

Colin Tatz, *A Course of History: Monash Country Club, 1931-2001*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2002, pp. 340, illus., notes, glossary, appendices, index.

A Course of History is a terrific history that can be held up as a model for aspiring public sport historians. Tatz has written in a punchy style that engages the reader from the moment the cover is opened until it is closed. He also writes with a sense of humour, using many anecdotes to illuminate elements of the Monash culture that differentiates it from other golfing and sporting clubs. The organisation of *A Course of History* is a combination of chronological and thematic chapters, all of which are complemented with a wide range of black and white, and colour images and photographs. Perhaps the most admirable trait of this history is that Tatz has written in a way that caters for multiple audiences: golf devotees, Monash members and sport historians. All writers realise the difficulty of this task.

For golf devotees, the history is sufficiently integrated into the Sydney, New South Wales and Australian context to appeal to a wide readership. For instance, there is glossary that contains over 77 golfing terms including the unfamiliar such as stableford and stymie. Golfers will also be interested in

the discussions about the special nature of the game, its popularity and its appeal to a cross section of society. Tatz neatly sums up the universal challenges of the game: 'you play against the course and against yourself — to beat yourself, control yourself, forget yourself, change yourself, even reinvent yourself while doing things that aren't natural' (p. 2). An apt description indeed.

For Monash Country Club members, key issues in the club's history are comprehensively reported. Tatz associates the early nomadic existence of the club with the Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA) from 1931. 'Out of the 'Y', as it was called, came Monash Golf Club — and out of that nomadic group of golfers, Monash Country Club' (p. 5). What is fascinating about this story is that the rationale for the club's establishment was the exclusion of Jewish people from other golfing institutions in Sydney. Tatz poses the question: 'Is it possible that the anti-Semitism of Sydney golf clubs between the two world wars gave birth to a club that may not otherwise have been?' (p. 35). After a very comprehensive analysis of anti-Semitism in Australia and more specifically in golf, he answers his own question in the affirmative. Born out of anti-Semitism, the club was appropriately named after one of Australia's most famous Jews — lawyer, engineer, Melbourne University vice-chancellor, and renowned corps commander in World War One — Sir John Monash. A great deal of detective work by Tatz and a host of volunteer researchers was necessary to piece together the early nomadic years, the formation of Monash Holdings Limited that purchased the land for the course, and the establishment of a permanent identity known as the Monash Country Club. Equally comprehensively covered was the construction of the course by the volunteer labour of its members, the fires that gutted and destroyed the various club houses, and aspects of the course as well as the characteristic features of the holes, greens, bunkers, fairways, waterways, flora and fauna. Tatz's experiences as an active playing member at Monash are evident as he writes with insights from his experiences over the course. As would be expected, the personnel who have ensured the management of the course and club house are detailed again with insider's understanding of the contributions of professionals, green keepers, administrators, kitchen staff and others. Finally, the careers of prominent golfers and the results of club competitions as well as the major golfing tournaments hosted by the club are documented.

For sport historians, Tatz provides an excellent synopsis of anti-Semitism and Jews in Australian sport. Anti-Semitism took many forms as Tatz summarises: 'there are degrees and levels of anti-Semitism, ranging from the relatively benign, to the physically and economically hurtful, to the grossly genocidal' (p. 30). These different forms of anti-Semitism are traced from the 13th century through World War Two to contemporary times. In the sporting

context, Tatz argues that 'muscular Judaism' emerged to counteract the negative effeminate stereotype of Jewish men. For Australian Jewry, sport was a conscious means of assimilation as the *Maccabean* journal stressed: 'Let us be Jews in religious matters but Australians in sport' (p. 21). Assimilation was harder in some sports than in others; golf exhibited blatant anti-Jewish feeling. As has been discussed, it was this discrimination that was the genesis of the Monash Country Club. What is ironic about Monash — a club born out of anti-Semitism — is that the members have not been, at times, receptive to both female members and aspiring members of Japanese heritage. To his credit, Tatz does not shy away from addressing these disappointing episodes; rather he investigates both issues in depth. With regard to the eventual acceptance of Japanese members, he asks: 'What conclusions can be drawn from this saga? Victims of discrimination are, in turn, capable of discriminating against others, visiting the same stereotypes on them' (p. 207). Similarly, Tatz chronicles the challenges by female golfers for equal access to the club house, course and management structure in a case that involved the Anti-Discrimination Board and resulted in a 'genderless constitution' (p. 218). This history is an informative case study of Jews in Australian sport.

Tatz's history is an excellent addition to both golf and sport history for all the features outlined previously, but there is one additional attribute of this fine history that has already been alluded to. Tatz is an insider — golfer, member and Jew — and his analysis of the sport, the club and of Jewish sporting life provides a story that is saturated with an acute level of knowledge, understanding and appreciation.

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