

J T Ferreira, J P Blignaut, P J Landman and J F du Toit, *Transvaal Rugby Football Union: 100 years: 1889-1989*. TRFU, Ellis Park, Johannesburg, 1989. Illus. pp. 256.

This is more an anecdotal survey and statistical compendium of the TRFU than a definitive social history of Transvaal rugby. Progressing season by season, it covers not only the consistently inconsistent performances of Transvaal representative teams, but the fortunes of constituent clubs, committees and local competitions. Other chapters examine the Transvaal B team and under-25 team, junior rugby, the history of Ellis Park, Sub-Unions, and the Transvaal Referee's Association. There is a lengthy set of individual, team and administrative statistics and a photograph for every occasion.

Perhaps this approach is too detailed. The chronology needs a little streamlining (and page numbering on the contents page) to give it thematic clarity, while there are other points where a wider perspective on South African and world rugby would establish a better context for developments within Transvaal. Occasional lapses also occur in identifying international players and officials- not least the intriguing possibility presented by Jack Hobbs (instead of Jock Hobbs) on the 1986 rebel New Zealand Cavaliers' tour.

That said, there is a stream of rich material here - especially relating to rugby in wartime. A cease-fire was arranged at the height of the Anglo-Boer War to allow a match between combatants, and an equal determination prevailed to maintain competition after 1914. 'Those who remained behind needed healthful relaxation. If they did not get this, many of them might get up to mischief and others might start playing soccer (p. 26).' One must also wonder at the prompting for a 1927 insurance arrangement that allowed payment of £250 for loss of 'two limbs' or 'two eyes' during representative fixtures.

Evidence abounds of administrative turbulence and wrangling throughout the history of the TRFU but remarkably the Union has had only three presidents since 1934. Harold Sanderson (1934-64) was an autocrat and fierce defender of amateurism. Jannie la Roux (1965-84) oversaw periods of prosperity but fell to a 'palace revolution' (the authors' description) following financial and playing disasters in 1984. In the last decade Dr Louis Luyt has guided Transvaal's bank-rolling of the Cavaliers' tour and more recently sanctioned international series. The influence exerted by the TRFU has at times appeared greater than that of the South African Rugby Board in securing the re-entry of the Springboks to international rugby. But much of this is regrettably beyond the scope of a centenary history completed in 1989.

Certainly the Luyt era belongs in a wider historical/political analysis and the events of the last five years may have altered the approach to parts of this history. Only passing, self justificatory, references are made to the opportunities afforded black players within the Transvaal, and there is an inevitably antagonistic tone towards anti-apartheid campaigns against such touring sides as the Irish in 1980. But on the standard model of rugby histories written by devotees for devotees, this book serves its purpose soundly.

Greg Ryan
History Department
University of Canterbury