



BOOKS

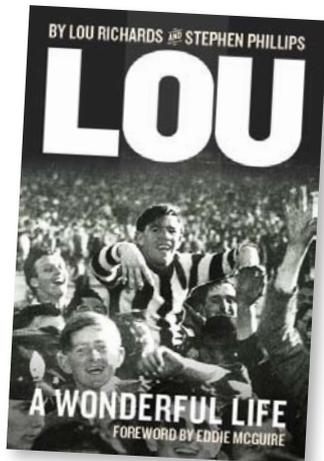
LOU - MY WONDERFUL LIFE

BY LOU RICHARDS WITH STEPHEN PHILLIPS
SLATTERY MEDIA GROUP, \$32.95

Lou Richards' autobiography follows his journey from knockabout kid reared in the backstreets of Melbourne's toughest working-class suburbs, to Collingwood premiership captain in 1953 (Richards played 250 games for the 'Pies over 15 seasons, kicking 452 goals) to media personality.

For those of us who came in late and associate his image mainly with the comedic Ronnie Corbett-style TV persona, it's easy to forget he was captain and a gifted rover, renowned for his courage and tenacity. He was a terrific player.

At the close of his playing days, he moved into the media for the next, oh, five decades (and counting) to assume the moniker of "Louie the Lip" - writing for newspapers and appearing on television. Here's a chance to spend a few hours with this larrikin as he recounts his marvellous story. It's full of charm and cheek and great yarns from one of the great characters of Australian sport.

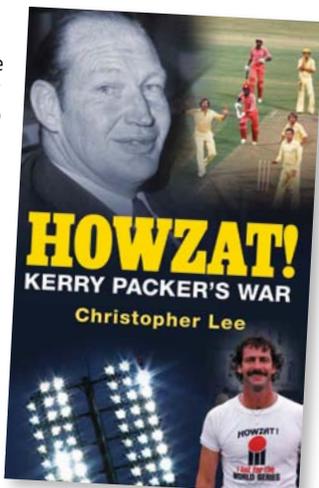


- Graem Sims ★★★★★

HOWZAT! KERRY PACKER'S WAR

BY CHRISTOPHER LEE. NEW SOUTH BOOKS, \$25

At the conclusion of the recent two-part television mini-series of the same name on Channel 9, viewers in their thousands hit social media to collectively cry "I wish there was more". Well, consider *Howzat!* further reading. Like many a movie vs book battle, the latter again wins here. While the TV series covered in great detail the effect of Kerry Packer's revolution-in-the-making on Australian cricket, Lee's book has more space to deliver a greater commentary on the wider implications and reactions to the media mogul's attempted take-over in 1975. With cricket now lit, shot from ever possible angle and wired for sound, BBC's head of sport, Jonathon Martin, commented that BBC would never change its cricket coverage "until hell freezes over"... A few years later, every cricketing broadcaster the world over was following Packer's lead. The reaction to the rebel organisation received a mixed reaction in India, with no Indian players in the initial Australia-West Indies-The World troupes of 1977. Seven Indian players were approached, including legendary batsman Sunil Gavaskar and ace spin bowler Bishan Bedi, but Bedi, a strong traditionalist, convinced them all not to jump to the dark side. We don't need to tell you the ending here - all we ask is that you give a few hours of your time to enjoy this quality read about the birth of World Series Cricket.



- James Smith ★★★★★

THE SECRET RACE: INSIDE THE HIDDEN WORLD OF THE TOUR DE FRANCE

BY TYLER HAMILTON AND DANIEL COYLE, RANDOM HOUSE, \$34.95

In our last issue, I editorialised that due to Lance Armstrong's refusal to defend doping allegations against him made by ten fellow cyclists, he was admitting his guilt. "It is confirmation that, after years of rumours and hearsay and inconclusive evidence, that Lance Armstrong cheated his way to success in those seven Tour victories." On this basis, I wrote, he should take his place among the most contemptible figures in sporting history.

