



Inside Sport
January, 2010
Page: 105
Section: General News
Region: National Circulation: 23,873
Type: Magazines Sport
Size: 1,050.55 sq.cms.
Frequency: Monthly

Brief: MUPUBLISH

BOOKS

WARWICK TODD: UP IN THE BLOCKHOLE

TOM GLEISNER, HARDIE GRANT BOOKS, \$30

The fourth instalment of Tom Gleisner's (one of the principle brains responsible for *The D-Generation*, *The Dish* and *The Castle* amongst others) *Warwick Todd* series doesn't stray too far from the well-beaten path of its predecessors. This version continues to parody the earnest, self-congratulatory tone of the cricket autobiography, with Todd - Gleisner's fictional Boony-style character - inserted into the 2009 Ashes series. This book rattles along with the same old gags, mock advertisements and genuine photos with Todd's head pasted in. If it weren't for Gleisner's wit, this whole concept would be about as stale as the annual flood of *Tour Diaries* that he mocks. This book does work - I found myself laughing out loud at points - but I do sense that Gleisner is starting to run low on fresh Todd-isms. Hopefully there's no fifth instalment in the works.

- Aaron Scott



MORE THAN A GAME

BY JAN STRADLING, PIER 9, \$45

The premise for this book is outlined in the introduction, where Stradling writes: "Occasionally a sporting event comes along that has the power to halt a nation in its tracks. These are the heart-stopping moments when the game taking place becomes a symbol of something much greater. Racial injustice, political grandstanding, ancient rivalries, national pride, sexual equality..." You can probably guess most of the contests that are dealt with - Jesse Owens at the 1936 Olympics, Bobby Fischer vs Boris Spassky in Reykjavik in '72, Diego Maradona's "Hand of God" goal in '86, the 1932 Bodyline Series and so on. On top of the expected moments, Stradling has also included a smattering of less renowned clashes - America vs China in the '71 ping pong showdown, Honduras and El Salvador's Futbol War of '69, Emily Davison's suffragette protest at the 1913 Epsom Derby. Each moment is given its own chapter and is further divided by a series of sub-headings. The writing's serviceable, if a little clinical, and all the moments are illustrated, many in colour. Nothing groundbreaking here, but a worthwhile read.

- AS

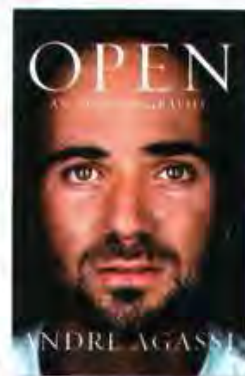


OPEN: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

BY ANDRE AGASSI & J.R. MOENRINGER, HARPER COLLINS, \$36

Forget the crystal meth controversy (a debate for another day), this is the grand slam of tennis biographies, arguably even knocking Lance Armstrong off his bike seat for the best-told sporting life. Like Armstrong's mega-selling *It's Not About The Bike*, Agassi's *Open* is barely about tennis. Elegiac, melancholic, tragi-comic, it's a rumination on the bittersweet American Dream, the falseness of fame, and the internal struggle of living a life not of one's choosing. For Agassi hates with a passion the Groundhog Day-world of professional tennis - "Same venues, same opponents, only the years and scores are different." The cinematic sweep of Agassi's big, big life would make Quentin Tarantino drool - a violent, immigrant father who force-fed him tennis; teenage infamy as a tennis rebel; the paralyzing fear not of losing his first Grand Slam final, but losing his hairpiece in the Paris clay; the emptiness on becoming No.1; his "passionate friendship" with Barbra Streisand; the ill-fated marriage to Brooke Shields which Agassi dissects with brutal candour; the phoenix-like return to No.1 at age 29; and the greatest tennis prize he ever won - his wife Steffi Graf. The moment their two abusive, ex-boxer fathers meet - and within minutes are circling each other up, duking up - is pure tragicomedy. Like Agassi did with *The Tender Bar*, the memoir of his Pulitzer Prize-winning co-author, you find yourself rationing the pages of *Open*, because you don't want it to end.

- Suzi Petkovski



MANTHROPOLOGY: THE SCIENCE OF THE INADEQUATE MODERN MALE

BY PETER MCALLISTER, HACHETTE, \$35

We ran an excerpt from a chapter of this book last month, "A History of Violence". Hopefully that gave a taste of what is a terrific book about our strange species. McAllister is a palaeontologist and excellent writer who compares humans today with their forebears - and finds us coming up short in virtually every area of physical endeavour, particularly in sport. It's fascinating that footprints left on a lake's edge 20,000 years ago in south-west NSW show that their Aboriginal owner would have dusted Usain Bolt in any sprint race - and that's just one example.

- Graem Sims

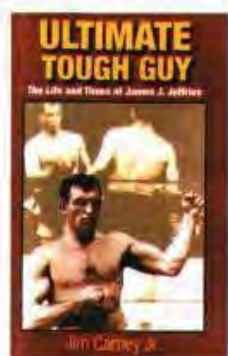


ULTIMATE TOUGH GUY: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JAMES J. JEFFRIES

JIM CARNEY JR, AQUILL PUBLISHING

If you've heard of Jim Jeffries at all, it's probably only as "the great white hope" who was dragged out of retirement and thrown into the ring against the first black heavyweight world champion Jack Johnson, where he was roundly clobbered over 15 rounds. As such, Jeffries is largely remembered as a mediocre boxer irrevocably tied to the racist thinking of the day. This is what has prompted Carney to write this biography. According to the author, Jeffries was considered one of the finest heavyweight pugilists of all time until 1969 when the play "The Great White Hope" was released. From that moment on, Carney argues, Jeffries was increasingly seen "as the foil of Jack Johnson" and so the prestige began to wear off his career. According to Carney, dismissing Jeffries on the basis of his loss to Johnson, coming as it did after six years of retirement on an alfalfa farm, would be akin to dismissing Ali on the basis of his comeback failure against Larry Holmes. And so Carney sets out to right the wrong. The result is a meticulously researched and carefully written tome. If you're a true boxing student you'll love it; if you're a fleeting fan you'll probably lose interest.

- AS

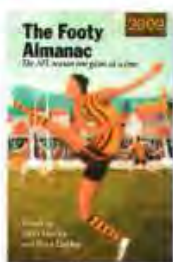


THE FOOTY ALMANAC 2009

EDITED BY JOHN HARMS AND PAUL DAFFEY, PENGUIN, \$30

It's the quirky, clever pen and keyboard work of its 128 contributors which sets this gem apart from other season in reviews. The book's contributors are lawyers, journalists, teachers, students, a shipping merchant and a real estate agent. They all love footy and all bring the reader the action from a fan's perspective. There's match summaries written while cooking, warming the couch [and barstool] and watching with a beer and pie from the grandstand. The book's editors, *The Age* boys among many other guernseys! John Harms and Paul Jaffey, bring the reports together magically.

- James Smith



THE ASHES 2009: GOOD ENOUGH

BY GIDEON HAIGH, MUP, \$28

You had to go hunting for Gideon Haigh's writing on this year's Ashes series: his commentaries appeared in overseas papers and several websites, but it remains a mystery why none of Australia's major dailies signed him up, as his writing, as usual, is at the top of the tree. As usual, we also need to disclose that Gideon is a friend of this magazine, but that isn't the reason we're able to say great things about this book, a collection of his writings following the sequence of the series. These articles stand on their own as incisive and seriously entertaining pieces, which, taken together, make this one of the best cricket books we've seen this year.

- GS

