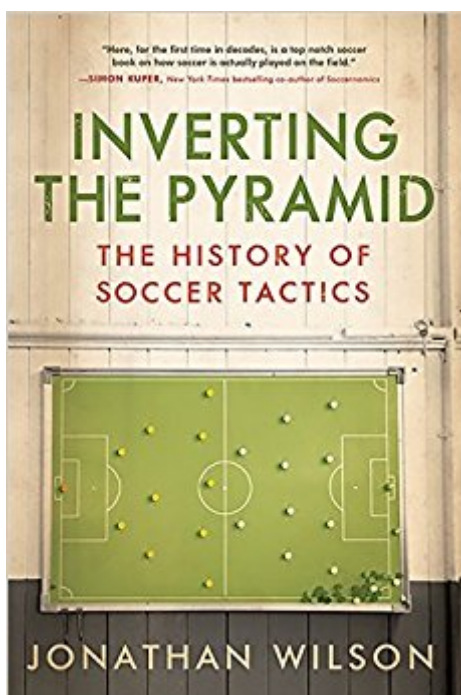


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# Inverting The Pyramid: The History Of Soccer Tactics



## Synopsis

“An outstanding work”; the [soccer] book of the decade. —Sunday Business Post  
Inverting the Pyramid is a pioneering soccer book that chronicles the evolution of soccer tactics and the lives of the itinerant coaching geniuses who have spread their distinctive styles across the globe. Through Jonathan Wilson’s brilliant historical detective work we learn how the South Americans shrugged off the British colonial order to add their own finesse to the game; how the Europeans harnessed individual technique and built it into a team structure; how the game once featured five forwards up front, while now a lone striker is not uncommon. Inverting the Pyramid provides a definitive understanding of the tactical genius of modern-day Barcelona, for the first time showing how their style of play developed from Dutch “Total Football,” which itself was an evolution of the Scottish passing game invented by Queens Park in the 1870s and taken on by Tottenham Hotspur in the 1930s. Inverting the Pyramid has been called the “Big Daddy” (Zonal Marking) of soccer tactics books; it is essential for any coach, fan, player, or fantasy manager of the beautiful game

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

There are books about soccer teams and soccer men, soccer nations, the culture of soccer, the business of soccer, and fans of the game. But rarest of all are really cracking books that explore the way the game is played. (And, no, we’re not talking about manuals that show you how to kick the ball.) Wilson, a respected journalist with a half-dozen books to his name, has produced a landmark work that explains what happens on the field and why. Beginning with the earliest days of

soccer, he charts first the adoption of rules, then tactics, and the evolution of tactics, with profiles and mentions of the geniuses (Viktor Maslov) and dunderheads (Wing Commander Charles Reep) who stamped their marks on the game. National character plays a role, of course, with chapters devoted to the blood-and-thunder English (‘‘The English Pragmatism’’), the defensive-minded Italians (‘‘Catenaccio’’), and the share-and-share-alike Dutch (‘‘Total Football’’). While a remarkable work of sports scholarship, this isn’t for casual fans, and those who don’t know their 4-4-2 from their 4-2-3-1 will definitely require a less challenging book. --Keir Graff

