

Dear Mr. Foer,

I sprint down the field, heat the last defender with a Maradona, effortlessly place it top corner. Perfect goal, and I celebrate and enjoy the feeling of absolute bliss. I go home and shower, idolizing over how similar my goal was to the greats, from Pelé and Maradona to Ronaldo and Messi. Subconsciously, I know children and adults around the world, ardent sports fans and players are thinking my thoughts, and to them those thoughts have real meaning. This was before I read your excellent insight to our modern world, *How Soccer Explains the World*. To me and people like me, soccer is a game, a passion, maybe even an obsession. But to some, it is their only ticket out of poverty, it is worthy of wars, it's not just a game. Soccer rules the world, it ties people together and is the new battlefield where the superpowers of our world fight centuries' old battles and settle their lust for world supremacy. But in this case, world superstars are the legions, coaches the generals, and the back of the net the ultimate "goal" of conquest.

I was like any other kid with a passion for the beautiful game: I had the team I played on, my favorite team, and teams I despised. On a birthday, my grandfather sent me a book, sharing my love of the game, a book by the title of *How Soccer Explains the World*, your book. Being a voracious reader, I was not daunted when I opened the book and saw the complicated vocabulary and sophisticated preamble. I read on, and the veil surrounding my soccer world was lifted. I saw the hatred of the Protestants and Catholics in Glasgow, the slender hope the poor children in Rio cherished, and the pride in Judaism and Tottenham the fans of that noble club feel. I saw how deep the passions run, how hot the feverish blood is, how much it means to them, the real fans of this century, when Barcelona goes face to face with Real, when the Rangers battle the Celtics for Glasgow supremacy.

So now when I shoot, pass, run and celebrate, I know where I stand. Your elegant and eloquent words revealed to me a world where soccer is both a game and more, where to some it is a religion, and to others, it is the most splendid, beautiful game ever to grace man's world. I understand that I can be a soccer fanatic, and still not understand why people do what they do for soccer. But that is the beauty of the game; it bridges the gaps, allows the poor child in the Ukraine with no hope of a better life to be the equal of the wealthy British aristocrat. It does the impossible, tying the world together with only a ball, two goals, and twenty-four young lads. It's the game that explains me, a kid born in New Jersey, raised in California, living in Massachusetts, and a boy who thinks just like me, watching the stars appear halfway across the globe, his only comfort the sweet kiss of night.

*Cole Gayre*