

TWO JOURNALISTIC VIEWS OF SPORTS HISTORY

Last year the President of the British Society of Sports History, Dr. Tony Mangan, visited Australia as keynote speaker at The Second National Symposium on the History and Philosophy of Physical Education and Sport at the University of Queensland in Brisbane.

Tony Mangan was supported by a British Council grant and additional funds from various institutions in Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne. While in Melbourne, Dr. Mangan gave the Phillip Law Lecture at the Phillip Institute of Technology.

In Melbourne Matthew Ricketson, a journalist from the The Age who had been a delegate at The Making of Sporting Traditions IV Conference at the M.C.G in 1983, interviewed Tony Mangan. Ricketson's article which appeared in The Age on September 11, 1984 is reproduced below.

Murray Hedgcock's article is printed as it appeared in The Weekend Australian.

TAKING SPORT SERIOUSLY

By Matthew Ricketson

Scene: An eminent English sports historian, Dr. Tony Mangan, is being interviewed in a small office in the physical education department of the Phillip Institute of Technology.

The talk is about, among other things, his critically acclaimed book, 'Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian public school: the emergence and consolidation of an educational ideology' published in 1891.

Without warning, the door flies open and in scurries the head of the department, Dr. Ray Crawford, wearing only a bath-towel and several dozen drops of water.

"Oh, aahh, sorry. I tell you, these students are getting too good," said the 53-year old Crawford explaining the claret hue of his cheeks after a soccer training session with his pupils.

It was an amusingly apt incident considering Mangan was in Melbourne to deliver a lecture on the changing relationships between the "jocks" in phys.ed. and the "serious" academics.

Mangan gave the Phillip Law lecture at the institute last week. Entitled 'Physical Education: Prejudices, Paradoxes, Priorities, Possibilities', the lecture charted the gradual shift in the relationship between physical education and academia from antagonism and ignorance to respect and cooperation.

The shift is not completed but the study of sports history is becoming increasingly accepted not only by physical educationalists but by other

historians, other academics and by the public.

This acceptance is reflected in the growing number of sports histories published or about to be published and in the favourable response to sports historians by their colleagues at the recent Australian Historical Association's conference at Melbourne University.

Dr. Brian Stoddart, of the department of sports studies at the Canberra College of Advanced Education, recently co-authored with Ric Sissons a brief but lucid book on bodyline entitled, 'Cricket and Empire: The 1932-33 Bodyline Tour of Australia'.

Stoddart was also the historical adviser to the producers of the recent TV series, 'Bodyliner'.

Early next year he will publish a book, 'Sport: The Great Australian Dilemma' which analyses themes such as sport and politics, the media and women in sport.

Wangan has several books on the boil: Penguin will next year publish the sequel to his study of athleticism in English public schools 'The Games ethic and Imperialism: aspects of the diffusion of an ideal'.

His research shows that during the second half of the 19th century games were seen as the best way to train young boys in character, loyalty, courage and esprit de *corps*.

Games were also seen as ideal preparation for British soldiers. Mangan's sequel showed how Britain's armies took this ethic to many parts of the Empire.

We is also preparing books on sport in South Africa and the ideal of manliness in 19th century England.

Richard Cashman, a historian at the University of New South Wales, will publish a book next month on Australian cricket crowds and barrackers entitled, 'Have a go, yer mug!'.

When Cashman spoke at the historians' conference at Melbourne University, he described the difficulty of finding the balance between rigorous scholarship and readable, popular material.

He, like most members of the small but growing tribe of Australian sport historians, is self-conscious about appearing abstruse to the public.

Tony Mangan has no such qualms. He believes there are ample popular books and magazines about sport and that the gap lies in serious studies on sport.

As the senior editor of the British Journal of Sports History, Mangan welcomes contributions from anyone but insists on a high standard of scholarship.

"A sub-discipline like sports history will only grow when a solid base of sound, quality literature on the subject is established."

"For example, the study of English literature used to be scorned in universities in favour of the classics but is now established largely because of the many excellent studies on literature."

Scholars focus on the games people play

SPORT appeals to the young because it is something happening now - an instant experience - to older generations because it is continuous.

The Aussie youngster who collected his favourite television cricket commentator for an autograph, and inquired "Were you ever a cricketer. Mr Bernard?" reflected the divide.

As you get older, you increasingly look back on sporting memories with an admitted tendency to feel that the styles and stars of today are not as entertaining.

Regardless of actual comparison, there is an obvious reason for this tendency to view yesterday through rose-tinted spectacles, or binoculars.

