

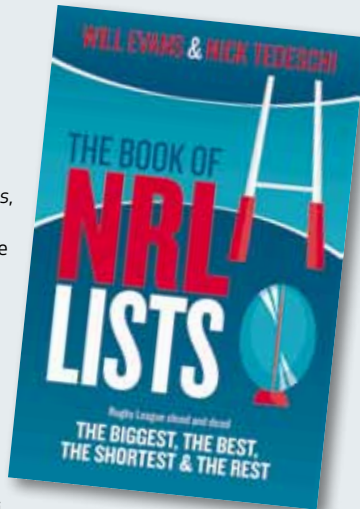
BOOKS

THE BOOK OF NRL LISTS

BY WILL EVANS AND NICK TEDESCHI, SLATTERY MEDIA, \$39.95

This book had us thinking about *The Simpsons* episode where Homer becomes obsessed with the *Guinness Book Of Records*, and starts bringing it around with him everywhere. It wouldn't be hard to see some league tragic falling into the same behaviour, with this neat collection of sure-fire conversation-starters. There's no dry or tedious territory covered in here. Pretty much every list offers an opinion, with a club-by-club accounting of the best to pull on the jumper at each team (even the Adelaide Rams) as well as the greatest games, seasons and so forth. But what's really engrossing are the arcane lists: the best hair (No.1: Fuifui Moimoi), beards (Noel Cleal) and moustaches (J.J. Giltinan), very full records of biting, gouging and spitting incidents (this is rugby league, after all) as well as our favourite, a ranking of the best Smiths in the game's history. There are more than ten good reasons to take a look at this book.

- Jeff Centenera ★★★★★

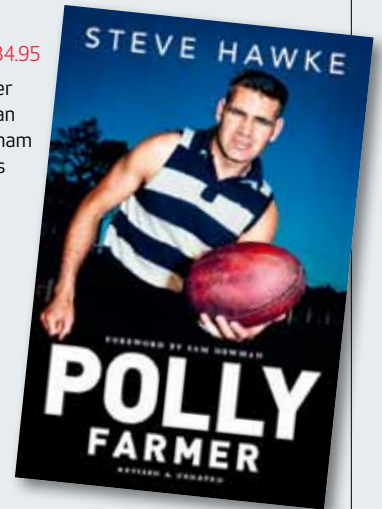


POLLY FARMER

BY STEVE HAWKE, SLATTERY MEDIA, \$34.95

Even though his playing days were over before the 1970s golden age of Australian football nostalgia, the greatness of Graham "Polly" Farmer is beyond dispute. He was among the first set of Legends inaugurated into the AFL Hall of Fame; he is widely considered to be one of the two best ruckmen ever, as well as the finest Aboriginal player in Australian football history. This revised biography, which was first published in 1994, recounts a sporting life that truly broke the mould. In many respects, Farmer heralded the coming of modern football – the athletic ability he brought to his position, the control he exerted on the game, his then-innovative use of the handball. But he played through a period which was radically different to the AFL landscape we know – one can only imagine the even higher regard Farmer would be held in if he had spent more than six seasons, a mere third of his 19-year career, in Victoria.

- JC ★★★★★



FILMS

STEPHANIE IN THE WATER

A FILM BY AVA WARBRICK. BAD WAVE PRODUCTIONS. LIMITED RELEASE. DETAILS WWW.STEPHANIEINTHEWATER.COM

The "documentary" as promotional vehicle is nothing new in the world of surfing media; in fact it's pretty much a rite of passage once a certain level of a surfer's fame (and marketability) is attained. In the blokey realm, this usually means a few tickets for said surfer and a few mates to some exotic wave locale – cue endless waves to hip soundtrack, invariably financed by their clothing sponsor, with zero storyline. Occasionally a movie with a real live dramatic narrative pops up – "The Occumentary" comes to mind, the charming biography of Mark Occhilupo. Australia's five-time world women's champ, Stephanie Gilmore, might present, then, as a worthwhile subject: recall the horrendous attack she was subjected to outside her Gold Coast apartment in 2010. It really rattled her, as she reveals in an emotional interview in this flick: "It basically knocked the happiness out of me." It was a rotten thing for a wonderful surfer known as "Happy" Gilmore to experience, especially considering she had just strung four world titles together back to back in her first four years on the world tour. In this film we get the childhood magic carpet ride yarn leading up to the incident, and we get candid pictures of her return to competition in the beginning of 2012. But the film stops suddenly, and unfortunately doesn't delve too deeply. It's stylish, with some lovely passages. But one for her existing fan base.

- Graem Sims ★★★



GAMES



FIFA 15

XBOX ONE/PS4, EA SPORTS, \$99.95

It's been a year since *FIFA 14* made its debut on next-gen consoles and while the franchise kicked off well, there was clearly room for improvement. *FIFA 15* ups the presentation and improves its already stellar gameplay. New animations make players more expressive, with more than 600 potential emotional reactions being triggered in-game, bringing the TV broadcast-style presentation closer to the real thing. The frequent cutaways and replays that show the players shaking their heads, for example – while they generate atmosphere and make you feel like you're watching an epic match on TV, they *could* annoy people who just want to get on with it.

Ball control feels more natural this year and AI is less predictable. But it's the goalkeepers who have been given the most attention, now behaving more realistically and animated more fluidly than last year's game. *FIFA 15* more than ever captures the energy and excitement of the real thing. If you're a sports fan who enjoys video games, this is a no-brainer.

- Al Bender ★★★★★