

BOOKS

ON WARNE

BY GIDEON HAIGH, PENGUIN, \$35

At the speed that popular culture goes these days, it won't be too long before Shane Warne will be largely known for being famous, that all-purpose yet ill-defined celebrity. Haigh's latest book is tonic, an attempt to reclaim Warne as the historic cricketer he was.

Drawing back to his first meeting with a 25-year-old Warne, an assignment for this magazine, Haigh observes his subject through five frames of reference: the fortuitous way Warne

came to cricket, his revival of the dying leg-spinning art, his relationship with his peers, brushes with his own bad impulses and, finally, a cricket world that changed markedly around him. The picture that emerges is one of the true outlier, in the Malcolm Gladwell sense – for a figure such as Warne to arrive where he did in his time and place, a thousand improbable things had to line up, both good and bad.

For those all too ready to dismiss Warne as a naif whose failings were only excused by his ability to take wickets, On Warne presents a rather different picture. Many sections of opinion came around grudgingly to the idea that Warne was deprived of the Australian captaincy that he deserved – that in the realm of cricket, at least, Warne was indeed as smart as they come. Pseudo-celebrity seems a strange fate for the rare person who attained such mastery of their sphere.

- Jeff Centenera ★★★★★

HELL-BENT

BY BENJAMIN LORR, BLOOMSBURY, \$29.99

John Cleese explained that one of his inspirations for A Fish Called Wanda was an infomercial with a guy touting, "Buddhism will give you the competitive edge." Championship yoga is the same kind of idea, and Lorr's exploration of this highly athletic and supremely weird subculture is quite the romp. No critical distance here – Lorr gets right into it, taking up Bikram

Yoga, the famed "hot" yoga favoured by celebrities everywhere, and along the way tries to come to an understanding of its colourful guru, Bikram Choudhury. The examination of yoga's physical and metaphysical properties is intriguing, while the time spent sorting out the posers from the people merely holding poses is good fun.

-JC ★★★★★

THE BAD BOYS OF FOOTY

BY MATTHEW WEBBER, EBURY AUSTRALIA, \$34.95

Marvel at them on the field; mystified by them off it. The hold that trouble-making footballers have on our culture is deeply fascinating, whether your reaction to their antics is relish or repulsion. Webber, who penned the intriguing inside-the-rooms account of Gold Coast's first AFL season House of the Rising Suns, casts a keen eye across the infamous and notorious of our four codes (yes, there is at least one union player in there), and lands on a vital truth: that every flawed footballer is flawed in his own way.

-JC ★★★★★



KONG
THE LIFE AND TIMES OF A SURFING LEGEND

BY GARY ELKERTON WITH PETER MCGUINNESS

In surfing's parade of shall we say "colourful" characters, Gary Elkerton has always been one of a kind. A nomadic childhood obviously had something to do with his unconventional ways: he grew up on a prawn trawler, and learned to surf on remote reef breaks. His fearless, powerful riding style took him to the top of the professional tree – almost. He never won a world championship – until 2000, when he won a Masters title. His nickname Kong refers to his bullish aggression in the water – a trait that spilled over into his lifestyle habits: we can very comfortably say he lived very large. Quote: "I was an arrogant, foolish young man with talent, celebrity and opportunity but without a shred of respect for my blessings. The problem, of course, is that cocaine is the perfect enabler for just this kind of dickheadedness." This is a highly readable, thoroughly enjoyable romp through several decades of surfing mayhem.

- Graem Sims ★★★★★

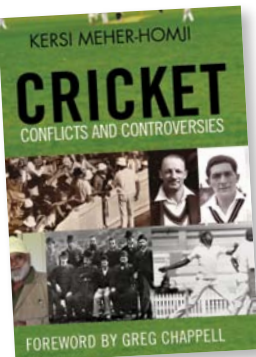
CRICKET
CONFLICTS AND CONTROVERSIES

BY KERSI MEHER-HOMJI, NEW HOLLAND, \$29.95

Kersi is a friend of the magazine, but that qualification actually supports our recommendation for this colourful look in cricket's rear-vision mirror: the guy is a cricket fanatic who sure knows his onions. Okay, cricket has a long history so there was plenty to choose from, and some of the big controversies are

obvious inclusions – and these all get a good workout. But beyond the Bodylines and Bob Woolmers, there are plenty of juicy inclusions in here I hadn't heard of or had forgotten. Thoroughly entertaining for cricket fans.

