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# Doctor Socrates: Footballer, Philosopher, Legend



## Synopsis

A stunning new biography of Socrates – the iconic 1982 captain of Brazil’s greatest national soccer team to never win the World Cup. Socrates was always special. With his 6’4” frame and incredible skill, the attacking midfielder stood out. He was a hugely talented athlete who graduated in medicine, yet drank and smoked to excess. Fans were enthralled by his inch-perfect passes, his coolness in front of the goal, and his back heel – the trademark move that singled him out as the most unique footballer of his generation. Off the pitch, he was just as original with a dedication to politics and social causes that no player has ever emulated. As the leader of Corinthians Democracy – a movement that gave everyone from the kitman to the president an equal say in the running of the club – Socrates revolutionized football management and left a truly lasting impression at a time when Brazil was ruled by military dictatorship. Passionate and principled, entertaining and erudite, Socrates was as contradictory as he was complex. He was a socialist who voted for a return of Brazil’s monarchy, a fiercely independent individual who was the ultimate team player, and a romantic who married four times and fathered six children. Armed with Socrates’s unpublished memoir and hours of newly discovered interviews, Andrew Downie has created the most comprehensive and compelling account of this iconic figure. Based on conversations with family members, close friends, and former teammates, Doctor Socrates is the brilliant biography of a man who always stood up for what he believed in – whatever the cost.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Downie has done a grand job of juggling all the different facets of the captain of the greatest Brazil team – never to win the World Cup; (Aidan Smith The Scotsman); Brilliantly written and researched. Amazing life. (Alex Bellos Author of Futebol: The Brazilian Way of Life); Socrates was one of Brazil's footballing icons... His posthumous fortune is having a biographer whose knowledge and understanding born of many years living in Brazil enables him to bring the reader "the full Socrates" in the colourful context both on and off the pitch... A valuable addition to the football bookshelf. (Keir Radnedge KeirRadnedge.com); I love this book. It's a book about famous sporting figures that actually it turns out we don't know that much about – It's a great book, one of the best I've read this year so far. I fully recommend you pick that one up. (Matt Williams Sports Book Podcast); Such a phenomenon [as Socrates] deserves the rounded, accomplished biography he has been accorded by Reuters writer Andrew Downie, who draws on a knowledge not merely of Brazil's football but of its wider politics and society based on 17 years of living there. Downie celebrates the brilliance and the achievements. (When Saturday Comes); An excellent piece of work. Fascinating study of a complicated man. (Tom English BBC Scotland); Compelling from start to finish - a vivid portrait of one of the greatest players of all time, and of the thrilling, fascinating country he represented. Highly intelligent, politically engaged, Socrates had an impact reaching far beyond the field of play. Downie does full justice to an extraordinary life, rich in joy, in sadness, and in inspiration. (Pete Davies Author of All Played Out) The confounding contradictions of Socrates' genius, and his apparent unwillingness to place football at any special pedestal, that forms the basis for Andrew Downie's excellent new book, Doctor Socrates: Footballer, Philosopher, Legend... Socrates not only shaped the idea of what sport can mean to its fans... but he also showed the world that there was a place for dissent even in sport. (Suhrit Parthasarathy The Hindu) The fascinating story of a true legend. Downie... pieces together the gripping, remarkable and inimitable story of a man who was as prodigiously gifted as he was staggeringly self-centred. (Hindustan Times); [Fans] now get the opportunity to read an honest biography of the Brazilian in Andrew Downie's magnificent work... This must-read sport book of our times.... First-class journalism... untainted by hagiography. (Times of India); Andrew Downie... manages to tread a narrow path in describing Socrates, with skilful writing, warmth in reporting and a clear eye. This biography should be compulsory reading for sports fans, but will also hold non-fans in thrall. (India Today)

Andrew Downie is the Brazilian football correspondent for Reuters, and has lived in the country for fifteen years. He has written on football for GQ, The Economist, The New York Times, and The Guardian, among others. He lives in Sao Paulo.

