

BOOK REVIEWS

Tingay, Lance, *History of Lawn Tennis in Pictures* (London: Tom Stacey Ltd., 1973)

The History of Lawn Tennis was obviously a labour of love for the author, Lance Tingay. The result is a book that has value for both the aficionado of tennis and the sport historian. For the tennis buff the outstanding selection of pictures provides a catalogue of names, places, and significant events that make tennis history. Tennis is a sport dominated by great individuals rather than teams or places. This domination is reflected in the selection of pictures, 130 of which depict the great individuals who have contributed so much to the game. The other 59 pictures present a collage of significant events, social attitudes, and the role of Wimbledon and Forest Hills in the growth of tennis. For the tennis fan this book provides an accurate account of the individuals and places that have contributed to the growth of tennis and will thus stimulate nostalgic memories of past events.

It is unusual to find a book which appeals both to the layman and the more serious student of sport history. However, in this instance Lance Tingay through his own immersion in and knowledge of the game has presented, through his selection of pictures and the written analysis, a most interesting and informative history of the game. His division of tennis history into five distinct eras gives the reader a framework for analysis and also a rationale for the divisions. Although these divisions may be somewhat simplistic their heuristic value is obvious. Tingay explores first the Genesis of the Sport to 1877 (p. 8-23), then Tennis Grows Up, 1877-1914 (p. 24-43); The Golden Years, 1919-1939 (p. 44-73); The Growth of Professionalism, 1946-1967 (p. 74-93); and Tennis as Big Business, 1968-1972 (p. 94-120). The author uses this framework to enumerate the individual tennis players who have dominated the sport from its beginnings in the Victorian era to the present day. Spencer W. Gore, Tom Wilding, Suzanne Lenglen, Ellsworth Vines, Maureen Connolly, Rod Laver and others are analyzed as tennis players and as individuals who have brought distinct characteristics to the game. It is most appropriate that a history of lawn tennis should be dominated by individuals because it, more than many other sports, was created and nurtured by the emergence and development of successive individual stars who dominated the tennis scene for a few years before becoming a part of tennis history. Tingay has therefore through his selection of pictures and his account of

individual stars given us an accurate view of the history of lawn tennis—the centrality of the individual.

As with so many books of this nature the value to the historian lies not in the stated objectives of the author but rather in the hidden values that underlie the whole book. Lance Tingay, himself, represents the basic values of tennis and thus his selection of individuals, pictures, and events reflects certain social aspects of the game. In other words, although he does not set out to give a social history of tennis what, in fact, emerges are some fascinating insights into the very nature of tennis and the social milieu within which it was played. It was created, nurtured and played by the upper socio-economic elite and despite an apparent democratization in the post World War I era it remained solidly entrenched at its administrative level among a certain class of society. The dogged adherence to an outdated amateur code is concrete evidence of control by this group until the very recent past. The battle between professionalism and amateurism is revealed most clearly in both the text and pictures. It would be interesting to use this material as the basis for a deeper analysis of the real nature of the professional amateur conflict.

Secondly the pictures reveal the vast social changes that have taken place with respect to sport. For instance women's place in the sport of tennis. An analysis of the playing dress of women from May Langrishe in 1879 to Chris Evert in 1971 reveals clearly the great change in women's tennis. It would appear from the pictures that the real change took place in the post World War I era. Certainly the style of tennis exhibited by Suzanne Lenglen in 1920 (p. 45-46) would not have been acceptable 20 years earlier.

Thirdly the dominant position of Wimbledon in the annals of tennis is illustrated by the fact that 95 of the pictures have captions referring to Wimbledon. Wimbledon symbolizes the whole history of tennis; the upper class amateur concept of tennis; the persistent interest of the Royal Family both as spectators and participants, the entrenched antiprofessional attitude of the exponents of amateurism, and the conservative nature of the tennis moguls.

These are but three examples of the type of information that can be gleaned from this book. It is replete with useful information and understandings which come only from a lifetime's immersement in the sport. Even though my personal preferences are against pictorial histories I find that this is an exception. It is far more than a hastily compiled set of pictures loosely tied together with a narrative; it captures the essence of tennis while at the same time providing a vivid and readable history of the game. A most worthwhile addition to any sport historians library.

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