

Ed Jaggard, *Garth: The Story of Graham McKenzie*. South Fremantle, Fremantle Arts Press, 1993. pp. 255, \$16.95 paper.

The market place suggests there is a demand for historical studies of cricket including biographies of great players and leading personalities. Too often, though, careful research, excellence and evaluation is sacrificed to ensure that publication coincides with a controversy in the news or when the retirement of a player has beckoned. However, the biography of Graham 'Garth' McKenzie is a reflective and informed study drawing on McKenzie's tour correspondence, his extensive scrapbook of his career, interviews with players of his era and the opinions of local cricket identities in hometown Perth. Despite access to the primary sources the book is of appropriate length, including a short fascinating foreword by Richie Benaud who discussed 'pace off the pitch'. The scientists suggest there is no such thing, but many contended it was a unique product of McKenzie's classic bowling action.

McKenzie was the first Western Australian to regularly play in the Australian Test team. His achievements in the Test arena helped to make his home State, once allegedly described by Benaud as the 'State of the Embarrassed Smile' in Australian cricket, into a major force. The 'huge inferiority complex' of a team that often didn't look like first-class cricketers and who regularly employed 'tyranny of distance' arguments to justify poor performance is well documented. Jaggard is dismissive of the range of excuses that most Western Australian sports, with the notable exception of men's and women's hockey, employed so that 'failure became a near terminal disease'. In this respect Barry Shepherd's term as the State cricket captain is regarded as important in achieving a more disciplined approach to practice and a tougher approach to matches.

So interesting is the coverage of Western Australia's position in Australian cricket that it leads to thoughts of Jaggard writing an authoritative history of the Western Australian Cricket Association (WACA) which was formed in 1885. Garth provides coverage of the 'inequitable subsidy' which

was the price paid in 1956 for the WACA to be permitted to play the full program of Sheffield Shield matches. As Jaggard suggests 'it was a short-sighted penalty imposed on Western Australia, and soon became strongly resented'. The book includes many references to the lack of communication between the national administrators and the players and several well founded criticisms of the Australian selectors.

McKenzie was not always treated fairly by the Australian cricket selectors. His omission from the Test team against India in 1968, despite his top form, is investigated by Jaggard who is aware that 'cabinet [selector's] solidarity' means the real reason may never be known. However, Jaggard dismisses the argument that McKenzie was not selected to protect Richie Benaud's position at the time as Australia's leading wicket-taker in Test cricket. The circumstances of McKenzie being left out of the Australian touring team to England in 1972 are also reviewed.

Not only does Garth contain much about the emergence of Western Australian cricket but it also depicts how McKenzie had to resolve dilemmas about career aspirations as Australia began to play Test matches during every Australian summer coupled with numerous overseas tours. During this transition phase Jaggard persuasively argues that Australian cricket authorities rarely took account of the player's needs and interests in making decisions about tour arrangements. They were reluctant to recognise that leading players such as McKenzie, who was trained as a school-teacher and needed to be adequately rewarded for their time and effort. The account of how McKenzie was clearly overbowed and underpaid explains how the situation was ripe for Packer's World Series Cricket format. Given Jaggard's thesis that McKenzie would have been a great one-day bowler it is a pity that the Packer revolution came too late for McKenzie, although after retirement he was able to accept a contract to play some 'second eleven' World Series matches in Australian country towns.

Jaggard has not dodged discussing the McKenzie 'enigma', the oddity that in Test cricket 'Garth' took 246 wickets at approximately 30 runs apiece, while for Western Australia his 270 wickets cost some 32 runs each. Some of McKenzie's critics claim he tended 'to roll his arm over' in State matches and saved his best for the big occasion in Test matches. Jaggard addressed that question by highlighting the poor scheduling of matches, the undue reliance on McKenzie as both a strike and stock bowler, poor slips fielding at lower levels of cricket, and then reminding readers how McKenzie's strove hard for Leicester, the English County Club to which he was contracted for seven seasons. Nevertheless, there was recognition that the promising start McKenzie made as a batsman in first-class cricket was never fulfilled. In the other facets of the game Garth's worth as a fieldsman is remembered while his sportsmanship and demeanour never varied from the high standards of behaviour learned from his father and uncle.

The account of how McKenzie emerged from his suburban setting to be one of the nation's great bowlers is informative and interesting. Given McKenzie's athleticism, his earlier involvement in Australian Rules football and the high calibre tennis coaching he received, the reader is left to ponder why it was cricket (and briefly hockey) that eventually became his major sports. Was the explanation McKenzie's recognised lack of speed of foot?

Importantly, however, the reader is provided with a better appreciation of McKenzie's contribution to Australian cricket. Although he may have lacked the charismatic traits of Dennis Lillee or Ray Lindwall, the author convincingly demonstrates that 'McKenzie single-handedly kept Australia at, or close to the top in world cricket throughout the 1960s'. His career marked the transition phase from the 'amateur to the professional', to which the national cricket authorities were slow to respond. Moreover, McKenzie was an important symbol of success which helped Western Australia's emergence as a power in Australian cricket.

As a professional historian Jaggard has written a quality biography. In a concession to the sporting public he decided not to fully document the prolific sources of some of his observations. There are many amusing anecdotes and some blunt comments about the standards of Test umpiring and some of McKenzie's fellow tourists. For instance, on the arduous 1970 South African tour, which proved to be the beginning of the end for 'Garth', the left-hand pace bowler Jim Hubble was told by the placid McKenzie 'it was time he started pulling his weight'. These attributes of the book, like most of Garth, would lead the reader to believe that Neville Cardus is back as a cricket author.

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