

mindful of the fact that this ‘murkiness’ is not only the result of a shortage of empirical detail or of gaps in the historical narrative. Instead, the more striking underdevelopment resides in the theoretical and conceptual realms. One major challenge confronting publications like *Football Studies* is to advance our knowledge in these areas.

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Robin McConnell, *Inside the All Blacks*. Auckland: Harper Collins, 1998. 279 pp. \$NZ 39.95.

The ambiguities and contradictions of this book are enormous. At the heart is the question of audience. The audience for rugby books in Aotearoa/New Zealand is a hard one to identify. McConnell seems to have recognised this problem of audience in preparing this book, but he has not, alas, cracked the issue. As a result, *Inside the All Blacks* is a wasted opportunity. Instead, in trying to address the contradictions of the audience for rugby books, McConnell has responded by writing in a style that complicates the contradictions. Equally importantly, McConnell appears as a beholden and unwilling to offend interloper in his own text.

The ‘blurb’, obviously written before the 1998 season, promises ‘a unique insight into how the All Black tradition is handed on and why the All Blacks have become the world’s greatest rugby team’. Scepticism about publishers’ hyperbole shifted to concern when former All Black Colin Meads opens his foreword by stressing the need to respect the traditions of the All Blacks, and closes by commending the book as ‘realistic’ but non-sensational. Enough words there to trigger worries before the first three pages are concluded.

McConnell lived and toured with the All Blacks for three years as part of his PhD research in sports management. He got places no other non-player has been: the Captain’s night-before-the-test team talk (from which even the Coach and Manager are excluded); the pre-match dressing room; nearly the back seat of the team bus – mythologically, every boy’s dream. He is in a unique position to provide some serious and significant insight into the way in which an elite rugby team is managed, organised and lead to sporting success. As he teaches sports management, this is not an unrealistic expectation.

There is certainly some of the expected team dynamic and management material included, but it is often poorly developed and inadequately illustrated. It is almost as if McConnell was scared of seeming too pointy-headed for the rugby book audience as perceived either by him or by Harper Collins’ editors. From time to time a table or series of bullet points is used to identify a series of

characteristics of management and leadership. McConnell's presentation of management traits, and the content of the discussion, is akin to much popular management writing and a number of management textbooks.

The text is disjointed and often unconnected. McConnell needed to work the interview material more rigorously to develop a mellifluous text: there are many series of disturbingly repetitive quotations, and too many quotes are left to speak for themselves. The chapters are often unconnected and gradually cumulate to a finale, but the crescendo is slow and not at all obvious and the point more piano than forte. When it finally arrives, it is a disappointment. There is so much evidence in the book that something more should have been possible. For the record, the point appears in the final chapter: the All Black tradition is strong and vibrant, but rugby is in a period of change as it increasingly commercialises and the elite is becoming increasingly separated from the clubs.

Yet, none of these is the biggest problem. McConnell appears as if in awe of these giants among New Zealand men. Players are referred to by nicknames, 'Kamo', 'JT', 'Foxy', 'Loey', 'JK'. This is the key code indicating a target audience: male fans, men who want to be one of these giants but the closest they get is shouting encouragement to their 'mate', the star, from the stand or the settee. His text is peppered with expressions of disbelief that his opinion would be sought, even though he teaches sports management and was engaged in management-linked research at the time. These traits point to a disturbing and deep-seated anti-intellectualism characteristic of sports writing in Aotearoa/New Zealand (and elsewhere). Although there is much to disagree with in his work, a series of books and articles by Spiro Zavos shows that accessible writing and anti-intellectualism are not mutually exclusive. McConnell and others would do well to look at his work, and then find ways to improve on it. Instead, we get his response to Jean-Marie Brohm's noted observation that rugby is 'a text book case of tolerated violence, and the deliberate cultivation of brutality': 'Mon Dieu, mate!'(p81) He makes no attempt to engage with the specifics of the comment (other than to note Brohm's Marxist perspective, enough to render Brohm a non-entity for most readers).

There is stylistically little in *Inside the All Blacks* that is a significant shift from a plethora of other rugby books. There are, however, three sections that are new, useful or significant. Two chapters, comprising about a third of the book, are drawn from McConnell's field notes for the weeks before two significant test matches. These give an insight to the patterns of those weeks, to training regimes, to the demands on players and other team members. These chapters humanise the players (despite McConnell's awe) and make very clear that this is a job, this is hard work: they make obvious the significance of professionalism in elite sport.

The final chapter is an intervention musing on the ‘where to from here’ question as the disjuncture between club and elite rugby grows. It sets the scene clearly. He points to the parlous situation of club and rural rugby, an issue becoming more significant as the New Zealand Rugby Football Union grapples with its future and its base. He suggests that the changing ethnic composition of elite rugby needs to bring about changes in management and leadership practices (as Maori and Pacific Island players increase in proportion to their populations and the rugby playing population). He notes that women’s rugby receives minimal support and profile from the NZFRU, while Maori media in particular lift its profile. All this, however, is lost in the valorisation of tradition that has not yet been obliterated by professionalism.

There are hints of something much better in this book, if only McConnell and his publishers had considered that it might be possible to get beyond rugby introspection to link the game and its management to its social context. The final chapter on the professional condition points to the issues, and McConnell has tantalising hints the whole way through. During a discussion of a Parliamentary reception on 3 June 1992 McConnell notes: ‘There is red and white wine, beer and fruit juice. (It seems obvious to me that the Maori and Island players tend to stay in a group towards the entrance end of the foyer: Michael Jones, Inga, Robin Brook, Eroni Clarke, Olo Brown.) The team is dressed for the parliamentary visit . . .’ (p 34). There is no indication of what this parenthetical aside might mean or whether management should have seen and done anything. This is symptomatic of the entire book: McConnell seems so in awe of the team and so beholden to the NZRFU and the All Blacks for letting him, the impostor, in that he is unprepared to criticise. *Inside the All Blacks* is missing its subtitle: *The Semi-Official Don’t-Rock-the-Boat History of the Making of a New Zealand Rugby Tradition*. Had he problematised his relationship with the NZRFU, with the team and with the text he could have produced a much stronger, more challenging and exciting book. Instead, we get bland beholden anti-intellectualism. Rugby fans deserve more.

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John Nauright and Timothy J. L. Chandler (Eds), *Making Men. Rugby and Masculine Identity*. London: Frank Cass, 1996. 260pp. Reprinted and updated 1999. £17.95; US\$24.95; A\$39.95pb; £35 hb.

This compact anthology is an impressive collection of essays that explore, in a loose but sensible chronological fashion, the historical links between