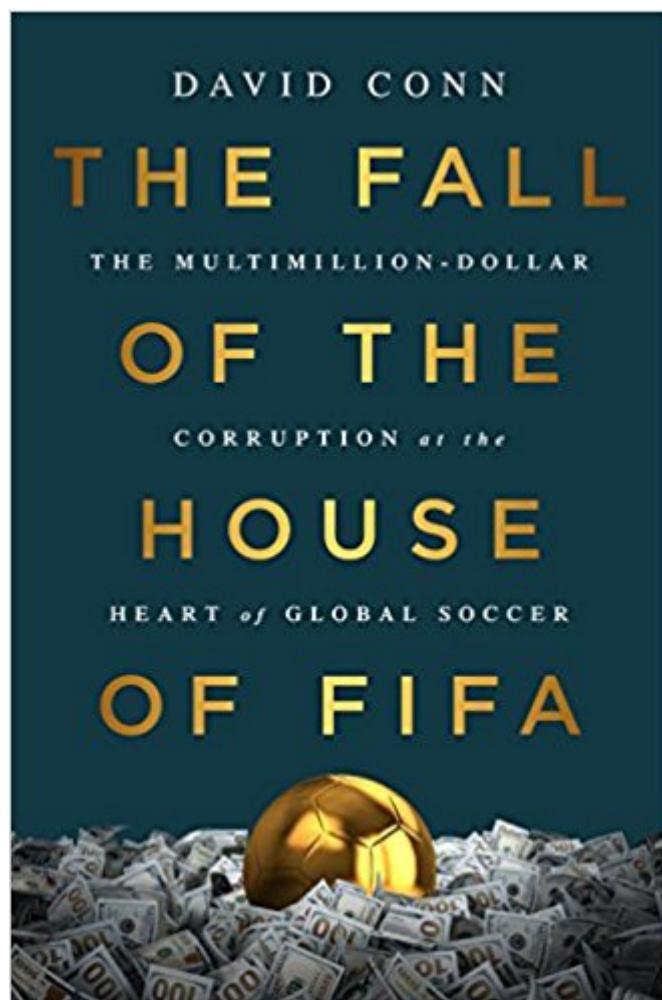


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# The Fall Of The House Of FIFA: The Multimillion-Dollar Corruption At The Heart Of Global Soccer



## Synopsis

In 2015, FIFA—the multibillion dollar governing body of the world's most-loved sport—was brought down by allegations of industrial-scale bribes, kickbacks, money laundering, racketeering and tax evasion. Beginning with early morning raids in Zurich and the indictment of twenty-seven executives by the US Department of Justice, the rottenness at the core of FIFA seemed to extend throughout all of soccer, from the decision to send the 2018 and 2022 World Cups to Russia and Qatar to lesser known cases of embezzlement from Trinidad to South Africa. David Conn writes the definitive account of FIFA's rise and fall, covering in great detail the corruption allegations and the series of scandals that continued to shake the public's trust in the organization. *The Fall of the House of FIFA* situates FIFA's unraveling amidst revealing human portraits of soccer legends such as Michel Platini and Franz Beckenbauer and features an exclusive interview with former president Sepp Blatter. Even as he chronicles the biggest sport scandal of all time, Conn infuses the book with a passionate love of the game, delivering an irresistible read.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"[Conn's] study of Sepp Blatter and other football officials is full of startling material and has cumulative power."—The Guardian "Conn left no stone unturned, skillfully re-creating a timeline of the corruption that threatened the very integrity of the game. His meticulous research and smooth writing style bring this unseemly chapter in FIFA history to a close, with realistic hope for the future of the most popular sport on earth....This is the conclusive account of the recent international FIFA scandal. As we look ahead to the 2018 World Cup, this is also a timely reminder that money and power are always a threat to high ideals in sports."—Library Journal

David Conn is the author of *The Beautiful Game* and an award-winning journalist for the *Guardian* where he has been a key part of the coverage of the FIFA crisis.

There will be many books written about corruption in FIFA, especially as more information comes to light. This book details the corruption that we know of dating back decades in an in-depth way, remaining credulous even as the acts themselves are a farce. Worth reading by any fan of soccer who can separate the game from the organization that runs it.

