

Chris Harte, *The Fight for the Ashes 1982-83*, the author, Adelaide, 1983, pp.246, \$4.95 paper. Available from the author, G.P.O. Box, 696, Adelaide 5001.

'The hottest cricket in a hundred summers' was the PBL marketing slogan for the 1982-83 Australia versus England test series, Chris Harte prefers to maintain the P.F. Warner tradition of 'The Fight for the Ashes'.

Harte has written a virtual ball by ball account of the test series in which Australia regained the Ashes and then proceeded to defeat England and New Zealand in the World Series Cup. The book's duplicated format does not make for easy reading but this is the consequence of an unnamed Australian publisher dropping the project at the last moment. To his credit Harte decided to engage in a bold piece of self-publishing.

The book is written in the mould of the traditional tour book which was much more common in the period from 1920 to 1960. But is there a market for such works today? I have grave doubts when there is extensive television, radio, newspaper and magazine coverage of major test series.

For a contemporary tour book to be both interesting and saleable to a broad cricketing public it must contain more than the playing details. In my opinion the best tour book of recent years was Scyld Berry's *Cricket Wallah - with England in 1981-82* which contained some memorable passages about Ranji, cricket's wide-spread popularity in India, and working conditions in bat and ball factories.

During the 1982-83 Australia-England tour there were a number of important and controversial issues which Harte mentions in passing. For example he comments that there were behind-the-scenes moves to organise a rebel tour to South Africa. Harte names Bruce

Francis, the former NSW player, and Hugh Tayfield as the prime organisers who guaranteed \$100,000 to any test player who would undertake a five week tour. A number of Australian players went so far as to sign contracts but withdrew when the Australian Cricket Board threatened legal action. Harte declines to name the culprits.

The growing commercial sponsorship of matches and the players themselves could hardly be ignored. The JVC promotional launches in every state for the England team apparently became 'quite burdensome'. Occasional references are also made to the ongoing dilemma of tobacco sponsorship.

Other more general issues such as crowd violence, on-field player behaviour, the decline of sportsmanship, falling attendances for non-international fixtures, slow over rates, one day versus test cricket and the frequency and length of tours are referred to but not really discussed.

The text is enlivened by some ephemeral statistical information. For example, Wessels maiden test hundred was the 1500th century in the history of test cricket or that England bowled their 1000th no ball against Australia during the series,

Having been produced in a signed limited edition of 400 copies this book is clearly intended for the devotee but does it herald the near-extinction of the more traditional tour book?

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