

AUSTRALIAN SPORT 1984: A BARRACKER'S* VIEW**

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I guess for most sporting Australians the highlight of 1984 was Los Angeles, but sport was in the news almost from the time we'd got over first footings and settled back to watch the New Year's Test against Pakistan: on 2 January Greg Chappell announced his retirement, to be followed next day by Dennis Lillee and soon after that by Rod Marsh. Each made his Test debut against England in 1970-71, each played a significant part in the successes of Australian cricket in the 1970s and in the World Series transformation of the game for international player and nationalist spectator alike, and each, characteristically, now made a final contribution to an Australian victory. Chappell's 182 and three catches took him to batting (Australian Test) and fielding (World Test) records. Lillee's eight wicket haul included both Pakistani openers in the first innings and the last four wickets of the match. Marsh held catches to finish, like Lillee, with 355 Test victims (records again). Noting cricket administrator R.J. Parish, in the 1984 *Wisden*, attesting to public opinion polls attesting to cricket as the most popular sport in Australia, it is proper for *Sporting Traditions* to acknowledge their class and achievement. We shall

* barrack jeer at, tease; barrack for (Aust.) support, encourage (team etc.), especially by shouting or cheering (from The Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary, 1984). I have been helped in this review by information supplied by Ken Norris, Dene Moore, Robyn Duff and Frank Pyke; they are not to be held responsible, of course, for the opinions expressed by this barracker.

** The second in an annual commissioned series which it should be emphasised present the personal views of the author which are not necessarily endorsed by the Society or the editorial board. It is not intended to be comprehensive, but merely highlight those features of sport in 1984 which the author felt to be of interest. Comments and criticisms are welcomed.

miss the cool elegance of the one, the technique, fire and courage of the second, the athleticism and rumbustious aggression of the third.

Whether Kim Hughes will miss Lillee and Marsh in particular is more problematical. At the year's end came the second great cricket retirement of 1984, Hughes's from the Australian captaincy after losses to the West Indies both there and here, citing as the cause 'constant speculation, criticism and innuendo by former players and sections of the media over the last four or five years'. Whatever the defects of Hughes's qualities - notably impulse, which it should be remembered also gave us *that* square drive in the 1980 Centenary Test at Lords - there can be little doubt that he has been one of the victims of the World Series Australian Cricket Board reorganization of Australian cricket over the last five years. Peace there may have been declared by the administrators in 1979, but one strongly suspects an uneasy truce (?ex-WSC, non-WSC) in the dressing-room. To this Hughes barracker (in the Australian English sense of shouter for) the other Hughes barrackers (in the sense of jeerers at) seemed to include Lillee and Marsh (both as player-memoirists and former-player-memoirists), Innuendo Ian, and, sadly, Alan McGilvray, who in his last Test season as ABC commentator was gratuitously pompous about the 'boy' who wouldn't take his advice. Nor was Hughes well served either by the periodic absences of Greg Chappell, who almost became the Clayton's Captain, or at the end by the kind of support given by ACB chairman Fred Bennett ('I haven't seen anything which I thought was unfair, but then I don't read all of the comment in all of the papers'). That the media and ACB treatment of Hughes was close to shoddy might well explain the enormous feeling Australian cricket crowds displayed for him early in 1985. It is perhaps also significant that the most sympathetic television commentator was Bill Lawry (sacked in 1971) and that the most balanced and penetrating analysis of the whole affair came from the unbiased English player-writer Peter Roebuck, in the *National Times* in December.

If the media disappointed some over Hughes, its performance at Los Angeles was solidly professional, certainly by comparison with the American chauvinism that accompanied television coverage of the Winter Olympics at Sarajevo. There was enthusiasm in

abundance at Los Angeles in July and August, notably from swimming coach Lawrie Lawrence after Jon Sieben's stunning last lap to win the 200 metres butterfly, Dick Mason at the basketball, and the anonymous hoarse voice (was it coach Charlie Walsh?) urging Australian cyclists Kevin Nichols, Dean Woods, Michael Turtur and Michael Grenda towards the gold medal in the team pursuit. But it must be said that Lawrence's infectiousness was democratic - he seemed just as happy with Justin Lemberg's bronze in the 400 metres freestyle and with the 'PBs' (personal bests) of many of the team, wherever they finished - and the enthusiasm rarely threatened to degenerate into the 'Gold! Gold! Gold! apoplexy of the ubiquitous Norman at Moscow in 1980. In two happy cases the commentators made significant contributions to the crescendo of tension and subsequent elation that all barrackers look for: Bob Edmond's expertise at the weightlifting left us in no doubt what Dean Lukin had to do to win the super heavyweight division, and George Grljusich and Tim Lane were so splendidly prepared for the arithmetic and athletic climax to the heptathlon that we knew of Glynis Nunn's victory before she did. The joy of Our Glynis on the podium brought back memories for some of Our Marjorie (Jackson) in Helsinki and Our Betty (Cuthbert) in Melbourne, although there was a moving side too to Our Dean's shyness as 'Advance Australia Fair' was played.