That was before I read this book. This is the personal testimony of Tyler Hamilton, one of his star team-mates through the first three of his Tour wins. This is not hearsay. There is nothing inconclusive about his evidence. There is nothing vague about it. This is an eyewitness account of Armstrong's (and Hamilton's) systematic doping.

It is completely damning. It describes in fine detail the place of doping in contemporary cycling culture, the liaisons with doctors who managed their regimes (Michele Ferrari and Ufe Fuentes, the Spanish quack at the centre of the Operation Puerto scandal), how the various drugs were acquired and administered (for Hamilton and Armstrong, it was basically a combination of EPO and testosterone), how their blood doping regime was contrived and executed, how the drugs worked in the bodies and in their minds.

They first roomed together in 1998 while riding for US Postal. "Gradually Lance and I built up some trust. We started to open up with each other a bit more, to talk shop. We talked about how much EPO we took at a time, how much of a boost we got [we were about the same]. We talked about recovery products, our likes and dislikes. We talked about cortisone [which was illegal]. Lance told me how he sometimes felt blocked the day of a cortisone injection... and how he preferred to take it the morning of an easier stage..."

Hamilton recounts in detail how the team got around the heightened security attention after the 1998 Festina scandal fully revealed the extent of doping in the peloton to the public, and there were concerns about police raids on their team bus and hotel rooms: "We were standing in Lance's kitchen when he outlined the plan: he would pay Philippe to follow the Tour on his motorcycle, carrying a thermos full of EPO and a prepaid cell phone. When we needed Edgar (their nickname for EPO), Philippe would zip through the Tour's traffic and make a drop-off. Simple... Lance practically glowed when he told me about the plan - he loved this kind of MacGyver secret-agent stuff. The French could search us all day long and they'd find zero."

From 2001: "Yes, Lance tested positive for EPO in the Tour of Switzerland. I know because he told me. We were standing near the bus the

morning of Stage 9. Lance had a strange smile on his face. He was kind of chuckling, like someone had told him a good joke. 'You won't fucking believe this,' he said. 'I got popped for EPO.' It took a second to absorb. My stomach hit the floor. If that was true, Lance was done. The team was done. I was done. He laughed that dry laugh again. 'No worries, dude. We're gonna have a meeting with them. It's all taken care of.' Armstrong never mentioned the subject to me again. Later he made two donations totalling \$125,000 to the UCI's anti-doping fund."

We could go on - private jet flights into Spain to have blood removed for later reinjection (the practice of blood doping). The micro-dosing specifics of their regimes to fool the testers. These are just a few tastes of the type of evidence presented.

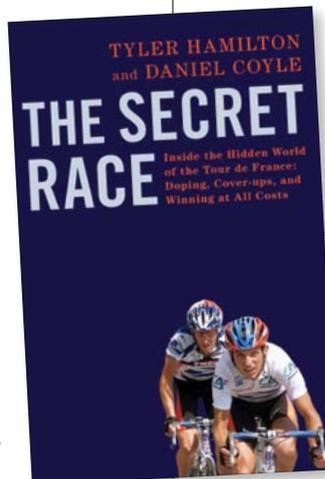
If, by reading the review this far, you get the impression that the book is all about Lance, well it is. And it isn't. Armstrong is understandably a central character - as he was in Hamilton's career. And Hamilton addresses what has been probably the biggest burning issue in world sport for the last 10 years. But as he recounts the tale of the slippery slope that was his own doping journey, we enter the ethically fraught realm that these elite cyclists inhabited. Hamilton never offers excuses for the course he took - just offering us an understanding.

As writer Daniel Coyle says: "When Tyler and I started talking, I realised this was an historic opportunity. No one's ever had a ticket behind the wall of silence, behind locked doors, onto the team bus. Over the past two years, in more than 200 hours of interviews and trips to key locations in Spain and France, Tyler has given me complete access to his story. To verify and corroborate his account, I've also talked to numerous independent sources, including former team-mates, several of whom are going on the record for the first time. This is a classic tale of human ambition and the consequences of trying to win at any cost."

