

Book Reviews

Max Bonnell, Richard Cashman, James Rodgers with statistics by Ross Dundas, *Making the Grade: 100 Years of Grade Cricket in Sydney, 1893-94 to 1993-94*. New South Wales Cricket Association, Sydney, 1994. Illus., index, stats, tables. pp. 112. \$10 from the New South Wales Cricket Association.

For a century Australian cricket has adhered to a tiered structure where cricketers can progress from suburban to international matches while always playing within a determinedly competitive context. The foundation of this structure has been a strong locality-based competition in each of the capital cities which provide a stepping stone to Sheffield Shield selection. This centenary volume shows how Sydney's cricket administrators of the 1890s were enterprising enough to respond to social and demographic changes which were making themselves felt in the city. In this respect Richard Cashman's introductory essay deftly sketches the processes at work which produced the current structure of Sydney cricket.

There follows a portrait of each club, some evocative photographs and a potpourri of sketches of prominent grade players. As is so often the case, the most evocative of these sketches are of those players whose names have faded but who devoted themselves to serving their club. There is, for instance, the delightfully alliterative Bert Bonser of Balmain who took 895 wickets in thirty-three seasons and yet was never asked to play first grade. There is also the towering achievement of Northern Districts leg-spinner Hugh Chilvers who took 1153 first grade wickets between 1925 and 1952. While grade cricket provided the crucial path to national selection for players such as Don Bradman, who announced his arrival on the Sydney scene by scoring a century in even time for St George, it was also the home of honourable practitioners of the game who held their clubs together with season after season of devoted service.

The statistical section of this volume has been compiled with Ross Dundas' usual accuracy and precision. In addition, it is a well presented book with an attractive period flavour cover.

The affect of *Making the Grade* is to whet the appetite for more on the history of Sydney cricket. It is to be hoped that individual clubs will record their history systematically and stylishly and that we will read more of the Bert Bonser's of the competition.

The contemporary challenge facing grade cricket administrators right around Australia is exactly the same as the one facing their forerunners of a century ago and recorded in this volume: to keep cricket relevant and flourishing in a rapidly changing society.

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Dennis Brailsford, *British Sport: A Social History*. Lutterworth Press, Cambridge, 1991. Illus., index. pp. ii + 146.

Noted British historian of sport Dennis Brailsford has produced the latest in a sequence of histories of sport in the British Isles published in recent years. While this collection is firmly in the camp of sport as an element of social and cultural history, it does not supersede the excellent *Sport and the British* (1989) by Richard Holt. Having said that, Brailsford's book complements Holt's in a number of ways. Brailsford is probably the leading expert on British sport in the early modern period, particularly the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. This expertise is reflected in the book as the chapters covering these centuries are easily the best, while Holt is more secure in later periods.

Significantly, Brailsford stresses the links between sport in Britain before the Victorian period and that appearing in the latter half of the nineteenth century. He argues successfully that we cannot view modern sport as a new phenomenon, but rather an extension of pre-existing sporting and recreational practices that changed to suit different social, economic and political circumstances. Brailsford demonstrates that sport has been tied to politics at least since the Elizabethan era of the sixteenth