

Edwin Jaggard, *The Premier Club: Cottesloe Surf Life Saving Club's First Seventy Five Years*, Cottesloe Surf Life Saving Club, Cottesloe, 1984, pp.181. \$22.50.

Edwin Jaggard, a surfing enthusiast has produced a history of this club to celebrate its 75th anniversary. While he upholds the exalted image of the bronze surf life saver, who combines sport with community service, he does not ignore some of the occasional undercurrents of discontent and the operations of 'rule bending' parties. Historian Jaggard also looks at crises within the club such as problems concerning membership, facilities and financial viability. He also links the history of the club with the 'suburb which spawned it' in that the club was dominated by 'professional and businessmen' though tradesmen, labourers and others were also members.

Jaggard is well equipped to evaluate why the 'Premier Club' has had so much success. He has resided in the Cottesloe district for most of his life. Although he joined Cottesloe as a juvenile in 1950, he later transferred to rival club Swanbourne-Nedlands

where he won state honours as a swimmer, an 'R and R' champion, and a member of the senior boat crew. As the incumbent President of the Western Australian chapter of the Surf Life Saving Association of Australia, he is also well aware of the complexities of club administration and politics.

The book includes an eye witness account of the dramatic shark attack and death of Simeon Ettelson in November 1925. This event caused a sudden erosion of the great popularity of this beach. Ironically this tragedy focussed public attention on the needs of the life saving movement. Later storms and cyclone Alby (1978) threatened the very existence of the beach. Both these occasions helped to rekindle the 'self help tradition', which Jaggard argues has been an important theme in the club history, and impel the local council to give more support to projects such as the building of a groin and new club rooms.

Considerable attention is focussed on Don Morrison, who, at his peak, was the most outstanding surfer in Australia. In his glittering career he had four wins and was placed in all but two Australian belt race championships between 1948 and 1959. In his more general history of surf lifesaving in Western Australia, *A Challenge Answered* (1979), Jaggard has labelled this 'The Morrison Era'. Among the other leading club members discussed was Rodney Hounslow, one of the surf belt idols, whose success later turned sour. He was banned from competition in 1956 because he had accepted a 'few bob' on the side for professional swimming coaching.

What is perhaps missing is an assessment of how the popularity of other major summer sports, such as cricket and tennis, affected the fortunes of Cottesloe. Did the club lose talent to these alternative sports?

*The Premier Club* is a handsomely bound and carefully indexed book. Along with *A Challenge Answered*, it should be read by those who want to understand the changing role of sport in Australian society. Mechanised surf boats, paddle races, iron man events, now well established attractions of carnivals, were not held in 1909 when the club was founded. Even more far reaching is the sight of 'women patrolling the beaches and being forthright opinion-makers on committees'. As late as the 1970s there was a tenacious rear-guard action against women attending the Annual General Meeting but

by 1980-81 'the battle was over'.

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