

Paul R. Bartrop, *Scores, Crowds and Records: Statistics on the Victorian Football League Since 1945*. History Project Inc., Kensington, 1984. Bibliog., pp. 186. \$9 (incl. postage), Available from Dr. J. McQuilton, History, University of NSW.

Researchers and sports followers in general are indebted to Paul Bartrop for this useful and convenient source book of the essential statistics of Victorian football since 1945.

The volume includes club scores and crowds round by round; end of season tables; Brownlow Medal winners and runners-up from 1924; leading goalkickers from 1897; club nicknames, colours and grounds and an annotated bibliography of some of the principal books written over the past 40 years.

In comparison with cricket, soccer and rugby, the library of Victorian football is decidedly thin: the bibliography consists of only nineteen volumes, and twelve of these have been written in the past decade. I am not entirely convinced by Bartrop's explanation that this dearth reflected the 'stability of the code' which 'created a contentment which denied the need for football literature other than training manuals or the occasional "great games/great players" popular history.' It is quite feasible that the working class followers of the VFL have been satisfied with magazines and tabloid coverage of the game (as have the followers of Rugby League in Sydney). But why haven't the more middle class

supporters of the game (which are considerable) demanded more substantial literary offerings? Why, too, has a 'new type of football fan' emerged in the 1970s who is more 'eager for details of the history and development of the sport?'

The volume is enhanced by an introductory essay which covers major football highlights since 1945 though Bartrop does not attempt to disguise his club allegiance: the 'fiercely determined' Saints played with great 'resolve' to win their one and only premiership in 1966 led by the 'dynamic' Baldock on the way to 'football immortality'. One can well understand this enthusiasm given that his tables show that St Kilda occupied the cellar eight times from 1946-83 which is well ahead of Hawthorn, Melbourne and North Melbourne, awarded the wooden spoon five times each.

The main value of this volume is that it integrates round-by-round and year-by-year results, which have already appeared in other volumes in more detail (quarter-by-quarter scores), with the crowds for each game and a total for each round. It is a pity, however, that Bartrop has provided no composite totals for the home and away games and the finals. Aggregate season totals would provide a handy guide to the general crowd trends. I spent an afternoon adding up his totals which reveal a steady growth in season crowd totals from 2.4 million in 1946 to a peak of 3.8 million in 1981 and a slight decline to 3.6 in 1983. The raw figures suggest that even though the VFL has suffered a crowd decline in the past few years it has fared much better than many other male team sports.

Bartrop has produced an invaluable reference volume. The raw material presented will be useful for individual club histories and for historians interested in comparative crowd studies, It is to be hoped that Bartrop will pursue his plans to produce a volume on VFL statistics for the period before 1946.

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