

World Series Cricket was a result of the success of cricket on television.

This is a stimulating book which is recommended even if it raises more questions than it answers. I hope that more researchers will follow Chandler's lead and explore these important issues, the construction and consumption of sport on television.

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Marc Fiddian, *PONSFORD AND WOODFULL: A PREMIER PAR TNEERSHIP*, The Five Mile Press, Fitzroy, 1988. Bibliog., illus., index, stats., pp.152. \$29.95

Despite the title, which hints at a study of the first-wicket stands that this pair of highly successful batsmen compiled, this book is in fact a double biography of Bill Woodfull and Bill Ponsford. The lives of both men are meticulously traced from birth to the end of their playing days, with a short eight-page chapter, 'Life Moves On', quickly bringing the story up to date from the mid-1930s.

The cricket careers of 'the two Bills' are carefully recorded, both in the first-class and club cricket arenas, in chronological order, game by game. The potential monotony of match descriptions is avoided by snippets of information pertaining to developments in their respective private lives, such as marriage, birth of children, and details of employment. Occasionally, too, the narrative is punctuated by references to newsworthy events away from the cricket field, so that, for instance, we are made aware of the impact of the depression while Ponsford and

Woodfull were at the height of their powers. Interesting footnotes also provide the opportunity for the author to digress (for example, when Jardine sent gifts to Oldfield's children after he had been hit at Adelaide in 1932-33) without interrupting the flow of the story. The prose is supported by some excellent glossy photographs and comprehensive individual statistics at both first-class and club level for each player. Given their great defensive qualities, I was interested and surprised to learn that Ponsford was bowled on 20 more occasions than Woodfull. (71 to 51) from an approximately equal number of first class innings.

The author acknowledges Bill Ponsford 'for his time and insight into his career' at the end of the book, but sadly, like Cardwell's biography of Hendry, few personal glimpses are reproduced in the narrative. Given the number of hours Ponsford spent in the middle grinding opposition bowlers into total frustration, there must surely be a sizable store of reminiscences at his disposal. Ponsford has, it is true, succeeded in keeping out of the public eye since his playing days, and it may be that Fiddian found the great cricketer unforthcoming about his experiences on the field. If not, an opportunity to share some memories of an important and fascinating era in Australian cricket has been missed.

The book does contain less of the times that the two batted together than I would have imagined. Of their great partnership of 375 against New South Wales in 1926, all that is said is '[On the second day] Woodfull, who opened with Ponsford, was the only batsman dismissed. He was out for 133, caught at the wicket off Andrews, when the total was 375.' Given that this is the only major record the pair achieved that has survived to this day, more might have been made of the partnership as it developed.

The statistical section does contain a list of the Century partnerships the two made together, and there is in the last chapter a discussion about the better Australian opening combinations since they retired, but the evidence presented is limited to individual records and some of the Century partnerships. No attempt has been made to calculate an average partnership for the various contenders for the title of 'best opening pair', so that the reader is deprived of the knowledge that the mean Test opening stand of Woodfull and Ponsford (42.95) generally suffers in comparison with the other pairs discussed, namely (Brown and Fingleton (63.75), Morris and Barnes (54.23), McDonald and Burke (39.62), Lawry and Simpson (59.23), Lawry and Redpath (43.33), Stackpole and Redpath (44.47), Wood and Laird (42.77) and Boon and Marsh (46.78). Perhaps, on the other hand, the author did work this out, but declined to publish it!

Overall, the book is an interesting, accurate and readable account of the careers of two great Australian cricketers, gleaned on the whole from published sources rather than personal contact.

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Gary Lester, *THE STORY OF AUSTRALIAN RUGBY LEAGUE*, Lester-Townsend Publishing, Sydney, 1988 Illus. pp. 288. \$35

In the introduction to this large format, 'coffee-table' styled book, the author states that 'it was never the intention here to write a book purporting to be the complete history of the game. He is true to his Word.