: A Tale of Passion and Folly in the Heart of Italy.

Karen Chan:

A lot of people always spent all their free time to vacation or perhaps go to the outside with them family members or their friend. Do you realize? Many a lot of people spent that they free time just watching TV, or even playing video games all day long. If you need to try to find a new activity this is look different you can read a book. It is really fun in your case. If you enjoy the book that you simply read you can spent the whole day to reading a reserve. The book The Miracle of Castel di Sangro: A Tale of Passion and Folly in the Heart of Italy it doesn't matter what good to read. There are a lot of people who recommended this book. They were enjoying reading this book. If you did not have enough space to deliver this book you can buy the particular e-book. You can m0ore effortlessly to read this book from a smart phone. The price is not very costly but this book features high quality.

Martha Howell:

This The Miracle of Castel di Sangro: A Tale of Passion and Folly in the Heart of Italy is great guide for you because the content that is certainly full of information for you who also always deal with world and still have to make decision every minute. This specific book reveal it details accurately using great organize word or we can claim no rambling sentences in it. So if you are read this hurriedly you can have whole details in it. Doesn't mean it only gives you straight forward sentences but tough core information with beautiful delivering sentences. Having The Miracle of Castel di Sangro: A Tale of Passion and Folly in the Heart of Italy in your hand like finding the world in your arm, information in it is not ridiculous one. We can say that no guide that offer you world inside ten or fifteen tiny right but this reserve already do that. So , this is good reading book. Heya Mr. and Mrs. active do you still doubt that will?

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