Says Hamilton: "When I testified to the grand jury, I told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I kept it all inside for way too long and, for the first time, I realised it was a story that needed to be told. I think when people learn how it really was - how it worked, how we did it, what it felt like - they'll see that this story is bigger than any one individual in the sport. It's really about making choices when you're pushed to the edge and deciding what you're willing to do to compete. I want to take people inside our world so they can understand the lives we lived."

Probably the most important sports book of the last decade.

- GS ★★★★★



GAMES



FIFA 13

XBOX360/PS3, EA SPORTS, \$98

EA Sports has pulled off an impressive feat – it has developed its “other” football title to the point where it has surpassed its *Madden NFL* franchise as its star performer. Simply put, *FIFA* is as comprehensive as a football game can get (at least until next year).

The franchise has had to negotiate the balance between gameplay and its football sim qualities, trying to figure out how much of it is a person pushing buttons as opposed to the data sets of the players. A concept like First Touch Control neatly unifies this – differences in player quality really stand out as the name players (basically anyone Spanish) will trap passes adroitly, the journeymen Premier League defenders not so much.

EA Sports’ forte has always been about building the environment around the play. The grounds look exquisite (you can even rename them, to keep up with the sponsors), and the commentary combo of the great Martin Tyler and Alan Smith is pure verisimilitude.

The elements all tie together in career mode, in which you can play as either footballer or manager (footballer, after retirement, can also make the transition to sideline boss). A neat addition this year is the chance to play for or manage national teams – the England job awaits!

– Jeff Centenera ★★★★★

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2013

XBOX360/PS3, KONAMI, \$89.95

Cristiano Ronaldo graces the cover of the latest iteration of *Pro Evo*, and damned if the game doesn’t share some of the Real Madrid star’s characteristics: artful, moody, often complex, yet given to bursts of brilliance. It’s been a bounce-back year for the franchise, which has lagged behind *FIFA* in recent times, and it has tapped into the qualities that have earned *Pro Evo* a diehard following.

The operative word here is “tapped”. The gameplay is based on a dexterity-testing set of touchy controls, reflecting the Ronaldo-esque step-overs and flicks you can perform, as well as manual shooting and passing functions. The game’s look still has that manga tinge to it, although the fluidity of motion is impressive.

In another distinctive *Pro Evo* touch, it still lacks comprehensive licensing. If you’re a fan of the Spanish, French or Dutch leagues, you’re set, but Premier League fans will still have to make do with the likes of good old Merseyside Red and Man Blue (it does, however, have Man United). UEFA’s competitions are under licence, which means you can’t escape hearing that cloying hymn (“*The champions*”). Not quite the champion, but this game is again a challenger to be reckoned with.

– JC ★★★★★



F1 2012

XBOX360/PS3/PC, CODEMASTERS, \$99.95

From the outset, it’s clear that *F1 2012* is more than just a mere update, with players initially prompted to complete the Young Driver’s Test. Here, you’ll learn all about important stuff like KERS and DRS (temporary speed boosts), different tyre types and how to correctly navigate turns. This introduction not only makes the game far more accessible to newcomers, but schools returning players on the new and more realistic handling. Career mode is still fantastic, but if you don’t have the time for an epic race, you could try your hand at the new Champions mode, where you compete against six of this year’s F1 champions in a series of bite-sized challenges. Or there’s Season Challenge mode, which also features shorter five-lap races where you choose a rival and challenge them for their place on their team. The new variable weather system ramps things up as well: you might start a race on a wet track, only to have it dry out after several laps, forcing you to think strategically about tyre selection. With stunning visuals and options to play as basic or as complex as you’d like, it’s hard to see what more F1 fans could ask for in a game.

– Al Bender ★★★★★

