

Ian Ferguson, *Cricket's Far Horizons*. Rex Thompson and Family Pty Ltd., 1996. pp. 212.

When I was in Singapore recently, I was surprised to hit upon a keenly contested three-day match at the exquisite Padang of the Singapore Cricket Club. The match is an annual event between Singapore and Malaysia. The Padang is right in the heart of the Singapore Central Business District on prime land.

How has the game survived in the post-imperialist era of this commercially-oriented city-state? Well, it is true that a large proportion of both teams were expatriate Indians, but I was informed that Malays and Chinese are taking up the game in droves — mainly, as a result of immense publicity it has received through Rupert Murdoch's Star TV. In April 1996, Sri Lanka and Pakistan had played a memorable one-day match, in which Jayasuriya had hit 76 out of an opening partnership of 80 (the remaining four being sundries). He must have endangered the heavy traffic that flows past the unfenced arena. Certainly, he set Singapore ablaze.

This book will surprise the monoculturalists who think of cricket as an exclusively Anglophone game. Ferguson demonstrates that cricket has a considerably wider appeal. Countries so diverse in culture and language as Argentina, Fiji, New Caledonia, Holland and Denmark are demonstrating the ubiquity of cricket. Within a short time, cricket will surely become the most popular sport in Asia — a continent which seems likely to dominate the international scene in the next century.

This well-researched work surveys the game as it is played far away from first-class arenas. It is a book full of piquant anecdotes and rich humour. It is unashamedly celebratory, Ferguson has a feel for the essential humility and modesty of the cricketer, for this game soon brings the boastful down to earth!

Whether he is describing the cricket in the Antarctic, a festival in the Arabian desert, or the bush legends that grow up about Australian outback heroes, Ferguson writes with an exceptional affection for and appreciation of the character and *characters* of this most hypnotic of games.

This delightful book is a welcome antidote to the ponderous sociological tracts that seek to debunk the essential joy of the wonderful pursuit that is sport. It demonstrates the pleasure that this most complex game gives to him, or her, who falls under its spell.

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