

**Merv Daub, *Gael Force: A Century of Football at Queen's*, McGill-Queens Press, Kingston and Montreal, 1996. Illus. pp. 282. \$C49.95 (cloth), \$C22.95 (paper).**

Gael Force is an in-depth case study examination of two social factors that surround sport: the manipulation of sport for political gain, and the collective identity that sport provides to its spectators. These two dynamics caused the Queen's Golden Gaels, a Canadian university football side, to rise to great heights, and is now precipitating its Icarian fall from grace.

Author Merv Daub begins by describing the birth of football on campus, the concerns that drove Queen's Principal George Grant in 1882 to encourage the interest in rugby football rather than in association football. Grant argued that rugby more completely expressed *mens sana in corpore sano* — the fusion of moral rectitude and physical mastery that improved the quality of men. With Grant's support of rugby, football was infused into the political streams of university life.

Daub continues his historical journey into the twentieth century noting the increasing strength of football as a local spectacle, briefly stalled by the interruption of World War I. Football quickly recovered in the immediate post-War period and began to build an even greater following into the 1920s. Football on campus was seen as one of the ways to aid the return to normalcy, a movement that engaged Canadians in the months and years following the War. In 1921 the modern 'Burnside' rules of gridiron football were adopted, which was a critical historical moment when the game departed from its rugby roots and began its development as Canadian football. When Queen's fell behind the progress of the University of Toronto side, drastic administrative measures were taken to make the Gaels competitive in the burgeoning university game. The university hired a full-time coach and trainer to prepare the team, a permanent stadium was built in the heart of the university campus, and a bureaucratic organisation was forged to finance the operations of the

football side.

This period witnessed the first generation of Queen's students who become enamoured with football as a spectacle and as a arena for generating collective identity. The 1920s are remembered as times when the Principal and the football side had a positive relationship that was mutually beneficial. Football existed and prospered as a game, while Principal Grant saw football as a positive tool in building his ideal vision of Queen's.

Gael Force documents the improving political fortunes of the football Gaels, in spite of a minor setback in 1940 as War-time demands brought a temporary halt to football on campus. During this period (1920-60) football remained the central focus of campus social life, and through this mechanism the collective identity (known on campus as 'Queen's spirit') of Queen's students became a treasured component of the sense of community. The popularity of football was also good business. The university sold the Queen's spirit to its prospective students as something unique among Canadian universities.

Daub writes in detail about a period of Queen's football history that he particularly treasured, namely the 'Silver Sixties'. It is in the 1960s that Daub himself played at Queen's and it is not surprising that his memories of this time are vivid and favourable. What is undeniable is that this period saw Queen's football at its absolute zenith of influence and on-field success. Accompanying the 53-16 record and multiple championships over the decade, was the complete dominance of football in the university identity and social life of the students. So prolific was the grasp of football on the campus that *Maclean's Magazine*, a major Canadian news periodical, referred to Queen's University as 'football crazy'.

As the 1960s witnessed football's perceived invincibility, it also heralded its imminent demise. As in the Paglian theory of cultural trends, Queen's football had an inception, a rise, a zenith and a decline, which was the state of the game in 1994, the last year of Daub's analysis. What makes the decline of Queen's football so interesting is that the challenge did not come from external social forces as it had during the War years, but rather from internal forces. University officials engaged in what some have described as deceitful political actions to strategically undermine the social power of football on campus. These actions culminated in the movement of the stadium from the heart of campus to a satellite campus over two kilometres west. The book ends with details of several other

exercises that would make Machiavelli proud, all undertaken by university officials as a means to destroy football supremacy on campus.

Of particular interest to Australian readers are the similarities between the development of 'Aussie Rules' football and the Canadian game. Wray Vamplew referred to the development of Aussie Rules as an expression of the desire to develop their own cultural symbols, separate from their British ancestry. In the same way, Canadian football developed out of the British game, but changed over time to reflect the influence of the United States. Daub's book illustrates how this took place in a Canadian university setting in Loyalist country but near the United States border.

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