Shock waves were sent through the soccer world when it was announced that the 2022 World Cup tournament would be held in Qatar during the summer months of the northern hemisphere. Many asked how this could happen and what was the *Federation Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA) thinking when they did this. A subsequent investigation found that allegations of kickbacks, bribery, money laundering and tax evasion played a big role in this announcement and also the awarding of the 2018 World Cup to Russia. These well-known incidents of corruption, as well as lesser known ones, some dating back to the 1970s, are covered in this well-researched and thorough book on FIFA by award-winning writer David Conn. He exposes so many incidents of bribery and other questionable actions by FIFA officials that one may get lost trying to keep them all straight. The old vendor cry that you can't keep the players straight without a scorecard is applicable here, even though there is very little written about the actual games on the pitch. Some of the specifics in the reports and interviews of the book will leave the reader shaking his or her head. One of these passages that did that for me was in the report of an investigation in bribery accusations, FIFA "believed bribery was a part of the routine facts of life in South America and Africa." This after the organization had denied any corruption in those areas after sending millions of dollars for development of the game and facilities in which to play. If you are confused after reading that, then so was I. That was just one passage of many that highlight the extent of the corruption in the organization and Conn writes about them with the knowledge only a veteran writer of the sport and the organization can do. His interview with FIFA President Sepp Blatter was also must-read material. This book is one that readers who are interested in the inner workings, good and bad (mostly the latter) of one of the biggest sports institutions in the world must add to their bookshelves.

David Conn is one of the world's leading authorities on football's commerce and

politics. I would be amazed if he isn't shortlisted for one of the annual sportswriter and/or investigative journalism awards, despite the fact that the main premise of this book is hardly a revelation. It has of course been widely known for decades that FIFA is a corrupt organisation, that Jack Warner is one of the planet's greediest and most voracious gangsters and, more recently, the 2018/2022 voting process which awarded Russia and Qatar the next two World Cups was entirely fraudulent. So what, you might ask, would Conn hope to achieve by churning up stuff we already know - much of it thoroughly depressing reading for any lover of soccer? The answer is that nobody has hitherto undertaken anything like Conn's degree of research to collate and chronicle FIFA's history and thereby identify the key events and protagonists in this epic catalog of greed and embezzlement which started nearly 50 years ago and flourished unabated for so long. If you don't know how the seeds were first sown back in the sixties and you plan to read this book, then I won't spoil it for you. But suffice to say that if you have any designer sportswear or equipment bearing the brand of a certain German corporation (beginning with 'S' and ending in 'Adidas') then by the time you finish the book you may well feel like chucking it all out and boycotting their products forever. All the key influential characters are here, from Sir Stanley Rous, the visionary but austere pioneer of the modern FIFA, to the recently deceased and utterly ludicrous American fraudster Chuck Blazer (with his insatiable appetite, luxurious jet-setting lifestyle and personal office suite in Trump Tower (complete with a high-rent apartment specially for his cats whose piss caused the entire floor to stink!) all paid for by FIFA and CONCACAF, naturally. It's no surprise that Warner emerges as the most repulsive of all the criminals but many other FIFA executives, presidential candidates and Confederation officials from all corners of the globe are also exposed as corrupt and/or complicit. Of the playing legends implicated in recent scandals, Franz Beckenbauer is the subject of one of the book's most explosive chapters but, in contrast, I was left feeling sympathy for Michel Platini who appears to have been naive (as opposed to wilfully corrupt) when he stepped up from UEFA into a FIFA career for which he clearly had insufficient political nous and where he was groomed, manipulated and then hung out to dry by Sepp Blatter. To this day Blatter blames Platini for the Qatar debacle which he conveniently claims was caused by a last-minute politically motivated change and Sarkozy influenced - change of vote by the French. As for arch-villain Sepp 'The Penguin' himself, the author must be congratulated for securing a personal interview, lyrically described in the illuminating final chapter. In fairness to Blatter, he deserves a modicum of credit for agreeing to the meeting in which he comes across as more of a

crackpot and a delusional fantasist in perpetual denial than the crook who presided over a global pandemic of corruption in the world's biggest sport. All told this is a superb book, painstakingly researched and masterfully presented, with its endless parade of odious, ridiculous and/or incompetent characters (plus the occasional brave or honorable one). It's not an easy read and it demands concentration but, remarkably, Conn manages to summarize

FIFA's hugely complex fifty-year web of corruption in a readable 300 pages without compromising on the important details — a major feat in itself. And so the story continues. A few weeks after this book was published, Angel Maria Villar, the big boss of Spanish soccer, was charged with corruption and forced to resign from FIFA's executive committee. As I write we are on the eve of another over-hyped and over-cooked Premier League season - with World Cup to follow — preceded by a summer that has featured transfer fees and player wages verging on the lunatic. It's all enough to make every traditional fan of the beautiful game reach for the sick bag.

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