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An Introduction to the Game

Fans vs. Players

You can't really call yourself a swimmer if you don't get wet. Likewise, your chances of becoming the next great running back are pretty slim if you enjoy the football game more while sipping Gatorade from the safety of the sidelines. If your only ambition is to watch the game, then you're a fan, which is perfectly fine. You can be the one cheering on your favorite players, buying their jerseys, and watching them celebrate each victory. If you want to play, however, then you're going to have to learn how to become a "player."

In the world of professional sports, the odds are stacked a mile high against you. If you want to become a player in the Spanish language, then your chances of success rest entirely in your hands. In order to get there, however, you will need to jump the stands and take the field. The field is where the game is won or lost. It is where one can hear what the players really say in the huddle—not the edited, cut-and-pasted versions we read in the newspaper the next day. The purpose of this book is to make you sweat a little, to loosen your tongue only to have you bite it later, to expose you to the thrill of victory while minimizing your agony of defeat. Most importantly, *Speaking Spanish Like a Native* is like a playbook drawn out for *you*. Learn it well and your appreciation and understanding of the game will increase dramatically.

So what sets this book apart from others? It's unique because it brings the field to *you*—freshly cut and trimmed, with much of the information you probably already knew from beginning Spanish already weeded out. You get a view of authentic communication with real people in natural, everyday situations with family and friends just as you would experience in your own

native language. This book is replete with words, phrases, and expressions that I learned by staying up until the wee hours of the morning chatting with native speakers in Mexico, and by sharing ideas, drinking beer, playing cards, dancing, cracking jokes, and even fishing. It is a written recording of a real game and real “players” transcribed onto paper, and like a truly dedicated reporter covering a breaking story, I was there to record it all ... straight from the mouths of Latino speakers.

Sure, you will certainly experience growing pains in your quest to learn Spanish, but one day, when that special moment arrives, it will be the Spanish language that will give birth to *you*—opening your eyes to a world that has always been there but just never in focus.