Andrew Downie's biography tells the story of the larger-than-life sporting figure, Socrates, against the backdrop of Brazilian politics and society at a time when both were changing rapidly. It would be impossible to tell the story of Socrates without explaining the era in which he came of age and eventually dominated the national football scene. Downie achieves this in an engaging and conversational tone punctuated with richly researched and detailed anecdotes that offer a glimpse into what it was like to be present as the beautiful game became big business in Brazil. This is no dull history lesson, but rather a romp through an era accompanying perhaps the only person whose path threads the divided social, political and economic strata of the country. While non-Brazilians have a sense of the Brazilian greats that have lifted the World Cup, stories of the "greatest team to never win it" are perhaps more interesting if not harder to come by. Thankfully Downie has meticulously curated a work comprised of countless primary sources and in-person interviews with the movers and shakers of the sport from all corners of Brazil and across Europe. To sum it up, this is a much more audacious undertaking than a book about a deceased football star. It is a sophisticated exposition of a life led at the intersection of Brazilian politics, culture and of course, football.

A thoroughly enjoyable book. I'm not even that much of a soccer fan -- I bought this book mostly because I'm interested in Brazil -- but it was a page turner, full of colorful stories. Socrates was clearly a fascinating man and this book also brings an era in Brazil to life. If you're a soccer fan, I imagine you'd get even more out of this, as it describes the point (if I understand it right) when world soccer/football changed from the beautiful game to the rougher, win-ugly sport it's often become. Well worth reading.

Great insight on Socrates the man, not just the footballer. The Author really did his homework and in doing so uncovered the other side of the doctor that wasn't known to the outside world. Such an enjoyable read that finished quickly.

This is a well-written and hugely entertaining romp which from start to finish takes you on a fascinating journey through the good times and the not so good times of this enigmatic and true

legend of the game. From the care (mixed with no shortage of flair) with which Downie tells his story, it is clear from the outset that he is acutely aware of the uniqueness of the subject matter in his possession and that he feels privileged to be in the position to be able to tell the story of such a fascinating man. He does not disappoint. This is a must-read for those interested in football and equally for those who are not - like other great books (and indeed films) about sport, you don't necessarily need to be a football fan to enjoy it. In a similar way to the superb book on Brazilian football by Alex Bellos, you get a real insight into Brazil off the pitch, especially during the dictatorship, and the author cleverly recounts how Socrates challenged the status quo and introduced concepts of democracy and freedom of speech to a generation of Brazilians who had only experienced repression. Socrates is shown to be a great thinker and revolutionary who was courageous in his ability to say what he really thought and go against the zeitgeist. This is all the more striking when you compare him to modern-day vacuous and molly-coddled footballers and their complete lack of opinions, convictions or ability to speak out as individuals. This is a meticulously researched book and is exhaustive in its use of primary and secondary sources. It is packed full of interesting insights and anecdotes from former colleagues, players and family and you find yourself reading the book with a finger in the index so keen are you to find out the source of that particular gem. The author's real skill is in leaving you to draw your own conclusions about Socrates. You fluctuate between adoring him, being impressed by his bravery and audacity and at the same time being immensely frustrated by his selfishness, seemingly endless tendency towards self-destruction and disregard for those close to him, to the point where you end up questioning whether in fact he was actually a "legend" after all. One thing is for sure is that on a number of occasions whilst reading the book you long to have had the chance to have spent a night in the company of Socrates, knocking back those ice-cold beers, smoking cigarettes and setting the world to rights about politics, football and everything in between. You suspect that the author feels the same.

This is one of the most detailed biography I have read. The years of research and interviews clearly paid off, and are clearly seen throughout this book. Kudos to Andrew Downie, the author who did a brilliant job showing all facets of this Brazilian footballer and idol of many. Dr Socrates was truly one of the most authentic personalities -- all fields and industries considered, let alone a very conservative Brazilian football scene during a tough dictatorship such as the one in force in Brazil when Dr Socrates rose as a World-class player. He did not only excelled playing football, but also as a political personality in Brazil. Dr Socrates lived live to the limits of freedom and ironically he

succumbed for not compromising a bit to be like that. He died because he was too tied to his own decisions (with astonishingly similarities to the Greek philosopher). I would say that Dr Socrates' human nature portrayed by Andrew Downie is exactly what makes him more than just a footballer, but also an all-time idol. Congratulations to Andrew Downie for such a beautiful way of telling a beautiful life. PS.: I cried reading the Epilogue; the emotions came all at once there and it was like living Dr Socrates' death once again. The joy and sorrow of a day: Dr Socrates' death and Corinthians' fifth national title.

It's an emotional journey, sometimes a painful one, to relive so many wins and losses by this great artist. I can still hear his voice, his deep voice masqueraded by his laughter and funny accent. I met Socrates a couple of times and it was always disarming to hear him thank me for being there, hugging me and everybody around like we were all old friends. Indeed we were, because you could not be his friend. And I am so glad to have met him a few times more through the pages of this fantastic book.

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