

Rosalind Fisher and Peter Morrison, *Hakoah Club Sydney 1938-1994. Hakoah Club, Bondi Junction, 1994. Illus. pp. 160. \$50.*

This book is a most welcome addition to the sparse literature of sporting clubs in Australia. While the Hakoah club, formed in 1939, is primarily remembered as a soccer club, it catered for numerous sports in its time. The beautifully presented coffee table book provides a chronology of the club's evolution and its pages are resplendent with photographs of important people and events.

The Hakoah Club of today is, as Syd Einfeld says, 'a noble beacon for Jewish people to meet together'. Indeed the palatial surroundings of its Hall Street premises are the nucleus of the social life of Eastern Suburbs if not many of Sydney's Jewry. However, the achievement of this pre-eminent position was not easy. The rise of the Hakoah Club is intrinsically linked with the history of its soccer team, perhaps the greatest in the history of the Australian game. The authors trace the evolution of the soccer club from its humble beginnings in Rushcutters Bay, Sydney. Founded by Austrian refugees, the club took its name from the famous Viennese club - Hakoah Wien. Hakoah was more than just a sports or soccer club, it was a movement whose political philosophy was closely linked to Zionism. It drew its strength from the idea of 'Muskeljudentum' - the Jewish answer to Muscular Christianity. Throughout the book the reader is aware of the single mindedness of the club administrators and their commitment to these ideals.

Hakoah is an excellent work in the club history genre. If it falls down it is that on occasions 'party line' takes priority over historical fact. The book ignores, for example, that Hakoah played in competitive leagues in 1940 and 1941 and in friendly games in 1942. There is no mention of the first President and Secretary of the club (W Gross and B Moddel in 1939) who were followed by L Levy in 1940 and A May in 1941. Inexplicably they have been written out of this history.

Undoubtedly the real character of the modern Hakoah had its genesis in the famous meeting convened by H Klimt at the Tarbut club in George St Sydney on the 27 May 1944. However, it seems incongruous to claim a lineage dating back to 1939 while at the same time not crediting the early pioneers. It's also a pity that the names of the first Hakoah team- which are known - were not appended to the photo reproduced here.

Hakoah became a driving force in Australian soccer. It was at the forefront of many great changes - the breakaway of the New South Wales Soccer Federation in 1955, the formation of the National League in 1977 and the push for a national youth league. Internally, Hakoah administrators anguished over the great dilemma of modern Australian soccer clubs - whether to change their 'ethnic' name for a suitably Anglo-Australian one. Off the field their organisation and innovation was an example to all sports clubs. There is abundant detail in *Hakoah* about the resulting attractive and successful community centre.

Unfortunately soccer at the elite level is a thing of the past at Hakoah. After much soul searching and a bitter debate the team was withdrawn from the National League after one game of the 1987 season. *Hakoah* chronicles how a sports club functioned as a flagship for the ethnicity of the Jewish community. Even when the playing staff of the soccer team became predominantly professional Gentile players, the club nevertheless saw itself as representing the Jewish community and was seen as such by other clubs. The issue of Jewish ethnicity looms large in the history of this club and anti-Semitism also has a place in this history. However, this book is essentially a celebration of achievement and the debate of these issues is rightly left to other forums. It is hoped by this writer that other football clubs, especially soccer clubs, can produce such competent chronicles.

Tony Hughes
School of History
University of New South Wales