

Editorial Preface

The first article in this issue adds to a lively debate, which began at the Sporting Traditions X Conference at Brisbane in 1995, and which continues to generate vigorous discussion in the pages of the *Victorian Bulletin of Sport and Culture* a year later. While some have expressed concern at the seeming differences between empiricists and theorists, or between those with a loyalty to a particular discipline (history) versus those who advocate an inter-disciplinary approach—or, ‘abstract speculation over solid factual scholarship’ as J Neville Turner put it—it is my view that this controversy reflects the vitality, diversity and maturity of the field of ‘sports history’. We are big enough and sufficiently confident about what we do to welcome debate about various approaches to sports history even if some of the protagonists may be guilty on occasions of special pleading for their particular approach or theory. Because sports history has now become part of the academic mainstream, we are also not immune to wider intellectual debates which are reflected in sports history research. I believe that *Sporting Traditions* (and for that matter ASSH itself) is a ‘broad church’ (both ecumenical and catholic as J Neville put it) which can accommodate a variety of perspectives. This issue contains various articles, some of which will appeal to the more theoretically-minded, others will satisfy those who yearn for ‘solid factual scholarship’.

I would like to welcome four new persons to our Editorial Review Board. Lynn Embrey, Vicky Paraschak, Murray Phillips and Claire Simpson. The composition of the Board—twelve are Australian-based as against six overseas-based—reflects the evolving character of the journal. While the primary focus of the journal will continue to be on Australian material and articles written by Australian-based sports historians, this flagship of Australian sports history has had an increasing international element. As a journal devoted to excellence we are attracting a greater number of articles from scholars based overseas. The Reviews Section has increased its international element since it is useful for Australian-based scholars to maintain familiarity with the best research undertaken elsewhere. All of the above will assist Australian-based researchers to make a greater impact in international forums—which is being achieved by some of our younger scholars—and to enhance the reputation of *Sporting Traditions* in international circles.

The revised format of the internal layout of the journal has been well received. During the next year (volume 13) there will be changes to the front cover, as agreed to in 1995 to include an illustration, probably relating to one of the articles in the particular issue. Any suggestions, or offers of assistance, about a new cover design are welcome.

This is the first issue (of the seven which I have edited) which has appeared late (by two months) and it has affected the timetable of the *Bulletin* no. 24 (which will also be late). The demands of being General Editor of the *Oxford Companion to Australian Cricket* (an ASSH publication) have been onerous but OCAC should appear on time (I am told) on 28 October 1996. I apologise for this delay. I hope to lift my game to produce vol. 13 no. 1 and *Bulletin* no. 25 on time!

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