

**Greg Growden, *Gold, Mud 'N' Guts: The incredible Tom Richards: Footballer, War Hero, Olympian*, ABC Books, Sydney, 2001, pp 234 illus (paperback) \$29.95**

Greg Growden is one of Australia's leading rugby union journalists and he is also the leading Rugby Union writer for the *Sydney Morning Herald*. He has written books on Rugby Union and cricket and he has long produced fine writing on Rugby Union for the *Sydney Morning Herald* over many years. Therefore he comes to the project with a wonderful background and in my view, a highly appropriate one to write about the extraordinary life of Tom Richards.

Tom "Rusty" Richards was born in 1882 in northern NSW and died in Brisbane in 1935. He played 3 tests for Australia, as well as representing Australia in the 1908 Olympic Games in London winning a Gold Medal. He also played 2 tests for the British Lions against South Africa in 1910, the only Australian Test player to represent the British Lions in the history of Rugby Union. He served in the 1st AIF on Gallipoli and the Western Front where he won the Military Cross and he lived a life after the war which indicated that he was always affected by it and led to his premature death at an early age. This is only the bare outline of an extraordinary life and Growden has filled in the gaps admirably. Richards' life reads like one of those Victorian adventurers that one read about as a youngster in a boys own annual!

Growden has used Richards' diaries from the First World War and other periods to paint a picture of an individual whose life almost beggars belief and at times reads more like fiction than fact, yet it is true! The use of his diaries to illustrate Richards' life while representing Australia and the British Lions at Rugby Union and his service overseas with the First AIF were the highlights for this reader specifically his thoughts while serving on Gallipoli, a sample of which is listed below:

There is no word, or for that matter, series of words that can convey any realistic idea as to what war actually means. Dante's vivid description of the inferno or a hindu idea of hell are as nothing compared to it. The reality of war I have been through, it is relentlessly cruel and does not give a brave man a dog's chance (p. 148).

The picture painted of Richards' involvement in the Wallaby tour of 1908 and his experiences of playing Rugby in South Africa and for the British Lions are also vividly portrayed. This portrayal by Growden is a significant contribution to the early history of Australian Rugby Union. Growden's portrayal of Richards' life after the war is moving as he struggles to combat the travails of the effects of gas in World War I. His life during this period as he battles on yet never giving in, is evocative indeed - a microcosm of the sufferings of many Australian returned servicemen from World War I.

This publication also has many fine photos which add greatly to the telling of the Tom Richards story. The only minor criticism however is the lack of both a listing of all the sources consulted and an index. However this should not take away from the importance of this work. This book is in my view the finest and most moving story yet published of an Australian Rugby Union player. It is a major and important contribution to the history of Australian Rugby Union and is a book that should be on every sports lover's bookshelf.

Postscript: In 2001 the name of the trophy that was competed for between the British Lions and Australia was the Tom Richards' Cup. A fitting tribute to this extraordinary man.

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