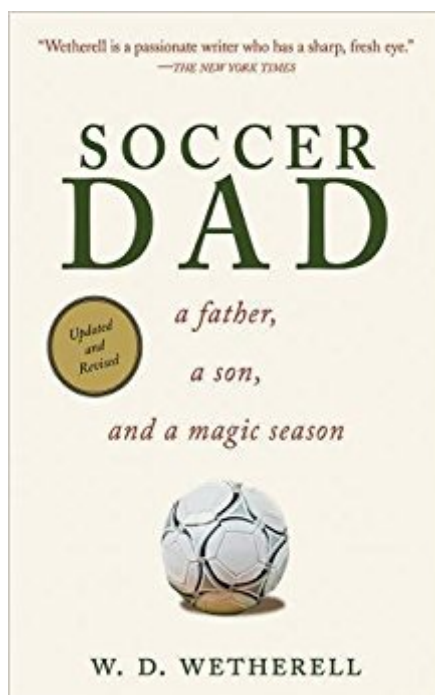


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# Soccer Dad: A Father, A Son, And A Magic Season



## Synopsis

A father's true story of his high-school-age son's winning soccer season. Soccer Dad is simultaneously the candid reflections of a devoted father and the enthusiastic observations of a diehard soccer fan. When Matt enters his senior year of high school, it is not without myriad parenting concerns on the part of his father, author W. D. Wetherell. What is his role in shaping his son's future? What will life be like when Matt is away at college? And what of Matt's soccer season? Is Matt's success in soccer just setting him up for disappointment later in life? With the pensive eye of an artist, Wetherell follows his son's team from field to field and win to win and ruminates on topics ranging from soccer's esoteric appeal in America to the conflicting emotions of a parent sending his youngest child out into the world. Reflecting on his own experiences both as a participant and a spectator, Wetherell offers a paean to the sport of soccer and the joys of parenthood. Updated and revised with a new chapter that brings Soccer Dad fully up to date, this is an exciting new edition that readers will enjoy for years to come.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Wetherell's son Matt is a starter for a Hanover, N.H., high school soccer team, which is seeking its third straight state championship, and he details the season's ups and downs, while describing the culture surrounding competitive youth soccer and saying good-bye to his son's childhood. Wetherell (*Chekov's Sister*; *Morning*) writes with energy and light humor, but he tries to cover so much territory that the narrative lapses into disorganization and unanswered questions. The account feels like a collection of short essays linked tangentially by Matt, whose challenging senior year isn't well

integrated into Wetherell's musings on soccer parents or the grueling life of a teenage soccer star. Wetherell also indulges in sweeping, hero-making prose regarding soccer and Matt's team, which has the opposite effect of its intent (cleats on the bass line that supplies the game's rhythm—always there, hardly noticed, absolutely core). Still, Wetherell's astute observations on soccer and the accompanying lifestyle plus his passion as a parent contribute to an often informative read. (Sept.) ""Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved."

W. D. Wetherell has written numerous books, including *Vermont River* and *The Wisest Man in America*. The American Academy of Arts and Letters awarded him the prestigious Strauss Living Award in 1998. He lives in Lyme, New Hampshire.

For any parent who has a child who is semi-serious in a sport, this is a humorous and nostalgic read. I love the classifications of the different types of parents on the sidelines (the quiet serious ones that stand away from the other parents totally focused on their child and the game, the socialites that talk incessantly and may not even know what's going on in the game until something notable happens, the complainers who are always unhappy with how their child is being treated by the ref or coach or other players). Having a son who is heavy into club soccer I could totally relate and find that much of my social life involves interaction with the other families on the team. I'm already dreading the day when that part of my life ends.

My husband and I could relate to this book on many levels. Our children are much younger than his son but, as this author retells stories of his boy growing up in soccer and his passion for the sport, we could have inserted ourselves into the pages of this book. Wetherell's casual style of writing was enjoyable, although at times it seemed a bit wordy and off topic (a few small tangents I could have done without). Overall, it was an enjoyable read. I chuckled out loud more than a few times and even shed a tear when I could relate so personally. Wetherell draws you into his family and into himself in such a way that any sports parent could relate.

