

Gideon Haigh, *The Cricket War: The Inside Story of Kerry Packer's World Series Cricket*. Text Publishing Company, Melbourne, 1993. Bibliog., illus., index, stats. pp. 398.

During the past twenty-five years, there have been numerous attempts by journalists and scholars to explain the creation, development and implications of the World Series Cricket (WSC) era that evolved during the latter part of the 1970s. Given the controversy that surrounded the existence of WSC it is not surprising that such exploration has varied in perspective. Unfortunately much of the literature has been either superficial (Caro, 1979; Beecher, 1978; Blofeld, 1978; McFarlane, 1978) or ideologically driven (Goldlust, 1987; McKay 1987; Lawrence, 1986; Rowe, 1986). In their quest to give meaning to this watershed in cricket history, such authors have gone in search of, and used, overarching theories or umbrella frameworks. In the process they have either ignored, or failed to notice, the human dimension of the era. The energy, faith, concerns and doubts of the WSC players and administrators have essentially been overlooked in a bid to provide the definitive explanation for the genesis of WSC.

Such shortcomings and gaps in the literature have been rectified to a large extent by Gideon Haigh in *The Cricket War: The Inside Story of World Series Cricket*. Through this work the author has provided a thorough, yet focused interpretation of the World Series Cricket era. Undoubtedly the result of an extensive use of diverse sources such as interviews, newspapers, magazines and annuals along with relevant books and theses, the twenty-one chapters (326 pp.) of this book are further enhanced by the inclusion of fifty pages of WSC statistics (courtesy of Ross Dundas), and a comprehensive and useful index. There is no question that this is a fine piece of sports writing.

Thematically Haigh neither ignores nor diminishes the importance of the key incidents of the period. The relationship between this sport and television, the numerous legal battles, the impact on the various cricket

control bodies, and the success and fan acceptance of the one-day game are all given due coverage. Yet it is Haigh's attention to the individual that results in this work standing apart from those of a similar ilk. The author has explored WSC from the perspective of the players, administrators, families and friends, that is, those intimately involved with or effected by WSC. In the process he has created an athletes' story.

The Cricket War: The Inside Story of World Series Cricket is an excellent example of the adoption of 'inside-out' view of sport rather than the traditional 'outside' perspective. This is most evident in Haigh's discussion of the World Series cricket '2nd XI', the Cavaliers. In most WSC literature this travelling group of marginal athletes has been treated rather perfunctorily, minor actors in an unfolding drama. Haigh's sympathetic treatment of this group of ageing stars and peripheral Test athletes is excellent. Tired of the constant touring, inconsistent pitches and facing an uncertain future, such players often doubted the wisdom of their decision to join WSC and struggled with their lack of notoriety. Such a condition was exacerbated by the realisation that some of them might have been playing Test cricket for Australia under the captaincy of Bob Simpson. Haigh's ability to humanise this facet of WSC adds a new dimension to what is an already absorbing story.

Similarly, any discussion of WSC is not complete unless it is counterbalanced with an account of the parallel dramas unfolding within traditional cricket. While some WSC athletes were contemplating the prudence of their decision to join the troupe, other cricketers were either chagrined at their lack of opportunity in the new series or comforted in the knowledge that its creation had provided them with a welcome but previously unlikely opportunity in the establishment ranks. Andrew Hilditch and Craig Sergeant were both telling examples of this latter situation while Kim Hughes and Gary Cosier exemplified the former. In the case of Test captain Bob Simpson it resulted in the resurrection of career that had been over for some time.

It was impossible for those on either side of the cricket fence to be unaffected by the turmoil that embroiled them during the WSC era. In most instances both sides were committed to, and passionate about their cause. Haigh develops the roles and expectations of such participants far beyond that provided by previous authors. It could be argued, however, that despite the fact they were on the sports outer, the WSC fraternity from John Cornell and Austin Robertson, through Ian Chappell and Tony Greig to current South African captain Kepler Wessels, rarely wavered in their commitment to the task at hand and worked tirelessly, often at great personal expense, to ensure its success.

One fate that has befallen Haigh, like many other authors of this era, is the apparent lack of success in interviewing a number of the principal non-cricket actors. Names such as Robertson, Cornell, Taylor and Packer are noticeably absent from his primary source list. While it is unclear how much more they might offer, their observations at some future stage may complete the WSC saga.

There is no question that Kerry Packer's foray into the world of cricket radically altered the game as played before, and presented to, an increasingly receptive public. Haigh takes us through these developments without rancour or cynicism. In the process he provides a balanced, informative and thoroughly readable account of one of the great episodes in Australian sport and cultural history. The result is one of the best sport books in some time.

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