For the record, the Olympic tally was twenty-four medals: the few gold already mentioned; eight silver (Glen Beringen, Suzie Landells, Karen Phillips, Mark Stockwell and the men's medley relay in swimming, the men quad sculls in rowing, Gary Honey in athletics and Robert Kabbas in weightlifting); and a dozen bronze (the tornado class in yachting, the men's rowing eight, the women's coxed fours, Glen Buchanan, Peter Evans, Justin Lemberg, Michelle Pearson, Robert Woodhouse and the men's freestyle relay in swimming, Barry Kelly and Grant Kenny in canoeing, Patricia Dench in shooting, and Gael Martin in athletics). There were also creditable (a word abused by some Olympics satirists) performances by Darren Clark and by the basketball and water polo teams to set against the agony of the hockey and the marathon. At least the men's hockey team, subsequently winner of the Champion's Trophy in Karachi, gave the Age cartoonist a wonderful opportunity for a characteristically Australian welcome home present (a Collingwood

guernsey for each member), while both Deek and his wife Gaylene Clews, who called the marathon, displayed stoicism and sportsmanship in large measure. Of all the Australian performances at LA it was hard to go past Sieben; he deservedly won the ABC's Sports Award for 1984.

The athletics, swimming and weightlifting performances doubtless pleased the Australian Institute of Sport, where all three sports have been part of the Institute's program since its 1981 opening. 1984 saw the arrival of the second director, polysport Dr. John Cheffers, some staffing turmoil (notably the departure of athletics coach Kelvin Giles), the addition of water polo and rowing to the Canberra operation, and the first decentralized unit, hockey in Western Australia. The AIS claimed a significant part (\$5.56 million in 1983-84) of the Federal government's commitment (around \$22 million, again in 1983-84) to sport and recreation through its allocation to the Department of Sport, Recreation and Tourism. Given Mr. Hawke's sporting enthusiasms no less than the evolution of Australian society, that commitment is likely to continue to increase and the allocation, it must be said, is not all spent on elite performers or on the national sports facilities program, the single largest sporting item in the Department's budget (\$8 million in 1983-84, \$10.5 million in 1984-85). There are programs of assistance for the disabled and for life-saving and water safety, while the operations of the sports development program include provision for assistance to 106 national sporting and recreation organizations in 1984-85, all of which must reach in some measure down to the ordinary suburban participant. The Department of Sport, Recreation and Tourism has also funded the sports studies course at the Canberra College of Advanced Education, which graduated its first students in 1984. The sport studies degree, unlike traditional physical education and human movement courses, has focused on administration and sports journalism as well as on coaching and sports science. Despite one movement into restaurant management, the overwhelming number of first graduates have placed themselves as television reporters, as sporting journalists on city and country newspapers, as media liaison officers, as administrators of regional and national sporting organizations, as coaching directors, and so on. With such a trained pool coming into the workforce the era of the

professional administrator must be just around the corner, if not already behind us. The tensions between volunteer amateur office holder (older? male?) and emerging professional administrator (younger? female?) are problems that need addressing.

Perhaps they will be addressed by the Australian Sports Commission, formally established in September 1984 and the most interesting of the Federal government's recent initiatives on sport. Under the chairmanship of Ted Harris, managing director of Ampol and erstwhile tennis commentator (if memory serves correctly), the Commission comprises twenty-one members drawn from the major Australian participation and spectator sports (for example, the three major football codes, cricket, bowls, racing, athletics, squash, swimming, netball, hockey), together with figures who have been prominent in the Confederation of Australian Sport, the Australian Olympic Federation, the AIS and the America's Cup challenge (none other than Mr. Bond). The Commission is to be established as a statutory body under legislation which, with the possible exception of the National Fitness Act 1941, is the first such legislation for sport in Australia. In time Sporting Traditions commentators might well judge the success of the ASC in achieving its objectives, but at least it has some: to increase the coordination of sports development policies and programs so as to improve Australian achievement in international sporting competition (to wit, better performances by the elite) and to increase the level of participation in sport by all Australians (I hope this means better pitches in Canberra in November, so that Maurie Mediums don't terrify ageing batsmen into retirement). In practice this means advice to the government (Federal) on policy and funding, fuller consultation with sporting bodies, development of research, and the generation and co-ordination of private sector funds for sport through a Sports Aid Foundation. Already the Commission has taken over the sports development program (which helps to employ some of those sports studies graduates) and the national athlete award scheme from the Department of Sport, Recreation and Tourism, and has established committees which reflect the Commission's allocation of priorities at its initial October meeting: children in sport, tax averaging, sports needs of the disadvantaged, and so on. We await with interest, etc. etc.

