

Mendenhall, Thomas C. *A Short History of American Rowing*. Boston: Charles River Books, 1981. Pp. xi, 124. Glossary, bibliography, race results, illustration. Paper. \$7.95. Dear, Ian. *The America's Cup: An Informal History*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1980. Pp. 193. Index, statistics, illustrations. \$19.95.

The America's Cup and *A Short History of Rowing* are informal histories written by and for enthusiasts of water sports. These books might well serve as coffeetable books as they have exceptional illustrations and handsome covers.

Ian Dear, a free lance writer, educated at the rowing schools of Morden and Pangbourne, is the yachting enthusiast. He has written a social/technological history of that international prize, *the America's Cup*, given this name because the first winner was the schooner, "America." The book chronicles the Cup races from 1851 through 1977. The America's Cup belongs to the New York Yacht Club which intermittently received challenges, increasingly in the 1970's. The challengers have been primarily Great Britain and the Commonwealth countries.

The improving technology of marine construction and the new materials available continually changed the sport, which Dear traces without undue detail. These technical improvements required rule changes, evoking disagreements between competitors. The monograph emphasizes the people involved, a complex of owners, designers, builders and crews whose constant squabbles and charges of unsportsmanlike behavior enlivens the book.

A book of less than 200 pages, *The America's Cup* constitutes a good introduction for students of sport history to one of the major water sports. The author briefly sets the competition in its wider social setting, noting the deterrent effect of wars on racing and the changing types of owners of racing yachts from the Vanderbilts to the contemporary television station owner, Ted Turner.

The book does not have footnotes although Dear states in his text that most of his references are housed at the New York Yacht Club; he does tell which newspapers or books his numerous quotes come from but cites no specific clues as to years, volumes, pages or dates. Statistics on the challengers and defenders are given in the back of the book.

T. C. Mendenhall, former president of Smith College and much welcomed awards-banquet speaker, is the author of *A Short History of Rowing*. Originally commissioned by the United States Olympic Rowing Committee, the text was written to acquaint oarsmen with the background of their sport. The text is quite brief, starting with the English origins of competitive rowing on the Thames, the American professionals of the 1870's, the amateur clubs, the rise of college rowing and the development of the America style. The final chapter is given over to the 20th century when the major style changes have come from Karl Adam at Ratzeburg, West Germany. The Ratzeburg style adjusts rowing techniques to the new technological developments in craft construction.

Dr. Mendenhall is himself an enthusiastic oarsman, so to aid and interest the general reader, he has included much paraphernalia to help the uninitiated understand rowing. He provides a glossary of rowing terms, which fortunately are not necessary to the understanding of his text, and he has a bibliography of both rowing histories and monographs on rowing. Race results of the major competitions in the United States are given from their inception through the 1979 season. Thus the book is useful even without the text.

The essence of *A Short History of Rowing* is an introduction to the sport both for oarsmen and the general reader unfamiliar with rowing. Since rowing has had a revival, especially in high schools and colleges in the last twenty years, professional sports historians will experience an increasing need for competence in this under-emphasized field. Dr. Mendenhall's articles over the last few years in "The Oarsman" on the famous scullers and famous coaches can supplement this history. Undoubtedly the book will be the standard monograph on rowing for some time to come and updates the last history of rowing published fifty years ago (Robert F. Kelley, *American Rowing*, New York, G. P. Putman, 1932.)

The author has pointed out to me an inaccuracy on p. 39. The "Grand Finale Women's Singles" is erroneously entitled the "Grande Finale Women's VIII." In the Harvard-Yale Races (pp. 55-59) a Harvard oarsman who rowed both the 1973 and 1974 races asserts the course was in both cases upstream, not downstream as Mendenhall's sources contend.