

Harte, Chris. *Two Tours and Pollock*. Adelaide: Sports Marketing, 1988. Pp. 320. Photographs, appendix.

Newspapers around the world front paged the fact that in early February 1990, Nelson Mandela, the symbol of unyielding black resistance to apartheid, would be freed after more than 27 years in prison. President F. W. deKlerk was

quoted as saying that this event would “bring us [South Africans] to the end of a long chapter.”

To continue de Klerk’s analogy, the definitive chapter and/or history of sporting boycotts and their impact on South African society, culture and ideology remains to be written. Just what effect sporting contacts or sporting isolation have had on this beautiful country where 5 million whites have held sway over 27 million blacks may forever remain unclear. Certainly the reverberations of the 1976 New Zealand All Blacks rugby tour to South Africa caused the massive Olympic boycott of black African countries that, temporarily, seemed to threaten the future of the Olympic movement itself. The boycott or “building bridges” strategy (coined and conceptually articulated so brilliantly by Richard Thompson in *Retreat From Apartheid*) seem to have been one of those profound issues that scars the personal and national psyche and polarizes on a number of levels—society, state, community, club and household. Certainly the 1981 Springboks rugby tour of New Zealand divided the country and effectively shattered the myth of the “land of the long white cloud” as an egalitarian, bi-cultural, Pacific paradise.

In the days following Mandela’s release it has been a fascinating exercise to see the shifting perspectives on the positive through to negative aspects of contacts, be they economic, social, cultural or sporting, with South Africa. Mandela himself has been quoted as saying, “To lift sanctions now would run the risk of aborting the process toward the complete eradication of apartheid.”

Chris Harte, a 43 year old Australian sports writer, notes in his introduction that:

This [*Two Tours and Pollock*] is not a political work. It is a cricket story with many sociological observations thrown in for good measure. I have had the chance to debate the tragedy that is South Africa with individuals holding views and opinions from all sides. This then is my historical record of two unauthorized cricket tours of South Africa.

Despite Harte’s home spun philosophy, “Stick to cricket and you won’t get into trouble,” it should be noted that in January 1990 the most serious riots in over a year took place in South Africa triggered by the tour of a group of “name” professional cricketers.

Two Tours and Pollock describes two rebel (in other words professional cricketers who went against the advice of their Australian Cricket Board) cricket tours by a group of athletes bolstered by signing two-season contracts of \$A200,000. For many of these cricketers it was a windfall nearing or at the finish of a distinguished career.

The book is really in three sections. There is part one, with the first tour results beginning November 9, 1985 and ending February 3, 1986. Another part, reviews the second tour from November 14, 1986 to January 27, 1987. A third section spotlights the swan-song of South African cricketer Graeme “The Prince” Pollock.

It is doubtful if the Australian tourists joined the ranks of cricketers’ immortals, Pace bowlers Hogg and Alderman did not eclipse the memories of a

Lindwall or a Lillee. Smith, Dyson, and Wessells were no Bradman, Simpson or Lawry. Kim Hughes captained bravely, however, and in the first test series, two tests were drawn and the final one was a win for South Africa by 188 runs. On the second tour (four test matches) three games were drawn with the South Africans triumphing in the first test by 49 runs.

The chapter headings chart the uneven and, at times, jumbled rush of words, symbols and ideas. Chapter four entitled "Geeps and Squizzy," gives a good illustration of Harte's enthusiasm and unrestrained exuberance. With some disciplined re-writing and rigorous editing the *Adventure/Hotspur* prose would have had much greater impact. This is not to downplay Harte's style of writing. He is unpretentious and there is no attempt at being a Neville Cardus or C. L. R. James clone. Not for Harte the measured, softness and sparseness of a John Arlott. Harte wants to tell it all-and does.

At the Castle Corner section of the ground, full of colored spectators, the chants of Hughes-Hughes-Hughes fill the air, as shot after shot brought forth runs. Eventually the crowd started chanting "C'mon Aussie, C'mon," led by a group of expatriate Australians, fully at home waving a large "Boxing Kangaroo" flag and drinking Fosters beer. Hughes cameo innings, of 61, with five fours and a huge six over long-on ended when he chopped a ball from Stephen Jefferies into his stumps. The crowd rose as Hughes returned to the pavilion. He could not hide his grin of satisfaction, for it was all beginning to slot into place.

For cricket aficionados, Harte chronicles the social and sporting nuances of the life-style of the rebel tourists in great detail. General readers and the sports historian will probably feel less excited by his account. Nevertheless, as was pointed out at the beginning of this review, the definitive history of sporting boycotts and sporting contacts with South Africa has yet to be written and, when it is, works such as Harte's, when they are analyzed, will be invaluable primary sources.

One minor gem is the account of Graeme Pollock, the great South African master batsman, and his final innings. Pollock first played for his country in 1960 when he was 16. Harte was there when Pollock aged 43 came out to bat in 1987 against Australia in his last game. Pollock was very nearly out with his first ball. A rising delivery from Hogg that was edged and nearly caught by the wicket keeper. Then Pollock took command. In his innings he scored his 20,800th run and was out eventually for a magnificent score of 144. Harte, this time, keeps it simple and nicely highlights the humanity of heroics:

As he walked back to the dressing room, Rod McCurdy on the mid-wicket boundary walked over to him applauding. "Well done mate" he said, "and thanks." Pollock smiled and then looked straight ahead.

Nearly, but not quite in the same league as John Updike's, "Hub Fans Bid Kid Adieu," that moving tribute to Ted Williams' last moment of active glory on the baseball diamond.

Two Tours and Pollock suffers from too many words and long-winded descriptions of long forgotten games. There is a disappointing type-print and the photographs in quality and clarity are, at best, amateurish. Nevertheless,

buried in the 300 hundred plus pages are some nuggets that will enhance future socio-cultural studies of South African sport. For, the importance and ideological resonance of sport, to especially the Afrikaner community, is enormous. Harte writes:

. . . South African Airways flight captain Naas gave the cricketers an emotional farewell over the intercom [after landing in Australia]. “To Kim Hughes and his team for having the courage to tour our beautiful country, thank you” he said. “Good luck for the future and God bless.”

Eastern Illinois University

Scott A. G. M. Crawford