

the game in its commercial and cultural context, but this does not detract from its value and interest. It is not a book that can be read at one sitting, and I do not expect that the author would have intended it to be read that way. This book is both 'racy' and dense, 'glossy' and deep. It is informative, provocative and highly entertaining, and while I do not agree with everything that Harte writes, I recommend it as a superior popular history and evaluation of the 'national game'.

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**Thomas V Hickie, *They Ran with the Ball: How Rugby Football Began in Australia*. Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1993.**

**Appendices, illus., index. pp. 243. \$29.95.**

This excellent pioneering work will become an essential starting point for anyone undertaking research on rugby football in Australia.

Soldiers in Sydney in 1829, the *Sydney Monitor* reported, were in 'the habit of amusing themselves with the game of football', a rough and unregulated game with few known rules and indefinite numbers of participants that had its origins in the rural parishes of England in preindustrial times. Whatever varieties of football were played in Sydney up to the mid-1860s went largely unrecorded. After exploring football before the Gold Rush Tom Hickie culled the newspapers of the day to provide a detailed analysis from the first recorded game in July 1865 between the Sydney and Australian clubs to 1881, a time when Sydney was emerging as a modern mass transit metropolis. Hickie's thorough and readable narrative traces the emergence of clubs, disputes over rules, the patronage and organisation of the game, crowd behaviour on unenclosed public parks and the difficulty of obtaining grounds on which to play

rugby. Prose, which is at times stilted, is the one criticism which could be made of this book.

On the eve of the first football season in Sydney in 1865 the author was unable to find any evidence to support the alleged attempt by the elusive Eldred Harmer to outlaw the game. After a keen analysis of the sources Hickie also found aspects of early accounts of rugby football, based on the reminiscences of W M Arnold, to be inaccurate. In the winters of 1866 and 1867 only three Sydney clubs participated in occasional games, and by 1869 little rugby was being played. After the formation of a number of clubs – Military & Civil (1867), Newington College (1869), Wallaroo (1870), The Kings School (1870), Calder House, Lyndhurst (1872), North Shore, Waratah (1873), a regular inter-club competition developed in the early 1870s. A dispute over rules led to the formation of the Southern Rugby Football Union (SRFU) in 1874, the first rugby body established outside Britain. Throughout the 1870s Sydney rugby was dominated by the Wallaroo and the University of Sydney clubs.

Expansion of rugby was inhibited by a lack of playing fields and clubs, and a need to refine the rules. The game was nurtured by gentlemen's clubs (especially Wallaroo) and private schools and initially three grounds at Moore Park served as early venues for a miscellaneous collection of teams. Men of wealth and respectability were pleased to lend their patronage to healthy recreational activities and they occupied pride of place at meetings of the SRFU. Affiliated clubs helped propagate the concept of 'muscular Christian' as the ideal sportsman and as the private schools grew the amateur ethos found a fertile breeding ground there.

Concerted efforts were made to establish the Victorian code in Sydney. Waratah and, Melbourne-based club, Carlton, played a series of games that attracted comparable crowds to those attending rugby fixtures. Those seeking adoption of the Victorian code sought reform from within the SRFU, and a hybrid code was considered.

There were only twenty-three rugby clubs in New South Wales in 1877, a critical year in Hickies's view. Rugby shrugged off the challenge of Victorian rules and by 1879-80 it was established as the dominant code in Sydney. In 1880 football was divided into three codes – Rugby, Victorian and English Association.

From the beginning rugby had been controlled by the middle classes but as more working men took up the game, it was inevitable that the traditional rugby ideology would face a challenge. The schism came in 1907-8 leading to the formation of the Rugby League code.

Detailed tables of games played, clubs, and players, and copious appendices, especially aroused the interest of the reviewer. They are a very rich lode of material for the researcher to mine. A selection of contemporary prints of grounds and landscapes, maps, photographs of teams, obtained from a variety of sources, also considerably enhance the presentation.

Sydney was an old world city and Melbourne represented the new world, wrote Nat Gould. An analysis of why Sydney adopted the rugby game and their southern colonists developed an indigenous football code, is beyond the scope of this book and awaits further research. The depth of Hickie's research makes this book a very welcome and valuable addition to Australian sports history. Development of rugby beyond 1881, the author notes, is now 'ready for others to pick up the ball and run with it'.

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