

Simon Inglis, *League Football And The Men Who Made It: The Official Centenary History of the Football League 1888- 1988* (London: Willow Books, 1988). Appendices, illus., memorabilia, pp.viii + 440. \$45.00.

In 1888 twelve clubs bonded together to form the English Football League where games were organised on a regular home and away basis between competing clubs. The formation of the league proved to be an immediate success attracting large crowds and generating high levels of income. As a result of this success the Football League grew in size to include 92 clubs organised into four divisions.

This book by Simon Inglis is subtitled *The Official Centenary History Of The Football League*. It is an account of English football (a small number of Welsh clubs compete in the League) from the inside, from the perspective of the Management Committee - those persons who were responsible for the organisation, administration and development of the game. Inglis has had complete access to Football League records (and officials), which he has combined with contemporary writings and newspaper sources in producing this history. While this is an 'Official History it is no apologia. Inglis has not shirked the task of criticising the Management Committee for its decisions, where he believes it is appropriate to do so.

Inglis provides an account of the highs and lows of what might be called a business history of English football. He examines the various twists and turns in the relationships that the Management Committee has with its member clubs, the Football Association, other leagues (both domestic and overseas), the Players Union/Professional Footballers Association, governments (both national and local), pools companies, the media - particularly television and the negotiation of broadcasting rights, sponsorship and so on. In the process Inglis unveils cases of embezzlement, betting

scandals and increasing problems associated with football hooliganism. The only things that his account seems to lack is a sex scandal, or players using drugs which is a problem which seems to currently bedevil top level sport.

The book is organised into 36 chapters (and nine appendices). Thirteen of the chapters contain, usually brief, biographical sketches of leading figures of the Management Committee. The longest are those devoted to C.E. Sutcliffe and Alan Hardaker, two men who Inglis believes were the mainstays behind the success of the Football League. There is also a chapter which takes readers on a tour of the offices and functions performed at Football League headquarters in Lytham, St. Annes. The remaining 22 chapters are presented in two distinct styles. The first eight, roughly the period up to the mid-1930s, are presented or organised chronologically rather than thematically. These chapters tend to jump backwards and forwards between different issues which, at times, makes for difficult reading. The remaining 14 chapters, from the 1936 pools war onwards, are organised more thematically, are more detailed, and, as a result, make for easier and more interesting reading. More generally, Inglis seems to have greater facility and more of a feel for recent developments than events which occurred in the past.

Obviously with a work of this scale it is relatively easy to find fault with an account of a particular event, or to suggest that some items could have been highlighted in greater detail. Indicating such examples, however, should not be seen as detracting from the overall quality of this book. Inglis has followed the traditional Football League/Football Association account of the 1909 dispute with the Players Union. He maintains that the dispute resulted from an attempt by the Union to affiliate to the General Federation of Trade Unions. The Players Union, in fact, sought affiliation in response to the Football Association's attempt to seek its destruction and/or drive it out of football. Also, a quote which is attributed to John McKenna in 1919 (p.112) was made by J.J. Bentley during the 1909 dispute.

Inglis could also have provided more details concerning the analyses and recommendations of the two Chester Reports.

The strength of this book is also its weakness. In providing an 'insider's account' Inglis has focussed his attention and endeavours in gathering information from within the football industry. Many issues which are of concern to him have been the subject of research into comparable sports and/or have appeared in scholarly writings on sport. An examination of this literature could have provided the study with greater depth, and helped Inglis in taking readers on an excursion through the complexities and nuances associated with running the industry which is football.

Notwithstanding these criticisms *League Football And The Men Who Made It* will provide more than useful source material for all students of English football. It provides a wealth of information on various business aspects associated with running the game, and will serve as a useful aid for future research and analysis.

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