

Bernard Whimpress, *The South Australian Football Story*. South Australian National Football League, Adelaide, 1983, Illus., pp.278. \$20.

Bernard Whimpress is to be commended for this valuable addition to the literature on Australian Rules Football - a field dominated by club histories written from a Strongly partisan approach. His book is objectively written and caters for a variety of interests ranging from the general football follower through to the growing band of sports historians.

The book is lucidly written, well illustrated and presented, so the story can be taken up at many points without loss of detail. The reader with only a few minutes to spare can delight in thumbing through the illustrations and their informative captions or in looking up an odd fact or two in the appendices.

The first part of the book deals chronologically with the development of the game from the 1840s to the present in seven separate eras each of about twenty years. The narrative then concentrates on themes such as the administration of the game, its rules, umpiring, the growth of professionalism and the like. Part two contains concise histories of the ten major clubs; part three deals with great players and personalities, and the book is rounded off with a comprehensive reference section.

The book goes further than merely describing football and footballers, and contains some interesting judgements by one who was closely associated with the management of the game in South Australia. It looks at the social, economic and demographic conditions of the times and how they influenced and interacted with the development of the game. In parts these comments are a little trite and tend to present the eras of development as more watertight than they probably were. It would have been better if the book had concentrated more on the chronological approach and combined or eliminated some of the specialised chapters. Separate consideration of the rules, umpiring, administration, notable administrators, great players, Magarey Medal winners etc., is hardly warranted. Furthermore the reader at times is obliged to backtrack when finding some important aspects of the game's development dealt with in one of these specialised chapters.

Overall there is a lack of balance in the treatment of the story. This is most apparent in the earliest periods but progressively less so later, and the period from around World War I onwards is first class. Five pages are devoted to 1877 but the next 19 years are summarily considered. Only two players are mentioned for this era when South Australia had many star players in inter-colonial contests - Alf Bushby, Charles Fay, Alf Graynor to name just a few.

Some confusion arises with the occasional use of local jargon. It would also seem desirable to have more about the interaction with the game's development in other states - particularly Victoria and especially where South Australian developments paved the way. It is clear that in the earliest years, football was more advanced in South Australia due to the enterprise of Adelaide merchant, John Acraman, who imported footballs, erected goal posts and arranged some games in 1854. That is, four years before Thomas Wentworth Wills' letter was published in *Bell's Life of Victoria* on 10th July 1858.

Overall this original book will stimulate interest in a subject which has been sadly neglected by researchers over the years.

Rex Harcourt
Melbourne Cricket Club