While on the subject of the elite - and with apologies to the Australian men's and women's underwater hockey teams, trampolinist Brett Austine, tennis player Mark Kratzman, squash player Chris Robertson and other world champions - 1984 was notable internationally not only for the Olympics but also for the Rugby Union grand slam by the touring Wallabies, who defeated England, Ireland, Wales, Scotland and the Barbarians in that order under coach Alan Jones. Whatever one thinks of the means by which predecessor Bob Dwyer was deposed earlier in the year, there can be no gainsaying the new coach. After a disappointing 2/1 series loss to the All Blacks in Australia, he presided over an arduous touring program in the United Kingdom and found the right combination to win the five important games. That right combination meant difficult decisions such as the omission of long-term Australian players, including Chris Roche and Michael Hawker. Mark Ella consolidated himself as one of the great five-eighths of rugby history, David Campese entranced yet again with his stepping, Roger Gould punted prodigiously, and Steve Williams and Stephen Cutler displayed steely resistance in the lineouts; but for me the great moment of the tour was the pushover try against Wales. While Tommy Lawton and Enrique Rodriguez remain Australians, it seems likely that 'ten-man rugby' will not have its special Australian meaning of the back three forwards and the seven backs.

In some eyes Rugby Union is an eastern Australian aberration characterized by internecine wrangling between public school 'rah rahs' supporting either the Blues or the Maroons. Yet it was through publicity that the Wallabies were transformed by triumph into a national team - and the first victims were, after all, the traditional enemy (hence also our pleasure at the Australian women's cricket team's series win over the Poms). But lest it be thought that in sport at least the tyranny of distance has been overcome - perhaps replaced by the tyranny of television - I suspect that Australian sport in 1984 remained characterized by regionalism as well as by nationalist attention to the Olympics, the-cricket, the Wallabies, Black Knight's Cup and the Fine Cotton ring-in; the last needs as analyst the Real (Al) McCoy, with or without footnotes. If future annual reviewers monitor the progress of the ASC, they might also monitor what sport in a year amounts to for the inhabitants of small country towns or city outer suburbs.

To the cricketers of Charters Towers, for example, is it the Brisbane Test, which they can possibly attend, or the Tests they can watch on television, or is it much more the annual Australia Day carnival, which attracts a hundred teams or more?

For this reviewer, as participant, 1984 meant a lost grand final in the Twos but heaps of runs after Christmas; as sports fan, not only the international and national events canvassed in previous paragraphs but also the triumph of the Canberra Cannons in the National Basketball League to set against the decline of the Canberra Arrows in the soccer. (The decline in support is such, Canberra satirist Ian Warden has suggested, that the Arrows are now informed of crowd changes just before they take the pitch.) As other examples of local events that point to a regional/sectional dimension to Australian sport one might mention the revitalization of Queensland rugby league, Canterbury's victory and Parramatta's dignity in defeat in Sydney, Essendon's revenge over Hawthorn in the VFL, and the Redlegs' surprise over the Magpies in Adelaide. I don't know what highlighted or characterized sport in 1984 in Tasmania, Western Australia or the Northern Territory; like Fred Bennett, I don't read all of the comment in all of the papers, But I also don't think it matters. Just as in the latter part of the nineteenth century nationalism was an amalgam of allegiances to a colony like New South Wales, an emerging Australia, even Britain itself, so in the latter part of the twentieth century it seems to one barracker possible to find a balance between playing and watching, between local, regional and national enthusiasms.

Finally, *Sporting Traditions* made its first appearance during the year as the journal of the Australian Society for Sports History. Vol. 1, No. 1 achieved a fine range of contributor, subject and historical period; one obviously approves also of the annual review of Australian sport! If I have a suggestion, it is that the Barrackers' Corner is not the place for statements like Scyld's Berry's *Cricket Wallah* bombarding readers 'with a morass of information unconnected with the subject'. Such statements are not merely silly, but run counter to what *Sporting Traditions* is trying to do. My other plea would be for the books section to be less encyclopedic and allow more time for longer, thoughtful

reviews of the important books (e.g. the reviews by Bob Paddick and Bill Mandle in the first issue). 'Academic' is not a dirty word; we can get the titbits from the newspapers and sporting magazines.