

Bernard Whimpress and Nigel Hart, *Test Eleven: Great Ashes Battles*. Wakefield Press, Kent Town, 1994. Bibliog., illus, stats. pp. 262.

Bernard Whimpress, *W.G. Grace at Kadina: Champion Cricketer or Scoundrel?* The author, Bedford Park, 1994. Illus. pp. 13.

Whimpress and Hart have selected a representative sample of eleven of the 'great' Test matches between Australia and England. A central issue raised initially is as to 'what makes a great cricket match'. It is a worthwhile question to ask why some matches are more celebrated and lodge more firmly in the popular memory. The authors believe that there are a number of criteria which determine great matches: those which fluctuate and have 'turn-around' factors; other matches which feature epic or cameo performances; games which are close; and, finally, absorbing matches where there is 'the drama of play and the manoeuvres, on-field and off, that affect it' (p. ix).

Few of us would quibble at most of the eleven selected Tests such as the First Test, the Centenary Test and Botham's 1981 Test when the odds of an English victory had drifted out to 500-1. But there are a few surprises in the author's list. The Australian win at Lord's in the Second Test of the 1961 series was memorable because it was achieved without captain Richie Benaud and marked a fine debut by Graeme McKenzie but the Test which is etched in my mind was the Ashes-deciding Fourth Test which fluctuated remarkably on the final day. Australia was virtually 'down and out' twice on that day but Benaud refused to stop attacking and finally was rewarded when he took 6/70 exploiting rough patches on the wicket. While I agree with the authors that Test draws should be included in a list of great matches - the Mackay/Kline stand against the West Indies has long been celebrated - it is surprising that the authors have opted for the 1993 Nottingham draw though it did produce a valuable partnership between Steve Waugh and Brendon Julian.

However, I have no disagreement with the selection of the Second Test of the 1954/55 season, which launched ‘Typhoon’ Tyson. This was the first Test that I attended and I can attest that this was a gripping, tense and fluctuating contest featuring some express bowling and a brilliant counter-attack by Neil Harvey who scored a valiant 92 not out in the second innings.

This book is aimed more at the popular than an academic market but it does raise some interesting issues about sport, history, popular memory and even nostalgia.

While *Test Eleven* celebrates some of the great matches, Bernard Whimpress’ booklet, *W.G. Grace at Kadina*, is more in the demythologising genre, which has become popular in recent years. This is yet another interesting case study suggesting that the ‘great man’ had feet of clay. Grace exploited the differences between the South Australian Cricket Association and the Yorke Peninsula Association and showed scant respect with the contract which he signed with the latter body.

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