-GS ★★★★★

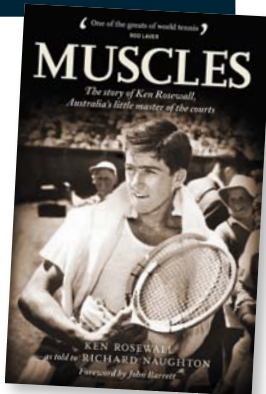


MUSCLES
THE STORY OF
KEN ROSEWALL

KEN ROSEWALL AS TOLD
TO RICHARD NAUGHTON,
SLATTERY MEDIA, \$39.95

Tennis great Rosewall is naturally associated with the sheen of Australia's 1950s golden-era sporting success. The diminutive man known as Muscles was on the scene for so long – winning his first Australian Open in 1953, and appearing in his last Grand Slam final in 1974 – that he became near ubiquitous. But the most interesting part of this copiously researched tome is the intervening years from the mid-1950s to late 1960s, the period before the open era arrived, where Rosewall played his best tennis, working manfully to get a pro tour going but unable to compete at the likes of Wimbledon. His final rejoinder is interesting: "Could a 5'7" player with magnificent groundstrokes compete against today's players? I don't think so?"

-JC ★★★★★

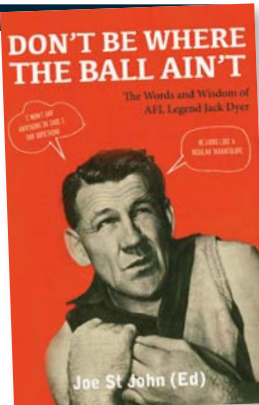


DON'T BE WHERE THE BALL AIN'T
THE WORDS AND WISDOM OF JACK DYER

EDITED BY JOE ST JOHN, NEW HOLLAND, \$24.95

Richmond legend Dyer was a 300-gamer, AFL Team of the Century selection and inventor of the drop punt, but his most enduring contribution to Aussie rules were his words. This collection of Captain Blood's sayings does a service to future generations of footy fans, who no doubt will study it closely as the game continues its trajectory to religion-like proportions in Victoria. Dyer's observations about Richmond's rivals still delight. On hated Collingwood: "Don't go to Collingwood, Crackers, they're bastards down there. I got knocked out there once in the 1930s." On Essendon: "An Essendon supporter is a Collingwood supporter who can read and write."

-JC ★★★★★



Encyclopedia of
Australian Cricket Players



Ken Piesse & Charles Davis

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF
AUSTRALIAN
CRICKET PLAYERS

BY KEN PIESSE AND CHARLES DAVIS,
NEW HOLLAND, \$???

This is a puzzling project. Any cricket fan worth his or her salt knows that there is an already existing "encyclopedia" of world cricket, including all the Australian players' stats, updated in each annual edition: it is called the Wisden Cricketers' Almanac. It is pretty much the most famous sporting book in the world. It has existed for only 149 years. Why then produce a door stop (over 600 pages) on quality stock, while including only the barest details on each player, in one of the most incomprehensible layouts every invented in the history of publishing? No balls.

- Graem Sims

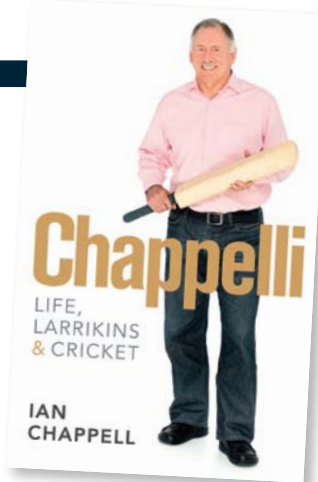
★★★★★ as good as it gets | ★★★★★ a keeper | ★★★★★ worth considering | ★★★★★ ho-hum | ★★★★★ in the bin

CHAPPELLI
LIFE, LARRIKINS AND CRICKET

BY IAN CHAPPELL, RANDOM HOUSE, \$???

