

It is a pity nobody has listed the many sayings of the 'old man'. One slogan of Craven I shall always remember from my student days is 'if God wanted man to play soccer, he would have given him round testicles'.

Knowing Craven from 1970 (first as a student and later as a colleague) I pity anyone who dares take up the mammoth task of compiling a biography on this phenomenal man. Partridge did well, but maybe he should have based his work on the previous two in order to come up with an absolutely detailed biography for the international market. Hopefully, Paul Dobson will rise to the challenge but we shall have to wait and see. However, the second part of the book, which covers more recent political sporting history and Craven's schemes for the development of rugby in South Africa, is invaluable. It certainly gives the reader a much better and more up to date picture of Craven the rugby administrator. In many ways this book concludes with a very important chapter in South Africa's sporting history.

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Bruce Schoefeld, *The Last Serious Thing: A Season at the Bullfights*. Simon and Schuster, New York, 1992. pp. 238.

I have to admit to knowing little about bullfighting but several things have always puzzled me. Why does it rate as one of Spain's favourite pastimes? What is it about bullfighting that interests not only Spaniards but Mexicans, South Americans, Portuguese and the French as well as a host of foreign tourists? Given the efforts to reduce violence in sport and the increasing pressure applied by animal rights' groups, how is bullfighting successfully defended? I picked up a copy of Bruce Schoefeld's *The Last Serious Thing: A Season at the Bullfights* to hopefully find the answers to these questions.

Based in Seville but travelling quite extensively throughout Spain, Schoenfeld explains many rudimentary issues in bullfighting by following the fortunes of three individuals: Espartaco, Litri and Fulton. Espartaco is a famous person and epitomises the status acquired by established bullfighters, while Litri, the rising matador, shows the uncertainty, pressure and scrutiny many aspirants face. Fulton is an American who endeavoured to be a respected *matador* but never fully reached his dream. The juxtaposition of these personalities, as well as some others, was effective in illustrating many of the salient features of bullfighting. It involves individual skills with the cape, *muleta* and sword that are utilised by the *matador* to subdue, master and finally kill the bull. As much as *matadors* acquire their own unique traits, and are either appreciated or criticised on this basis, bullfighting thrives on rivalries between the fighters. The rising star, Litri, was often pitted against the established icon, Espartaco. The media are integral in the creation of rivalries and, in general, are very generous in their coverage of the *corridos*. They reflect not only the passion for bullfighting but the preoccupation with the associated personalities which is shared by the rest of society in pre-fight and post-fight deliberations. Much discussion involves which matadors are invited to perform at the *corrida*. To fight at the prestigious rings in Seville and Madrid is not only an honour but highlights an established hierarchy in venues. No matter whether the venue is a *plaza de toros* in a small Spanish town or one of the popular urban rings, the matador interacts and, ultimately, is answerable to the crowd. Responses can range from cushions thrown in disgust to the granting of ears and tails in exultation. To earn ears or tails at the major venues enhances one's reputation far more than similar rewards from the less established rings. The standard of performance is also measured by the quality of the foe. Spanish bulls are considered better than those produced by Mexicans, Portuguese, South Americans and the French. The Spanish *Miuras*, bred for their size, intelligence and bravery, are the most feared of all. To perform well with the big, bold and dangerous *Miuras* is appreciated.

For the uninitiated, *The Last Serious Thing* is valuable. It is limited, however, not only by the absence of useful literary tools such as an index and a bibliography, but by scant attention to some interesting and pertinent issues. There was little debate over the value of bullfighting: some of the criticisms of bullfighting are discussed but Schoenfeld fails to provide a convincing or rigorous defence case. At one point, it is tritely suggested that bullfighting has rejected previous critics and will continue to do so. He also argues that bullfighting, as a predominantly Spanish subculture, will increase in popularity as Europe becomes more homogenous. There may be some merit in this latter point but it needs amplification. In addition, there was no concerted effort to probe into the intersection of social class and race with *picadors*, *banderilleros* and *matadors*. *These issues* could have been explored further by detailing the impediments encountered by Gypsy *matadors* and by Fulton. After all, the American's failure to succeed was attributed to his non-Spanish heritage. Equally disappointing, *The Last Serious Thing* does not examine masculinity and bullfighting even though this association appears to underpin the essence of the event. Nor does the author probe whether bullfighting is best understood as sport or ritual. He describes bullfighting as a spectacle and mentions the associated metaphysical arousal but there is little effort to explain its ritualistic components which have been addressed by other writers.'

Overall while The Last Serious Thing is an interesting book for the uninformed, it is not sufficiently comprehensive nor reflective and needs to be read with other sources to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the significance of bullfighting to Spanish culture.

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NOTE

1. See for example, M-I Arrotia, 'Bullfights: Art, Sport, Ritual', *Play and Culture*, vol. 1, 1988, pp. 282-90.