

Jack Pollard (ed.), *After Stumps Were Drawn: The Best of Ray Robinson's Cricket Writing*. Collins, Sydney, 1985. Illus., pp.237. \$19.95.

Ray Robinson inspired much respect and affection in cricket circles. For example, Dennis Lillee and Rod Marsh - two unlikely 'Sentimental Blokes' - were so moved by his death that they placed an 'In Memoriam' notice in the *Sydney Morning Herald* while Sir Donald Bradman wrote of enduring memories of the finest of all Australian sporting journalists and a thorough gentleman'. Jack Pollard selected items for *After Stumps were Drawn* and his regard for Robinson's talents and character manifests itself in a lengthy introduction. This piece - perhaps the finest of all Pollard's voluminous sports writing - comments on the nearly 60 years that his friend devoted to cricket writing at the expense of his health, which was strained by the tension of meeting deadlines and his search for the apt word or phrase, and his domestic harmony, which was tested by his lengthy absences reporting on the game. The brotherhood of the sporting press box and Pollard's high esteem for Robinson is reflected in his writing on the last years of his colleague: Most Fridays I took him shopping, stacking up on tins of baby food, eggs and black currant juice, which was all his stomach would hold.

Pollard has selected 31 items from magazine and newspaper articles and from Robinson's five major books. Sources are only provided in a general way and individual items are not identified. This is irritating, although it does give the enthusiast the challenge to establish the date of each selection. There are also some errors in the book. A photograph (between pp.96-97) is captioned 'Sid Barnes and Don Bradman' whereas it appears to be Bradman and Jack Badcock. Hal Hooker (p.146) talks of learning from Hobbs and Hutton whereas it should be Hobbs and Sutcliffe.

These quibbles aside, it is a delight to see these examples of Robinson's art gathered together. The pattern of his writing is consistent. Facts, facts, facts packed together like a rich fruit

cake lightened by his intriguing use of phrases. I suspect that there is a little use of selective statistics but found it fascinating to read that Stan McCabe, when making his Test centuries, scored faster than Bradman (p.65). If the West Indies counted 25 bouncers in 40 balls bowled by Ray Lindwall to Everton Weekes in the 1951 Sydney Test (p.99), can we blame them if they have long memories?

And, of course, there is the 'Robinson esoterica': Martin Donnelly had the smallest ears in Test cricket (p.109) and Stan McCabe had small and uneven feet - one size 5, the other size 6 (p.64).

I wonder whether Australia will produce another cricket writer of the stature of Ray Robinson. A product of the harsh '20s, he had to 'stick to his last' - to the benefit of cricket. Perhaps, in a later age, he would have become a distinguished academic. Jack Pollard has summed up the man: 'he never relented in his devotion to his art - cricket writing. I believe his life was a triumph' (p.22).

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