As our Drinks With (page 34) this month prove, Ian Chappell is one of the most astute and fearless cricket minds in the country – but you knew that. What we could only have only guessed at was the colourful life he has led in his 69 years, afforded by first his cricketing and then his broadcasting lifestyle. This is not his autobiography: it's more informal than that – closer in tone to the bloke across a bar rather than fronting a lectern. Recovering alcoholics might find it a bit challenging, though: there appear to have been oceans of ales downed in his colourful sojourns over the years, as he crosses paths with an eclectic range of characters, with quite a few adventures detailed in charming style. Okay, so it's not going to win the Booker Prize. But it'll keep you entertained, no risk.

-GS ★★★★★



BLACK CAVIAR
THE HORSE OF A LIFETIME

BY GERARD WHALEY, ABC BOOKS, \$45

Gerard Whateley must be just about the busiest bloke in sports media. You've no doubt heard his commentary for the ABC, as he hosts Melbourne's Grandstand and calls games (when the Olympics aren't on ...) He also hosts AFL 360 on Fox Sports during the footy season, and is a regular on the ABC's Offsiders on Sunday mornings. Can call a horse race! Brilliantly. And now writes a book – and a really good one at that, if horse racing is your thing. Maybe even if it isn't ... I've noticed over the last year or two, as Black Caviar's pile of wins has mounted up, that Gerard's voice and descriptions of the animal have become increasingly gooey (I hope he won't mind me saying that): the guy is clearly besotted, and has channelled his passion into this detailed recounting of the career of this marvellous unbeaten mare. A top read.

-GS ★★★★★



NBA 2K13

XBOX 360/PS3, 2K SPORTS, \$88

The undisputed hoops game on the market has gone in for the full pop culture immersion, proof of its exploding popularity with gamers. An eminence no less than Jay-Z was brought in to consult on the game's overall aesthetic, and the linkage between NBA and hip hop culture oozes out of 2k13.

What made this title, and reduced EA's competing efforts to rubble, was gameplay – about as authentic a basketball experience you can get with a controller in hand. That said, 2K's trademark shot control on the right stick is gone, which is probably a change for the better.

If football games are about the team, the NBA is about the individual stars. The 2k series tapped into this with MyPlayer, the most-played mode in the game, which allows players to create their own hardwood star. In past games, it was a grind to get your player out of humble benchwarmer status – this year, the mode is deeper and more elaborate (love how you can request meetings with the general manager!) but also propels your alter ego along more quickly to potential LeBron or Kobe status. One other new inclusion that has to be mentioned: the chance to play as the all-time greatest collection of stars, the 1992 US Olympic team.

-Jeff Centenera ★★★★★

FORZA HORIZON
XBOX 360, MICROSOFT, \$99.95

I went into Forza Horizon blindly expecting another simulation racer in the vein of Gran Turismo – the type of massive game that involves dozens of laps and hours of grinding to unlock new cars. However I was pleasantly surprised. Forza Horizon basically takes the assets from previous Forza games (detailed licensed cars, meaty engine sounds, an unprecedented level of vehicle customisation) and throws them into an open-world racer set in Colorado during the Horizon festival – a fictitious X Games-type affair where you'll not only compete against fellow drivers but

aeroplanes, even hot air balloons. It's important to drive stylishly throughout these events too with a popularity system taking into account your burnouts, drifts, slipstreaming and so on. There's way too much to see and do in Forza Horizon to list here and the online aspect of the game is second to none. With an open-world playing field of this size, you'd expect the graphics to take a hit too but the environments, cars and effects are top shelf. Don't be fooled by the less sim-driven, more fun focus of Forza Horizon – it's still a long, deep and rewarding game and a welcome addition to the stellar Forza series.

- Al Bender ★★★★★

