

The Damned Utd: A Novel

By David Peace

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“Probably the best novel ever written about sport.” —*The Times* (UK)

He was a real-life, working-class hero known as the “British Muhammad Ali”—because he had a big mouth and wasn’t afraid to use it.

But Brian Clough wasn’t a boxer, he was a soccer coach, known for taking backwater teams and making them into champions. In towns where people had little else, the hard-drinking and scrappy Clough was a hero. He was especially beloved for telling it like it was on behalf of small-town teams everywhere—calling out the stars who played dirty, rival coaches he suspected of bribing referees, and the league that let them get away with it.

And then one day Clough was offered a job coaching the big-city team he’d called the dirtiest—the perennial powerhouse Leeds United.

The Damned Utd tells the story of the legendary Clough’s tumultuous forty-four days trying to turn around a corrupt institution without being corrupted himself—the players who wouldn’t play, the management that looked the other way, the wife and friends who stood by him as he fought to do the right thing.

The inspiring story behind the movie of the same name, *The Damned Utd* has been called by *The Times* of London, “The best novel ever written about sport.”

The Damned Utd: A Novel By David Peace Bibliography

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Editorial Review

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Starred Review What happens when a soccer coach—or football manager, as they're called in England—takes over a team he despises? In anticipation of Peace's forthcoming *Red or Dead*, a novel about the legendary Bill Shankly's 15 years (1959–74) in charge of Liverpool, the publisher offers a first U.S. edition of this 2006 novel, which makes a perfect bookend with its fictionalized account of counterpart Brian Clough's turbulent 44-day tenure at Leeds United in 1974. The tale is told in parallel story lines: in the present, Clough arrives at Leeds and takes charge of the team. In the past, Clough manages Derby County, a small team in a lower division, to the absolute heights of success, only to be undermined by his own outsize personality. We learn about his utter hatred for Leeds and their manager, Don Revie; his disgust at the unsportsmanlike antics of the players; his suspicion that some of their victories are bought and paid for. He replaces Revie, but the players won't play for him, and the season gets off to a nightmarish start. Worse, he's missing his right-hand man, Peter Taylor, a savvy scout whose absence feels more like an amputation. In a stream-of-consciousness, first-person narration, Peace builds tension and characterization brilliantly, imparting an epic feel to what was ultimately a brief, failed experiment. Clough would find success again with another team and continues to be regarded as one of the greatest managers—and most entertaining personalities—in the English game. (He died in 2004.) The book ruffled some feathers but was a deserved hit, and it was adapted into a fine film, *The Damned United*, starring Michael Sheen. --Keir Graff

Review

"The greatest novel on English football."

—*The Millions*

"If there's one sports novel you should read, it's probably *The Damned Utd* . . . a meticulous, if fictional, reconstruction of a crucial period in the career of one of European soccer's most brilliant and fascinating figures . . . one of the most insightful portrayals ever put to print of the insecurity, pride, and vanity that make up the greater part of nearly any successful coach's character."

—*Deadspin*

"Probably the best novel ever written about sport."

—*The Times (UK)*

"Fascinating . . . Brilliant."

—*The Guardian*

"*The Damned Utd* isn't good, it's brilliant. Vivid . . . compelling . . . as the reader, you are swept along. It is quite an achievement."

—*The Scotsman*

"The most extraordinary novel about football yet to appear."

—*Independent on Sunday*

"The book that brought the legend back to life."

—*The Observer*

"Shakespearean in its scale, ambition, depth and elements of tragedy, farce and betrayal."

—**Independent**

"Now this, young man, is what you call an exceptional . . . book, as bold, brilliant and unconventional as Brian Clough himself, whose voice is vividly brought back to life . . . It is a great story grippingly revived."
—**The Times (Books of the Year)**

About the Author

David Peace – named in 2003 as one of *Granta*'s Best of Young Novelists – is the acclaimed author of the Red Riding Quartet (*1974*, *1977*, *1980*, and *1983*), which was adapted into a BBC television series that was released theatrically in the United States, and is currently being adapted into a major motion picture directed by Ridley Scott. Peace is also the author of the highly praised Tokyo Trilogy, which so far includes *Tokyo Year Zero* and *Occupied City*. His book *GB84* was awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize, and *The Damned Utd* was called “probably the best novel ever written about sport” by *The Times* (UK). His newest book, *Red or Dead*, was shortlisted for the UK’s prestigious Goldsmith’s Prize.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Dolores Parker:

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Joan James:

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