

**Craig Johnston with Neil Jameson, *The Craig Johnston Story: Walk Alone* (Sydney: Collins, 1989). illus., memorabilia, pp. 256. \$29.95**

Every male Anglo-Saxon child who has ever kicked a soccer ball in Australia has dreamt of playing first division football in England, being a member of a team which achieved 'the double' (First Division champions and winning the Football association Cup, and scoring the winning goal in a FA Cup Final at Wembley). Craig Johnston realised this dream. In a career spanning more than a decade with Middlesborough and Liverpool, Johnston was a member of Liverpool's 1985/6 championship double's side (only the third

occasion that such a feat had been achieved), and scored the goal that broke the deadlock when Liverpool defeated Everton 3-1 in the FA Cup Final. Craig Johnston is Australia's most famous and accomplished soccer player, a mantle he may be forced to wear into eternity unless Australia manages to achieve major success at international or World Cup level.

Together with journalist friend Neil Jameson, Johnston provides an account of what it is to live a dream, of his life and career in the upper echelons of English soccer. He inherited his love or obsession with the game from his father, who, at the age of twenty, travelled to Britain in the 1950s in an unsuccessful attempt to pursue a footballing career. Craig Johnston was a successful schoolboy player in the Newcastle area (a traditional nursery of Australian soccer talent), and after leaving school at fifteen twice (not once, but twice!) persuaded his parents to finance trips to England to trial with Middlesbrough. He eventually made his first team debut at seventeen in a fourth round FA Cup tie against Everton (Boro won 3-2). After establishing his career with Middlesbrough he transferred to Liverpool and was a member of the various sides which achieved so much success during the 1980s. Upon realising that he had lost his love of the game Johnston shocked the football world by retiring when his contract with Liverpool still had a year to run.

While Johnston provides information on key matches and highlights (and lowlights) of his career *Walk Alone* does not fit into what might be called the 'glory' model of most traditional soccer or sport autobiographies. This is essentially and basically an account of soccer as work - of the pressure, tension and insecurity associated with the lot of the professional footballer. Johnston provides details on the drudgery, humiliation and loneliness of life as a trialist/apprentice, the constant fear of injuries and how his career was almost destroyed by overtraining, the dangers associated with playing with injuries in

an attempt to maintain his place in the side, the constant threat of competition for his place in the team from other players, and the continual fear of being dropped from the side no matter how well he played. There are also accounts of his various celebrated clashes with management at both clubs. Johnston makes it abundantly clear that he has little time for most managers, and even less for club directors.

*Walk Alone* is a very readable and thoughtful account of life as an elite athlete in probably the toughest soccer competition in the world. For those with a fascination for Liverpool, Johnston provides insights into the club's internal workings, and moving accounts of the tragedies at Heysel and Hillsborough. Johnston is self deprecating and maintains that his major regret is that he never realised his full potential as a footballer. (p. 246) This might be so - but then again there is probably not more than one hundred players throughout the long and illustrious history of English football who can say they scored the winning goal in a FA Cup Final.

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