

schoolboy rugby in Sydney is the GPS Competition and District Football really means the 'traditional' District Clubs. This leads Pollard to totally ignore the Mosman and Hawkesbury Agricultural College Clubs, for instance, because while they were formed prior to 1900 they did not become part of the District Scheme until the mid-1960s and were not 1st Division District Clubs.

This book would have been more comprehensive and valued had Pollard been able, even as appendices, to list the various clubs and schools throughout Australia who play rugby as well as details of the various competitions. The book however, is a quick reference book concerning mainly the game at the national level, with trimmings to market the book with as a wide an appeal as possible. The 945 pages (particularly those concerning every Australian Test Player) is a remarkable achievement in itself. It depends upon how useful the publication will be to the reader. Whether a reader will find Pollard's work a valuable reference book or alternatively get lost in its pages remains to be seen. An index would have assisted in guiding one through the maze. But who knows - fishing expeditions have proved very profitable to Pollard in the past.

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are invariably 'second-hand' accounts.

Peter Roebuck is a rare breed in that he has the ability and commitment to write his own books, to reflect on his experiences as a cricketer while still engaged opening the innings for his county, Somerset. *It Never Rains* is in fact a diary which he wrote during the actual county season. Well educated, with a First in Law from Cambridge, Roebuck writes with great wit, honesty, verve, and is a shrewd observer on how the game is now played.

Roebuck's first book *Slices of Cricket* is a collection of cricket stories and pen portraits which appeared in various magazines and were gathered together and augmented in book form. There is much in this book to delight the average fan who enjoys anecdotes, bizarre events and eccentrics: there are colourful stories about Norman Teer, the 'highest bowler' in Somerset who bowls teasing donkey-drops and about the eccentric R.J.O. Meyer; there are details of a cricket riot in Corfu and Roebuck bowling fast in Hong Kong; then there are accounts of close one day matches and getting lost with Vie Marks on the way to some cricket ground.

While the book tends to fall into a traditional genre of cricket writing, the celebratory collection of amusing anecdotes, some of the pen portraits of star Sussex colleagues, Richards and Botham, will be of interest to the more serious observers. There is a very telling account of how Botham descends on the Scottish village of Callandar like a 'baron of those wild medieval days' fishing for salmon for 12 hours and then drinking everyone under the table till very late at night before rising refreshed after a brief sleep.

Although Roebuck's first book won wide acclaim in cricket magazines, he himself was dissatisfied with some aspects of *Slices* in that he came to realise that he was furthering some of the charming and often seductive illusions about the game which was the stuff of much popular cricket writing. Roebuck believed he needed to write a second book to correct this 'fault' and to convey a more honest and frank assessment of the world of the cricket looked at from the inside.

The result is a far more impressive book than his first publication. It has just as much droll Roebuck humour as the first

volume: every park cricketer will be able to identify with some of Roebuck's early season problems when 'my drives all screwed through square leg like some hack golfer' and his reflection on 'a cussed game' which can provide you with 'glimpses of beauty' and then 'throws you back into the trough of mediocrity'. The real value of the book, however, lies in Roebuck's attempt to go beyond the shallow popular image what life is like for a county cricketer and deal with the problems and frustrations of being a professional sportsman, coping with success and failure, team relations, cricket morality and the changing structure of the game.

Roebuck provides some fine insights into the current game such as how cricket 'introverts' (like himself?) can find the game 'intensely challenging and utterly frustrating but who feel at ease in front of the public'; on the problems of adjusting from a Sunday League game to a quiet Monday County game; on the sparse stoical county crowd sitting patiently in raincoats, with flasks of coffee waiting for the heavens to relent; explaining why he probably doesn't have the ambition to push himself towards the highest level of cricket; elaborating how most Somerset players are far more prosaic than the popular image of cricketers 'as greedy fellows who frequent night clubs, pick up beautiful young ladies and dash about like prima donnas in sponsored cars'; and exploring the stresses and strains which result from sportsmen living in close proximity to each other for an entire season.

There are also, in this second book, some fine portraits of the stars, and the lesser lights, of the Somerset team, including an illuminating comparison between Richards and Botham. The whole demeanour of Richards 'is calculated to dominate the bowlers. When he cares about the game, Richards' every muscle intimidates his opponents. His face is screwed up with emotion, his body is taut with aggression... and his conviction that he will dominate is unshakeable for all to see'. Botham, by contrast, has no such depth of belief in himself'. After a West Indian tour Botham 'admitted to being shell-shocked, a concession that Richards would never have made'. Cricket to Botham is not so much a 'matter of pride, a test of courage and manliness'.

In many respects this welcome book represents a new genre in cricket, and sports, writing. Hopefully some of the other partici-

pants in modern sport will be inspired by Roebuck to write an honest and frank inside perspective.

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