a fascinating analysis of the way the game has evolved tactically from the 1970s until the last season... as a summary of the first 140 years of football tactical history, it is hard to imagine a more readable or thorough effort. \* IRISH EXAMINER \* This is a masterful piece of research and lives up to the claim to be nothing less than "a history of football tactics"... Facinating \* SCOTSMAN -Books of the Year \* You will never read a more entertaining or erudite history of tactics \* SUNDAY TELEGRAPH-CHRISTMAS BOOKS \* A gloriously readable, eccentric and informative trawl through the changing tactical mindsets and formations that have helped shape the beautiful game. \* METRO \* Absorbing and informative \* GUARDIAN ON LINE \* This must surely go down as one of the most revelatory sports books of the year, as well as one of the best, who would have thought that a book charting the history of football tactics and strategy, from the 1870s to the present day, could be so engrossing and entertaining. \* SCOTLAND ON SUNDAY \* [A] fascinating history of tactics, a book that is guaranteed to enhance your football watching; your team may still lose, but you’ll have a far better idea why they did. \* INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY \* For a detailed analysis of how a single striker became the norm throughout football, you had better read Jonathan Wilson’s excellent new book about tactics. -- Patrick Barclay \* SUNDAY TELEGRAPH \* Facts and stats, plus anecdotes, interviews and Wilson’s deft touch with football-speak, give colour to a subject that can be a little dry and all-too confusing for those watching (and often those picking the side). \* CQ \* A masterful work, It’s all deliciously nerdy - a cross between a coaching manual and a social history - and if its publication helps foster a flowering of interest in the tactical and analytical side of the game in this country, it could be the best thing to have happened to English football in years.\*\*\*\* \* TIME OUT - book of the week \* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The subtitle of this book is "The History of Soccer Tactics," but it’s so much more than that! Author Jonathan Wilson discusses the personalities--players, managers, journalists and even supporters

and politicians--as well as the social conditions--colonialism and the Cold War, for example--that have brought the game to life over the years. I would not necessarily recommend this book for beginners, as Wilson employs terminology that I think requires at least a rudimentary knowledge of the game. I've been a more-or-less casual football fan for some years, and this book has pushed me along toward a more sophisticated understanding. I think it's a perfect resource for anyone in a similar situation.

This is, exactly as titled, a history of football tactics, from the unorganized scrum of the mid 19th century through the 'pyramid' days of 2-3-5, to the myriad formations of today. I do not know enough about the history of soccer tactics to speak directly to the accuracy of the history given, but it feels authoritative. It starts in England, switches to Scotland, transfers to Central Europe, on to South America with special attention paid to Brazil, then back to Italy, etc. This focus on how the game spread around the globe and how regional differences were introduced that then went on to have international implications and influences. The book, written by an Englishman, is Anglocentric, but England birthed the country and with the growth of the BPL is sort of the epicenter of the soccer world. All in all a very worthwhile read for anyone interested in learning the history of how soccer is played.

Clear, expertly written, detailed, and comprehensive, this book is the best place to start if you're interested in advancing your understanding of the why the game is played the way it is today.

Lots of great material on the history of this glorious game, mainly told through biographies of the men who shaped it's major movements through the 20th century. It could have been much better written, and it's not going to suck in people who aren't already dedicated fans. Reads more like a narrative history textbook than a compelling non-fiction informational piece. That said, it's well-researched and an invaluable addition to the study of the sport.

Excellent book that will get you thinking about tactics on the large field. It helped open my eyes up to the get a better understanding of the modern game and how coaches wanting to get to the next level need to make sure their teams are flexible in working with different systems of play. It also got me to think about what my true philosophy is as a soccer coach. Thus a great book for anyone trying to be a great coach - learn from history so you don't repeat it!

This is not only the best soccer book i ever read (and i have read lots), it is one of the best books i have ever read. It is clearly aimed at the serious football fan or coach who actually cares about the subtleties of the game and also has an interest in the history that has underlain the evolution of the game. It is actually as much of a history of the ideas as it is about the ideas and tactics themselves. I just pulled it off my bookshelf now and i want to go read it again (that would be the fourth time i think). The global nature of the game and its influences are lovingly described from Rio to Moscow via Ipswich. A great book, a must-read for any serious-minded soccer fan. Jonathan Wilson has taken sports writing and soccer writing to a different level.....congratulations Professor Wilson!

This is a thorough examination of the evolution of soccer tactics from the earliest days of English missionaries to the height of Barcelona's tiki taka. Everything you could ever want to know about the history of soccer formations is in here. Plenty of great insight into the minds of some of the best and most revolutionary soccer minds in the world.

This is an absorbing and informative history of the development of football tactics over the course of the last century and a quarter. The title derives from the evolution of standard football formations from the top-heavy 5 forward, 3 midfielder, 2 defender sets during the period 1900-1930 to the 5 defender (4 backs with libero) favored at the depth of the catennaccio era in the 1980s.

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