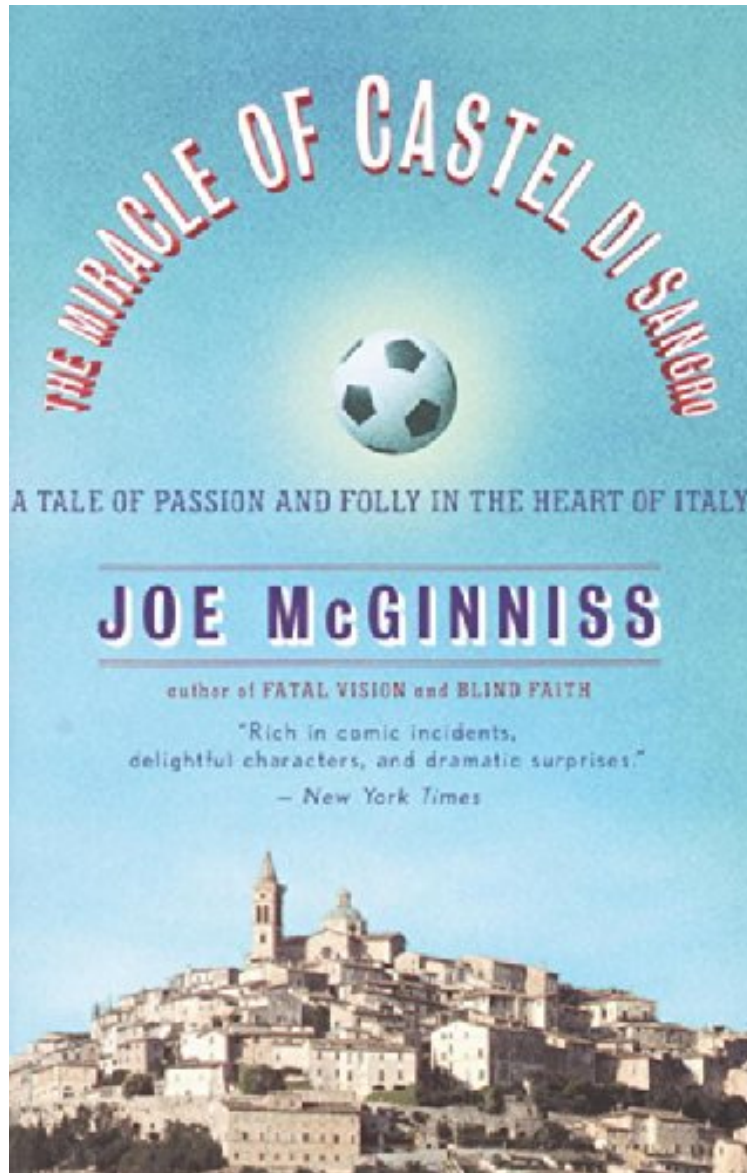


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The Miracle of Castel di Sangro: A Tale of Passion and Folly in the Heart of Italy

Joe McGinniss

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Joe McGinniss : The Miracle of Castel di Sangro: A Tale of Passion and Folly in the Heart of Italy before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Miracle of Castel di Sangro: A Tale of Passion and Folly in the Heart of Italy:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. One of the best non-fiction books I've read in years. By RSWIt's been quite some time since I was moved to write a review. This book, a suggestion by a stranger upon hearing that I wanted to learn more about soccer, and Italian soccer in particular suggested this book. I'm not going to go into the story or background because many reviewers do that well and I want some things to remain a surprise. This is a story about that is about soccer yes and Italy. It is even more about the heart and soul of athletes. It is about human nature, ups and downs, savage disappointments, triumphs unimaginable, twists and turns unforeseen, laughs, and finding a place in the world. It is also about balances and soft voices...I was so sad to read that Joe McGinnis had passed away in 2014. I so wanted to write him a thank you note for teaching me about joy and perspective and soccer. And affirming my love for the complexities of Italy. And this book above all. I refuse to lend to any one because I want it near to look at. Selfish? Maybe. In the end, I can't stop thinking of it. It's all like a movie, Joe. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Liked the book, but not the author. By Mentalfloss1 This was fun, if you're a fan of soccer/football or you love Italy. Many good stories and characters. Best to learn the author's Italian as he learns it. Once he mentions a word he will use it again and expect you to remember. That's ok. But the author, to me, seemed rude and intrusive in the world and situation he was experiencing. He came across, at times, as the typical ugly American. But he was a good writer and he truly immerses himself in his subjects. (I've read a couple of his other books). But if you don't care for soccer this one might be either a puzzle to you, or just plain irritating. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Terrible read. By Piccolo Venice If you want to read a book about a pompous American in Italy, this book's for you.

Master storyteller Joe McGinnis 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 McGinnis 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, McGinnis 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, McGinnis 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*).

.com We already knew Joe McGinnis 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, McGinnis 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* McGinnis'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 Abruzzo 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 Serie B through a sudden death shootout ending a playoff game. The second miracle? Can they stay in Serie 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 opera. A funny 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. A
Cliff Glaviano, Bowling Green State Univ. Libs., OH
Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. 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