ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

JUVENILE FICTION

The Magic Soccer Ball: "Receiving and Trapping"
Pedro Rita
Susan Adam Rita
Emilio Carrillo, illustrator
Maria Fernando Sambuceti, illustrator
Murilo Pruner, illustrator
978-1-4343-4037-5
Three Stars (out of Five)

Appealing illustrations of a family of soccer-playing soccer balls liven up a manual of soccer moves and coaching techniques. The Magic Soccer Ball is part of a series that uses this method for teaching young players and coaches.

The book takes readers through a typical day in the life of a family that is very involved in soccer. The parents are soccer coaches who also play the sport and the young narrator's friends play as well. Many techniques are explained within the story but twice in the book characters point to diagrams that show what to do during and after receiving passes.

Coach Pedro has played professional soccer in Brazil and has been coaching youth soccer since 1999. He has earned a bachelor's degree in physical education a master's in education—Soccer and is also licensed by the United States Soccer Federation.

Susan Adam-Rita was a psychologist in her native Brazil and is now working towards a PhD in counselor education in the U.S.

The narrator explains why adults tend to both show and tell as they instruct: "She told me that she does this because a few kids learn better when they can see…whereas others just need to hear it." The writers also give the "why" behind these instructions rather than just issuing commands: "The ball has to make contact with the inside of the foot to cushion the impact."

The book's strengths lie in its practical tips for using soccer techniques and in showing how to teach these techniques. However tighter editing would make for an even better product. Small matters like starting a new paragraph when a different person is speaking can make the reading experience much smoother. The book also shifts point of view from third person to first person which may confuse some readers. The inclusion of small bits of Portuguese (words on a

visible banner in the soccer field and saying “Tchau” at the book’s end) could be confusing or intriguing depending on the reader. At times the book seems as if it were written for close friends of the authors rather than for a general audience.

Overall the book is a worthwhile read for young soccer players and youth soccer coaches. In addition to the tips for receiving and trapping techniques the entire book gives a good example of how to conduct a soccer practice—demonstrate moves take players through drills and break them into teams to practice the moves they’ve learned—and how to do it all with patience and a sense of fun.

Jada Bradley