

**Michael McKernan, *The Makers of Australia's Sporting Traditions*.
Melbourne University Press, 1993. pp. xix + 289.**

In the quarter of a century since its inception in 1966 the twelve volumes of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* have provided information on 7211 Australians, some 250 of which achieved prominence by, or in, sport. Here Michael McKernan, a pioneer sports historian in Australia, brings together a number of these biographies; 180, 187, or 'some hundreds' depending on whether you consult the dust jacket, the preface or the author's introduction. No reasons are given for the omissions so readers are left to guess the selection criteria.

Indeed, throughout too much is left to the reader. One rationale for the book is that biographies in aggregate can tell us much about Australian sport and its changes, though the editor makes little attempt to draw out any themes. The biographies have not been updated in the light of new research, nor is the date of the original entry given. Worse still is the omission for reasons of 'space and simplicity' of the original notes and references, which forces any research-minded sports historian to go back to the *ADB* itself. The one advance on the original volumes is the provision of illustrated material, some of which offset the deficiency of textual entries on sportswomen. Overall one is left to wonder why this book was published.

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