

Charles Sale, *Korty: The Legend Explained*. Ian Henry Publications, Hornchurch, Essex, 1986 Illus. pp.162. \$24.95.

Printed in off-set by a small Essex publishing organisation, this muddled biography of Charles Jesse Kortright, of one of the great Essex cricketers and one of the fastest bowlers of the Golden Age, is the first book published by *Daily Express* journalist Charles Sale.

Unfortunately the book suffers from a great deal of padding, a good editor could have reduced the book by half. Another problem is that Sale includes much material which is spurious. Chapter One explores the history of Ingatestone, part of Essex where Kortright lived, as well as tracing obscure relatives (mainly by marriage) back to Saxon times. As Kortright's immediate family came from Denmark, these pages are of marginal interest. Chapter Two tests the patience of the reader even further, it examines some of the family hobbies which range from collecting hawks and falcons (AD 1157) and antiques from Rome and Florence (1844). Then there are some obscure references to the career of Sir Roger Casement, who might have been a distant relative of Kortright but was a 'relation' whom Kortright never met.

Chapter Three, at least, introduces some more pertinent material. Korty went to Brentwood School for one year and then moved to Tonbridge School best known, we are told, for producing Colin Cowdrey and a host of other cricketers. Sale, however, does not reveal much about Korty's school cricket, which is despatched in a few paragraphs, rather he drifts into pages of discussion of the first-class cricketers at these two schools.

Korty made his debut for the M.C.C. in 1893 and played 160 matches, over 14 seasons, for Essex County Cricket Club from this time. But it is difficult to follow his career because the ensuing chapters suffer from confusing chronology: first it's 1896, then 1893 and then back to 1898. There are some occasional good sections: there is an interesting and well rounded chapter on the 1896 season but immediately after there is, for no real reason, a potted history of roundarm bowling and references to novelist Jane Austen's nephew. There is another well written chapter on the 1898 season, with good detail on crowd incidents: this chapter, probably the best in the book, includes Korty's battles with and against W.G. Grace. After an early falling out, Korty eventually came to like W.G.

After retiring from county cricket Korty moved on to play country house cricket in the last days of the Golden Age. After that Kortright enjoyed golf despite his unpredictable temper and intolerant disposition.

Finally, the author hints about Korty's relationship with his sister, Caroline, with whom he lived for many years. Korty remained a life-long bachelor.

There are some inexcusable errors in this book with Bramhall (sic) Lane appearing in three places. There are also some rather fanciful, or at least unproven, suggestions. There is a gem on p.85 where the author, in whispering prose, lets the reader into a big secret. Did the reader know that Douglas Jardine once played golf with Kortright just before the infamous English tour of 1932-33? Could it just be, the author asserts, that Kortright gave Jardine the idea to bowl Bodyline? The author, in addition, does not always succeed in evaluating his subject critically. Sale praises Korty at one point for introducing new blood into the 1903 Essex side but Kortright really had little choice as many of the old players retired at this time.

Overall this is a poor biography, inadequately researched and overpriced. Much of the book is based on three items: Korty's article in *Wisdom* 1948; his obituary in the *Times* in 1952 John Arlott's interview with Korty in 1948.

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