A wonderfully personal account of a dad and soccer fan as he follows his son's soccer team through his senior year and potentially his final season. I loved how he described his memories of past games, talks with his son about his performances after matches, how he's grown to bond with the other kids and their parents. Being in love with my role as soccer dad and sharing in all things

relating to the sport with my son, i felt that this could be my own story. Just bought a copy for each of my son's coaches.

A splendid elegy to a season of growth for a father and a son, and a magnificent tribute to a shaper of young men, the magnificent Coach Grabill.

If you're a fan of WD Wetherell's baroquely funny and imaginative novels, you may enjoy this book, though I must say his anarchic invention has been severely tamped--for valid reasons, since he has committed himself to a difficult task, an extended work of nonfiction centering on his son's struggle to win the state championship in a fiercely competitive soccer environment. There aren't many parts of America in which US football takes a backseat to the traditional "beautiful game," but apparently where the Wetherells live, in New Hampshire, it ranks as #1. Each couple of pages in the book you get another mini-essay about different aspects of soccer, and some of these work and some don't. He describes the sounds of soccer in minute detail, and this is a great piece, the sounds a fan will hear on an autumn afternoon, the way the earth rumbles as though a horde of buffalo were stampeding across it, and then he marks down, as though in dance notation, the short interjections and exhortations the individual players make. (Wetherell notes that, compared to most sports, soccer players are talky, something I never thought about before.) The boys on the team each have something to prove, especially in the face of a devastating cheating scandal that had drowned the high school in bad press during the opening of the championship season--a scandal involving football players, the sons of the most prominent town residents, linking their brains together for a Topkapi-style heist of exams. Though no soccer players were directly involved, Wetherell shows how the boys were made vulnerable to the hooting and jeering of their opponents from neighboring high schools, eager to associate the innocent with the disgrace of their schoolmates. Wetherell has his heroes, and they are legion--just about anybody who ever played soccer, and he loves his son's coach, the redoubtable Scot Rob Grabill, "Hanover High's charismatic head coach." Wetherell tries to be objective in outlining the weaknesses and strengths of the boys on his son's team, but one will smile at the way that Matt, his son, escapes any criticism whatsoever. It's clear that for this soccer dad, the sun shines out of Matt's cleats, and while that's the way it should be, it becomes difficult to make any sense out of Matt as a character. He's an angel, and a great athlete, and the apple of Walter's eye, but he's not really a human being here. I kept wondering when a real boy would break out of the gilded skin his father's prose encases him in. We find out that, although he's now a senior, Matt hasn't been to a party in four years, for there might be drugs or drinking there, and that would

be bad. I won't spoil the suspense of whether or not charismatic Rob Grabill whips his team into the "threepeat" they're all hot for, but I should mention that at the end, a terrible tragedy occurs to one of the main characters--an inexplicable, Richard Yates-like diminution of power. That part was more like one of Wetherell's novels. This book is like being next to a man hollering his head off from the bleachers and you're right next to him with a head cold.

Anticipating more soccer and less scenic descriptions, I found myself skimming parts of the novel to find the story of an undefeated season and the roller coaster ride that often brings. Instead there was much commentary of driving to locations, background character details which did little to engage this reader. The soccer team and its march to the state championship match is almost an afterthought, which may have been the author's goal. I may have been anticipating a different story here and as such, was left a little disappointed.

This is a must read for any soccer Dad or Mom. It goes through all the trials and tribulations of being a soccer parent in a humorous way. There are also many interesting observations about the sport of soccer. It would also be a good read for many parents that have endured long seasons as a baseball, football, or basketball dad or mom - the impact on the parents is the same. The story is well written and I found it a quick and enjoyable read.

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