

Peter Burke and Leo Grogan, eds, *This Game is Ours: Supporters' Tales of the People's Game*. EATWARFLEMSD, St Andrews, Vic., 1993. Illus. pp. 180. \$12.95.

The EATWARFLEMSD are the Education & Allied Trade Workers Australian Rules Football League East Malvem Sub-District, one of the several fantasy football teams based in Melbourne. As the name suggests, its original members were all involved in education. Apart from coaching fantasy football teams, its members also engage in fund raising activities. This book was produced as their 1993 fund raiser, all profits from its sales will go to the Open Family, a youth charity.

Fifty-seven contributors, ranging from humble fans to ex-players, sports journalists and professional commentators have contributed small pieces on various aspects of Australian Football. A handful of items have been reprinted from other sources (mostly the *Sunday Age*) but most were written for this collection. The styles, length and quality of contributions vary greatly.

Most of the best contributions are about the authors' experiences of playing (at school, suburban or country level) or supporting football teams. I particularly liked Peter Hanlon's piece, 'Cos my Dad did', which combined both experiences and also mourned the passing of a country football club, Coragulac of the Polworth and Hampden leagues. Other player's reminiscences take us to football teams as diverse as St Peter Chanel's Primary School, Sacred Heart Primary in Diamond Creek, Katherine in the Northern Territory, Panton Hills and Apollo Bay.

James Morrissey's contribution, 'Life after Football', is about his primary school experience when football was forbidden. In was an unfortunately prescient title. In the few months since the book was published Morrissey has been cut from the Hawthorn list and has sustained a serious injury which will discourage other clubs from drafting him.

The contributions cover most aspects of barracking from Gael Hoggner's memory of a teenage crush on Butch Edwards to Ross McMullin's chronicle of years supporting Carlton. Con Petalas' experience as a young

boy in the 'forties prematurely (and illegally) ringing the timekeeper's bell at Arden Street reminds us of the 'old days' of Australian Football.

There is a continuing theme running through most of the articles. It is a nostalgia for a less commercial and more community-oriented form of football. There are articles mourning the loss of Junction Oval, Windy Hill, Moorabbin Oval, Lakeside Oval and the side that used to play there, South Melbourne. Of the four fictional pieces, the only one that actually works is 'Forever Fitzroy: An Historical Romance' by Guy Debord in which the author imagines a revolt against the elimination of the Lions leading to a revolution against all authority in Australia.

The sub-text of *This Game is Ours* is that Australian Football is under threat as a 'people's game'. This book, at its best, represents the barrackers asking for their game back, not through polemic, but through contrast with the 'good old days'. Perhaps, a collection of educators and professional authors are not typical representatives of 'the people' but they do represent views that Ross Oakley and his commissioners should consider when they read the reports of their marketing experts and accountants.

It is in the nature of these collections that inappropriate contributions will also be included. Jim Poulter's research on Marn-Grook, which may be the original ancestor of Australian Football, deserves a more scholarly treatment and should be re-published, with sources, in a journal such as *Sporting Traditions*. Heather Montgomery's personal response to violence in football (her brother was a victim) strikes a discordant note and should probably also have appeared elsewhere.

The Game of Ours is not the most profound collection available on Australian Football. It is however as close to the voice of the barrackers yet published and it makes entertaining reading.

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