

position is only one interpretation.

A further criticism is Kelner's tendency for 'nostalgic wallowing' in the working class origins and community attachments of Rugby League. Kelner is certainly not alone in this trait which seems endemic to the recent literature dealing with the intensity of the experience of Rugby League loyalties. The fact is, the game in Britain in recent years has been subject to a substantive reformulation along commercial lines, considerably blurring the traditional cultural parameters of the game. Much of this reformulation occurred prior to the Super League, so readers should look critically at Kelner's argument.

The principal strength of the book lies in the opening and closing chapters that explore the tensions between historical legacy and commercial logic and highlight the uneasy alliance between the game and the eclectic demands of television. For those seeking a detailed and reflective account of the conflicts precipitated by the emergence of the European Super League *To Jerusalem and Back* is an excellent choice. Those wanting a more substantive and in depth investigation of the conflicts at the local level and the broader context of the changing dynamics of globalised sport will find the book leaves many questions unanswered.

Mark Falcous
Department of Physical Education,
Sport Science and Recreation Management
Loughborough University

Garry Linnell, *Football LTD: The Inside Story of the AFL*. Sydney: Ironbark, 1995, 393 pp. A\$17.95.

Garry Linnell, who is a senior journalist with the *Age* newspaper in Melbourne, Australia has written a serious, but highly readable book on the politics of Australian football. Linnell used a massive amount of primary research data to tell the story of how the Victorian Football League (VFL), the most powerful Australian football competition in Australia, was transformed into a national competition. A combination of newspaper articles, club and central administration documents, and 140 in-depth interviews with football officials ensures that this story is both credible and revealing.

According to Linnell, the initial impetus for the restructuring of the VFL came from Allan Aylett, a former North Melbourne player and club president, who was elected as VFL President in 1979. Aylett brought to the VFL not just a rampant enthusiasm but also a grand vision for the game. Linnell divides this vision into four parts. The first part involved a ground rationalisation program

that meant most clubs were encouraged to play their 'home' games at venues some distance away from their traditional home ground. The three designated Melbourne grounds were the Melbourne Cricket Ground, VFL Park (which was renamed Waverley Park in the 1990s), and Carlton's Princes Park (renamed Optus Oval). The second part involved an expanded role for merchandising, which meant that for a price, product and service suppliers could use the VFL name and logo in their advertising. The third part involved an overhaul of the decision-making processes and administrative structures of the VFL. In 1984 the Board of Directors, who comprised representatives of each of the twelve clubs, was replaced with an 'independent' Commission whose members were appointed by the clubs, but who had no allegiance to them. The final part involved the interstate expansion of the VFL, and the gradual formation of a national competition, the Australian Football League (AFL).

Linnell reminds the reader that the implementation of this vision needed the support of club officials and VFL bureaucrats, and he spells out in graphic detail who they were, and what they did. It becomes a 'who's who' of Melbourne's business community. In the early 1980s Ian Rice, Lindsay Fox, Randal Macdonald, and Bob Ansett were all club presidents, and each in their own ways sought to commercialise the game. They were joined by Ron Casey, Leon Weigard and John Elliott soon after. However, Linnell leaves no doubt that the major impetus for transformative change came through the Commission, and in particular its two business strategists, Peter Scanlon and Graeme Samuel. Scanlon and Samuel were instrumental in appointing Ross Oakey as Chairman of the Commission, and admitting the West Coast Eagles and Brisbane Bears to the competition. This all happened in 1986 and Linnell sees it as the signifying event in the transition from 'a 12-team suburban based competition into the richest most powerful national sport in Australia'.

Linnell does not stop there. He also provides a detailed account of the game's commercial successes and failures along the way to the maturation of the national competition in 1994, when Fremantle Dockers were admitted. They include the bizarre rise and fall of Geoffrey Edleston and the Sydney Swans between 1985 and 1988 and the massive increase in the TV rights fee paid by Channel 7 in 1987. Linnell also examines the Fitzroy/Footscray merger fiasco of 1989, the collapse of Christopher Skase and the Brisbane Bears in 1990 and the fight to see which South Australian club was invited to enter the AFL in 1991. Finally, Linnell discusses the ever increasing power of the Commission and the 1993 decision by clubs to give it complete authority to set the directions for the game into the new millennium.

Linnell has written a definitive expose on the AFL and how it operates. He demonstrates that the fan has virtually no say in how the game is run, or its strategic management. Rather, power rests with a few senior club officials, the

Commission members and the Channel 7 television network. At the same time. Linnell notes that club members have shown their collective efforts can, for a short time at least, keep a team in the competition. However, Linnell does not pretend to look in detail at fans and club members, and their role in setting the agenda for the clubs and the Commission. This could be the theme for another book. In the meantime. I recommend Linnell's book unreservedly.

Bob Stewart
Department of Human Movement, Recreation and Performance
Victoria University of Technology