

Murray G. Phillips, *From Sidelines to Centrefield: A History of Sports Coaching in Australia*. UNSW Press, 2000. 194 pp, notes, bibliography, index.

This book opens with a heartfelt tribute by Olympic gold medallist Herb Elliot to his former coach, the late Percy Cerutti. However, far from only concentrating on the careers of "cult-coaches" the author is at pains to emphasise that the work developed from a different remit. Indeed, it is stated in the Introduction that it was commissioned by the Australian Coaching Council, hence its main aim is to record the establishment, development and workings of the Council.

Although such guidelines have the potential to restrict the story in this regard, Phillips is also aware of need to fulfil a wider historical space here as he tries to bring attention to coaches who, in the majority of cases, have often been left out of Australia's sporting heritage. In addition to addressing this issue of coach recognition, the book also examines broader coaching issues within the Australian historical context which include the birth of coaching in 19th century Australian sport, how it evolved over time to represent the modern codified spectacle we see today, and where is coaching as an occupation and a profession heading in the new millennium.

Within the Introduction, the author acknowledges the limitations of the book both as a "selective history" in terms of the sports and coaches covered, and of himself as a social actor in the process of writing a personal subjective history of Australian coaching. It is hoped that this selectivity to which the book is subject will serve as a catalyst for sporting bodies to better document their own histories. Nevertheless, although subject to the given limitations, this book does indeed mark the 'first detailed history of coaching in Australia' (p. xiii) and is thus groundbreaking work.

The author defines coaches as those who prepare athletes for competition as opposed to teachers of skill acquisition which, from a coaching perspective, could be deemed somewhat problematical as athlete preparation in this regard is often acknowledged as only one role of the modern coach (something that emerges clearly in chapter 7 where the complexities of modern coaching are examined with leading coaches). Nevertheless, largely constructed around this definition, the book is organised along the lines of 7 thematic chapters.

In the first of these the roots of coaching are investigated in the context of the amateur professional divide, that not only split sport but shaped its coaching as well. The chapter covers the period from the 1850s to the First World War, as it was 'during this time that Australian sport took on more modern characteristics and shed those more typical of folk games' (p.1). The argument is well constructed that coaching played an important identifiable role in this modernisation, with its history within the sports of boxing, rowing, running and cricket giving early structure to the chapter. Other sports including the football codes are also examined in this respect as the story further unfolds.

Chapter 2 traces the growing status of coaching from the 1920s to 1950s and 60s as it became an increasingly valued endeavour. Thus, it builds on themes introduced in the previous chapter related to the growing importance of coaching, the division between amateur and professionals and implications for coaches and athletes, and the shift from the playing to the non-playing coach. To indicate and highlight this general shift in the role of the coach from periphery to centre stage the examples of rugby league, Australian Rules football and basketball are examined.

Chapter 3 presents a synopsis of related developments in the 1950s and 60s; a period considered to be one of Australia's most successful in international sport as epitomised by the spectacular success enjoyed at the Melbourne Olympic Games of 1956. Within it, the rise of the then revolutionary "scientific" approach to coaching is compared and contrasted with the more traditional "non-scientific" method typical of the day, principally in the sports of swimming, tennis and track and field. These sports are highlighted as the author claims they hold a special place in Australian sporting history in this regard, as coaches within them at the time were designing innovative training regimes. More specifically, the contributions of a number of influential coaches during this era such as Harry Hopman, Percy Cerutti, Franz Stampfl and Forbes Carlile among others are detailed, with an examination of their then novel and controversial increased training methods and attention to athlete motivation being given due prominence. Indeed, this appears to be the most interesting aspect of the book from a coach's perspective as the intense rivalry between Stampfl and Cerutti in particular is well presented.

The following 3 chapters take a closer look at the establishment and development of official coach education programmes in Australia, thus taking the focus somewhat away from the characters involved to a chronology of the evolving formalised structure. In this respect, Chapter 4 discusses the origins and growth of the Australian Coaching Council, and contains a general examination of the interaction between government and coaching. Chapter 5 furthers this theme with an exploration of the role of the Council in initiating, developing and expanding coach education throughout the country, whilst paying particular attention to the Year of the Coach programme. In turn, Chapter 6 examines the Year of the Coach programme in greater depth, and in particular discusses its role in recognising the contribution and consequently raising the profile of coaches.

Chapter 7 moves the focus away from the standardised historical nature of the previous section and includes data taken from interviews with a number of leading contemporary coaches from a cross section of sports. Issues explored with these coaches and discussed here include their perceptions regarding the major influences on contemporary sports, which comprise of how sports have changed over the years, the support staff involved in modern sport, and the respective roles of science, technology, drugs, the media and sponsors. Finally, the Conclusion contains a general summary of the earlier chapters and an outline of remaining challenges.

Although the personal interest generated by the colourful and interesting accounts of prominent coaches and their respective philosophies included in the early part of the book is not quite carried through to the more structured

history of formal coach education programmes in the second, the text remains true to its stated objectives. Throughout, the author pays excellent attention to detail, with the number of interviews undertaken with coaches being an example of the depth of research undertaken within the project. The book has indeed been written for a wide audience; for academics and students as perhaps a *forerunner to future analytical work*, and more importantly as the author intended, for public consumption for those interested in coaching and sport in general.

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