First experience is etched most sharply on the receptive mind because it comes fresh and enticingly different.

Sadly, the freshness and difference dull as years go by, and you realise you are watching much the same spectacle - albeit one jazzed up and presented by a changed cast - that you saw last year, or a decade ago, or a 25 years earlier.

Fertile

But you then can get a new enjoyment by relating today to yesterday, by comparing the one with the other, by looking back to the origins of your sport and by studying the span of sport generally as it changes and develops.

Not all sport expands, of course. Those who know their Australian sporting history recall that cycling and professional running were mass spectacles in the last century - a sharp contrast to today's modest place in the scheme.

The early days of Australian sport have become a fertile field for scholarly cultivation in the past decade or so, and some fascinating material has been turned up.

Notable is Richard Cashman, whose research into cricket has been immensely valuable and highly readable.

Setting the game into the context of its society, he has reminded us sharply of the origins of today's Australia and today's Australian cricket with research bettering anything published in Britain.

Seminars on various aspects of different sports and their origins are now a regular feature on the Australian scene, and there is an Adelaide-based society which studies the topic and publishes papers on its findings.

Now the Brits, cunning chaps, are catching up.

London calling - MURRAY HEDGCOCK

I have just been browsing through the first issues of *The British Journal of Sports History*, produced by the Frank Cass publishing house in London.

Frank Cass specialises in somewhat esoteric academic reports on everything from strategic studies and west European politics to peasant studies, Commonwealth and comparative history, and business history.

But the firm does have an interest in more lightweight matters having made a bit of a name for itself by publishing the scripts of *The Good Show*.

Three British academics are the editors of the new journal backed by an editorial board including three Canadian university representatives, three Americans, a Japanese, a German, three more Britons and former Wallaby Max Howell of the University of Queensland.

The editors explain their aim is to "stimulate, promote and coordinate interest in the history of sport with special, but not exclusive, reference to the British Isles".

James Walvin, of the University of York, introduces the series by writing:

"It is unlikely that people who turn to this journal in a serious vein need persuading of the social significance and intellectual importance of the history of sports".

He goes on to say that anyone dubious about the argument is unlikely to read the journal anyway.

So what are we actually offered in the first issue, which costs a modest \$10 for 102 pages?

David Rubinstein writes on *Sport and the Sociologist 1890-1914*, pointing out it was in this period that Britain was first "put under the microscope" by social scientists.

He quotes one Charles Edwards, writing in 1892 about the working classes: "It is quite odd to see how strongly the people in league districts are smitten by the football fever".

Mr Edwards would find the football fever of 1985 even more odd, no doubt.

Erica Vicard of Brandon of the University of Alberta offers a study entitled *Sport History in Academic Reflections in a Half-century of Peculiar Progress*.

If the title doesn't give much of a lead to the topic, then the essay is simply about the way sport has become a subject for serious study in recent years.

Richard Cox, of the University

of Liverpool offers a series of articles on the history of sports in Britain, including personal experience reports and abstracts from specialist journals.

From a study of *Cricket in Scottish Football Before 1914* in the Canadian Journal of the History of Sport and Education, we learn that before Scottish football clubs adopted company status membership was dominated by the working class.

When clubs became companies, with shareholders, there was a sharp increase in the representation of proprietors and employees, with those in the drink trade to the fore.

That sounds logical.

Robert Makkothoff looks at the historical perspective of sport in society, again treating the alcohol theme by pointing out that the public house was the social centre of the English community, providing an increasing number of diversions, including games and sports, for its customers.

Somewhat heavier weather it may seem, but actually extremely entertaining is a study by Peter McInnis described as "the doyen of the British social history of sport" with the following ominous title: *Hieronymous Mercurialis de Arte Gymnastica Classification and Dogma in Physical Education in the 16th Century*.

Irony

This looks back at a book written by Mercurialis, an Italian doctor born in 1500 who wrote a study of gymnastics and athletics with the idea that this contributed greatly to health.

Finally, there is a series of book reviews of equally weighty tones from around the world.

Granted, all this does not sound a barrel of fun and would hardly appeal to people who might have been at the Melbourne Cricket Ground tomorrow if Australia had been playing England, but it still has much to commend it.

The language, when one of the academics relating towards the convoluted and opaque to a degree that makes this column's more pious and flights of fancy read like the Heaviside.

But dig and delve through the verbiage, and there are nuggets of invaluable information to be salvaged.

Perhaps they might remember there is a project time to look back but it should never replace sitting in the fresh air, watching a slice of sport actually being played.