

BARRACKERS' CORNER

This section considers barracking in both the Australian supportive and the English critical senses. We invite comments on articles or reviews in *Sporting Traditions*, but this corner is also open for readers' views on issues in sports history or contemporary sport.

The luxury of Barrackers' Corner is for an author to have the opportunity to reply to his review in the same edition of a publication in which his many hours of toil and sweat are dismissed and analysed in a few paragraphs.

Ray Crawford's view of Cricket Rebels is the best we have read so far. However his opinions are based on the final production. If only he had seen the authors in their state of frustration in mid-August 1985 when one of Sydney's top legal minds insisted they carve 22% from the original manuscript. Worse still: it was the best 22%.

"The truth is irrelevant when it comes to the Australian libel laws" we were told. So out went the double-dealings of Australian Cricket Board officials. "The fact you have proof that cricket identities 'X' and 'Y' had substantial cheques paid into their company accounts by 'Z' is not acceptable" the legal eagle said. "You know that 'Z' will sue you even though you know you are right because for him to lose that case will cost peanuts. For you to win the case will cost you your houses, chattels and probably jobs". We backed off very, very quickly. So for those reasons, Mr Reviewer, our story does seem rather hollow. Yet it is a story which had to be told.

A point is made in the first paragraph of the review regarding those who read quality newspapers being unsurprised by the book's contents. We agree; yet how many people in ordinary life actually read our 'scoops' in The Australian from January 1985 onwards? Most other newspapers rewrote our articles for their

readerships (and made some shocking errors in the translation from broadsheet prose to tabloid scandal) with Australian Cricket Board officials ringing us up to chummily ask what was going on.

The inclusion of the ACB contract is very relevant to the whole story. Forced on the players, against their will, just before leaving for the 1984 tour of the Caribbean, the contract was so appallingly written, it shows how easily the contracted players were confidently able to treat it with contempt.

Ray Crawford's last sentence is an obvious statement. My question to him is: 'If we wrote the reasons and motivations of the rebels for going to South Africa, who would pay our legal bills?'

Please do not dismiss our comments lightly, for there is absolutely no quarrel with Ray Crawford's review. We know much, much more about the growing cancer which is affecting Australian Cricket than we dare write.

Our minor expose of the tip of the iceberg (The Australian 16 August 1986) has resulted in our colleagues in press-boxes around Australia this past season being told of our 'unreliability', 'lack of loyalty' and worse.

Irrelevant of our personal opinions of them, Kepler Wessels, Kim Hughes, Graham Yallop and Bruce Francis are currently putting pen to paper. If (and it is 'if') their books see the light of day without court injunctions, part of the missing story will be told. But do remember one thing. If Watergate had happened in Australia, the law would have prevented the story being told.

We did our best with Cricket Rebels. The lawyers fees, having only just been finalised, took all of our royalties plus more. That was warning enough.

Chris Harte
Warwick Hadfield

I do not want to continue a long debate about the Collingwood Football Club. I would like to respond briefly to Richard Stremski's comments about my comments about *Kill for Collingwood*.

Richard Stremski suggests that I am somehow irritated or made indignant by his book. On the contrary, I enjoyed reading it, I have placed it on student reading lists and I have purchased copies as gifts for friends loyal to the Magpies. My review took issue with Stremski's account of the club. If that is journalistic practice rather than serious history then I am not a serious historian. For the record can I restate my central comments.

1. The book cannot be faulted for the detail and the rigour with which Stremski has investigated internal club affairs.
2. It may offend some one-eyed Magpie fans. But for many others it is the best thing to have happened since Collingwood won the 1958 flag.
3. Some of the emphasis on recent events tends to unbalance the book; it becomes more and more concerned with internal affairs as it proceeds. This is at the expense of a broader understanding of the history of social change in Melbourne.
4. The methodology makes it impossible for Stremski to investigate the *mythic* qualities of football. He tells us how Collingwood became great. He does not take up the cultural importance of the Magpie Myth. The Collingwood myth has never been the property of the club. It has been created within a broader culture. Since Stremski does not use the techniques of the social anthropologist or the cultural historian he cannot analyse how myths are created nor can he explain how they survive when the conditions which produced them have disappeared. The culture of the mass of supporters must be considered to solve these problems; considered not romanticized.
5. To suggest a different way of doing things is not to disparage the approach taken by Stremski. It is just to say that there is another way of doing things.

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