



Third Umpire

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

BOOKS

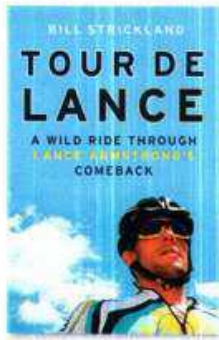
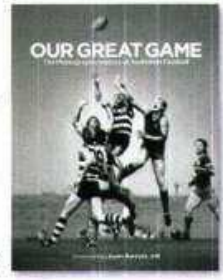
The Spirit Of Golf And How It Applies To Life

BY RICHARD ALLEN MURPHY, \$25
In probably the most populated single category of sports books – golf books – there now exists a thriving sub-genre of golf literature that profess to work on the mind. Sounds at first like this is one, but despite the inference in the title, *The Spirit of Golf* is much less a pop-psychology primer than an affectionately collated collection of anecdotes from the game's grand history. Supposedly the chapter headings are meant to press certain buttons – Confidence, Focus, Honesty, Self-Belief, Courage, Daring etc – and yes, the tales contained do fix on these themes, and yes, they do resonate with some meaning. But the real charm and effectiveness of this book is in the sparse, elegant prose that recalls some of the great moments of the game and casts them in a refreshing new light. It's very well-written, and easily dipped into given its vignette style.
 – Graem Sims ★★★★★



Our Great Game: The Photographic History of Australian Football

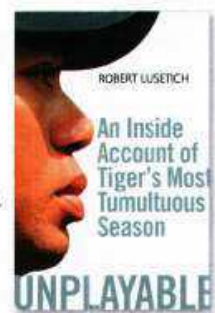
EDITED BY JOHN MURRAY, THE SLATTERY GROUP, \$99.95
Lavishly presented pictorials, built for coffee tables, are dime a dozen these days. This book – with its 304 pages divided into chapters like Team, Coach, Joy, Despair, Fans – rises far above the pack. The pics delve back to the earliest days of the sport and are devoted to all levels of the game – some of the most memorable shots are of diggers kicking a footy on Vung Tau Beach, Vietnam, with a machine gun hanging from the makeshift posts, or of park footballers hacking about in unimaginable mud in the Yarra Valley District League. This book is also improved by the fact it doesn't just focus on the highlights of the game – a shot of an unconscious John Greening being stretchered off Moorabin with blood trickling from his mouth after an "incident" with St Kilda's Jim O'Dea is a notable example. In all, there's enough detail here to keep fans enthralled for hours – the evolution of the suburban grounds, the evolution of players' physiques, the evolution of the jerseys, the evolution (or, perhaps, stasis) of the fans ... Each photograph is carefully selected, thoughtfully captioned and beautifully reproduced on quality stock. Coffee tables across the country should feel blessed.
 – Aaron Scott ★★★★★



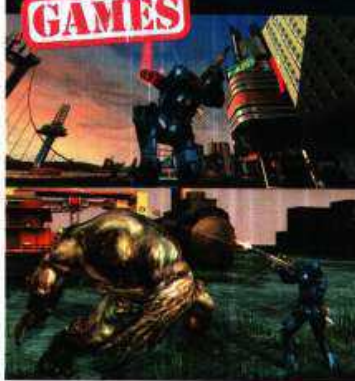
Tour De Lance BY BILL STRICKLAND, ALLEN AND UNWIN, \$30
Don't be deterred by the banal title – this book is a cracking read. Strickland is an accomplished cycling writer: he edits America's *Bicycling Magazine* and has written three cycling books. One of these books – *We Might As Well Win* – Strickland co-authored with Armstrong's long-time friend and team director, Johan Bruyneel. It's this connection with Bruyneel that provided the seeds for this book. In one of their many conversations, Bruyneel let slip to Strickland way back in mid-2008 that Armstrong was making a comeback. And so Strickland set about exploring the psychology behind this stunning move. The resulting read is a fascinating insight into both Armstrong and the world of professional cycling. More than this, however, Strickland has injected himself into this book to strong effect. As Armstrong completes his comeback, so Strickland gets dragged back into the inner workings of the cycling community, a place he'd gladly left behind for the more romantic view of the fan. Strickland's prose is colourful, his cycling knowledge is first rate, and he comes across as a thoroughly likeable narrator.
 – AS ★★★★★

Unplayable: An Inside Account Of Tiger Woods' Most Tumultuous Season

BY ROBERT LUSETICH, SIMON & SCHUSTER, \$35
Few athletes – well, even few works of fiction – saw their story turn as dramatically as Tiger Woods did that fateful November night last year. Everything the public had come to accept about the one-time prodigy, who had seemingly mastered the vexing games of golf and modern celebrity in equal measure, was suddenly overturned. Author Lusetich, a former Los Angeles bureau chief for *The Australian*, had set out to cover a season on tour through the lens of Woods, but like a harried screenwriter dealing with a Hollywood studio, had quite a different ending foisted on him. Taking a cue from John Feinstein's insider classic, *A Good Walk Spoiled*, *Unplayable* astutely observes the culture of the pro tour as it tracks its way through Tiger's comeback from injury, to the British Open where he misses the cut as 59-year-old Tom Watson almost wins, to Woods' unprecedented PGA defeat at the hands of upstart Y.E. Yang. Unable to comprehend where this story is ultimately going, *Unplayable* falls short of being a definitive work on Tiger, but utterly succeeds in portraying golf's bigger picture, before the fall.
 – Jeff Centenera ★★★★★



GAMES



Crackdown 2 MICROSOFT GAME STUDIOS - XBOX 360, \$99.95

Crackdown 2 is a missed opportunity. Don't get me wrong, it's a lot of fun – but three years after the original caught everyone by surprise, the sequel shows little progress. Pacific City has been overrun by a terrorist faction called Cell while a virus has been turning the citizens into zombie-like freaks who run amok at night. Playing as a super-powered agent, it's up to you to bring this city back under control, piece by piece. Doing this requires you to a) capture Cell tactical strongholds, b) activate guarded generators and c) deploy devastating sunburst beacons inside freak lairs. Repeat these three mission types a bunch of times and you're done – there's virtually no variety to the missions. The good news, however, is there are plenty of distractions, the main being Agility orbs (collectable green icons scattered high around the city that boost your super powers). Driving stunt challenges return, while co-op missions have been upped to four players over Xbox live. While I was unable to test the multiplayer aspect, I imagine it would be a lot of fun, as the open world is at its best when you're goofing around and causing chaos. If you're a fan of the first game, you'll enjoy *Crackdown 2*; just know that even with new weapons, vehicles and enemies, you'll feel a strong sense of deja vu.
 – Allan Bender ★★★★★