

Book Reviews

Ric Finlay, *Island Summers: A History of Tasmanian Representative Cricket*. St David's Park Publishing, Hobart, 1992.

Illus., stats. pp. 232. \$29.95.

In his introduction, author Ric Finlay makes the point that a history of Tasmanian Cricket has the potential to be a rather morbid chronicle, and there is a considerable amount of truth to the statement when one considers the many spectacular performances made against the island's teams over the years, and rather little to balance the ledger for the locals.

On the positive side there have been some fine players; from Charlie Eady, Kenny Burn and Ted Windsor at the turn of the century to the present day success of Tassie's favourite son, David Boon. Their lack of opportunity until Shield admission, was Australia's as well as Tasmania's loss. While team successes have been even less frequent, there have been moments. No Tasmanian will ever forget Jack Simmons hoisting the 1978-9 Gillette Cup above his head in front of 11 000 adoring fans.

It has been thirty years since a comprehensive history of Tasmanian cricket has been produced, and the dramatic changes of the last two decades have demanded another work. There can be no better person to undertake the task than local historian and statistician Ric Finlay. The word meticulous could have been coined with him in mind. Finlay has literally spent years of his life researching and supporting Tasmanian cricket. His knowledge of his subject is awesome, and at last he has been given the opportunity to share his work with the rest of us.

Island Summers chronicles cricket on the island from its first reference in 1814-5, through the frustrating years of existing on one or two games per season, to eventual full time participation in the Sheffield Shield. Finlay takes us on the long road to what has become cricketing respectability. The very readable text has been complimented by a full statistical analysis.

For this reviewer, the most interesting aspect is the section on the early days of cricket in Tasmania, as much of the research has not been seen in print before. This section also includes a great deal about the North-South rivalry, which is Tasmania's greatest drawback as well as its fiercest sporting tradition in the days before admission to the Shield.

If criticisms are to be made of this work, they lie almost totally with the publisher and not with the author, and the first of these is the price. \$29.95 for a 232 page softback work seems a little excessive, when no particular expense seems to have been undertaken in layout and design.

The cover is a garish and not very good painting of an unknown batsman and wicketkeeper playing with very little technique, on the old TCA ground. The question may be asked as to why photographs weren't used. There were plenty available, and a shot of David Boon, balanced with an atmospheric portrait of an old player or team may have caught a buyer's attention and led to more sales. As a lover of photography, the inclusion of more pictures would have been appreciated, but that may just be a personal bias.

None of these criticisms detracts from the quality of Ric Finlay's work. For anyone wanting to understand the story of cricket on the island, it is essential reading.

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