



CRICKET BOOKS

A Sporting World

Archie Mac and Martin Chandler | 9:30am GMT 24 December 2017

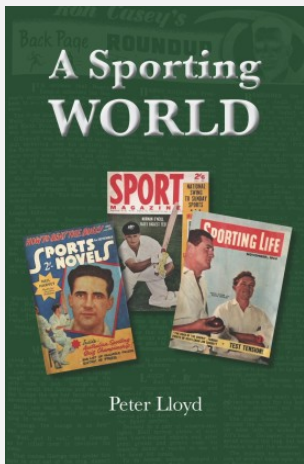
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Rating: 4 stars



A review from close to home by Archie Mac

For a sport crazy country, magazines dedicated to sport have traditionally struggled in the Australia market. Even the Aussie version of *Sports Illustrated* lasted just six issues when launched in 1992. *A Sporting World*, takes us back to a time when, at one stage, there were three successful multi sport dedicated magazines.

Peter Lloyd provides a summary of each of the three publications which were at their peak from the late 1940s through to the 1950s; before struggling and ending in the 1960s. While all three magazines dealt with a variety of sports, Lloyd focuses mainly on the cricket content which featured some of Australia's best cricket writers of the period.

The book looks at each of the three publications in detail. It provides publication dates and aspects of publishers, writers and content with emphasis on cricket coverage. The first publication dealt with by Lloyd is *Sports Novels*.

Sports Novels will be the least known of the three magazines and the most surprising success. After all we learn that it was basically a small family business enterprise. It was published by a husband and wife team and the majority of the feature writers, apart from Johnny Moyes, will be unknown to most cricket fans. *Sports Novels* ran from 1946 – 1964 before it changed names and became a specialist turf racing publication.

The best remembered sport magazine from the period, and the one given the most coverage in *A Sporting World*, is *Sporting Life* which ran from 1946 – 1957. It also appears to have contained the most cricket coverage out of the three publications dissected. The authors too are well known. Johnny Moyes (the writers tended to swap between the publications), Jack Pollard, Keith Miller, Ray Robinson, a young Richie Benaud, and perennial Cricket Web favourite R.S. 'Dick' Whittington.

Some of the cricketing articles that Lloyd summarises from *Sporting Life* sound mouth watering to the cricket fan and will definitely pique the interest of most. I have already checked on eBay for available back issues, which it turns out are very affordable.

It was also interesting that *Sporting Life* had two distinct issues in the winter months to cater for the football codes. For those non Australian readers, the country is split into two footy areas. The Northern states predominately support Rugby League and Union while the Southern states follow Australian Rules Football (less so now than it once was).

The last publication covered is *Sport Magazine* which ran from 1954 – 1964. Jack Pollard, after leaving *Sporting Life*, became the editor of *Sport Magazine* and it seems he wasn't above recycling the occasional article from his old magazine and reprinting it in the new venture. Again the cricket content in *Sport Magazine* does not appear as prominent as the coverage in *Sporting Life* although there are still some interesting cricketing topics covered.

Lloyd explains that despite the continued quality of the coverage of all three magazines they suffered from the new medium of television. As advertisers preferred to spend their publicity budgets on the small screen, and new sporting shows also started to appear on the 'box' the sport magazines folded.

A Sporting World is beautifully produced with many colour reproductions throughout. Lloyd's writing adds to the quality, his prose being crisp and thought provoking. The editing by Bernard Whimpress is also up to his usual high standard. I could only find one typo which is a tremendous feat of proofing.

A Sporting World is in a signed limited edition of just 150 copies, which is available from Cricket Web's friend Roger Page. It is well worth a read but be aware that, just like me, you will probably find yourself searching for back copies of old sporting magazines on eBay and the like.

..... and one by Martin from the other side of the world

Given the nature of its content I was going to leave this one to the Mac. After all the likelihood of my ever being able to acquire copies of any of the magazines the book celebrates is pretty remote and, as they appear to be quintessentially Australian would I enjoy reading them anyway?

On the other hand I have read articles that Peter Lloyd has written in the past for *Between Wickets* which demonstrate a real passion for cricket literature, so on the basis that we bibliophiles should stick together I decided that I really ought to invest in this labour of love. It is a self-published limited edition of 150 well illustrated and nicely produced hard backs. It is not cheap, retailing at AUS\$80, but all things are relative and that is certainly not prohibitively expensive, particularly as I cannot imagine there will be too many customers from outside Australia.

The three magazines whose stories are the centrepiece of *A Sporting World* are, with their lifespans in brackets, *Sport Magazine* (1954-1964), *Sports Novels* (1946-1964) and *Sporting Life* (1946-57). Lloyd describes them as *the three staple Australian general sport magazines of the mid-20th century*. It would seem the magazines' reputations did not manage to cross the globe. Personally I have no recollection of hearing of any of the titles before let alone ever seeing a copy of one.

Lloyd tells his reader that full runs of any of these three are rare. That surprises me. Australians are collectors, the number of limited edition cricketing publications that emerge from The Cricket Publishing Company and other specialist publishers being testament to that, and from the information Lloyd has been able to discover the circulations were not particularly low. Perhaps it is the fact that the magazines dealt with sports other than cricket and therefore appealed more to the casual reader than the collector? Had there been a specialist cricket magazine at the time I might have been inclined to reach that conclusion, but there wasn't so it is an interesting question. After all in England the task of obtaining back copies of *The Cricketer* is neither difficult or costly.

In the early part of his book Lloyd looks at a few other general sporting publications that appeared in Australia before, during and after his three favourites. Oddly he doesn't deal with the few specialist cricketing magazines that appeared as well, although to be fair to him he makes it clear that is not in his mission statement. I suspect though that the subject would not have detained him for too long anyway. Unless I have misunderstood the position other than a few titles that ran for little more than a handful of issues there was nothing between *The Australian Cricketer** that appeared in the early 1930s and David Lord's *World of Cricket* that appeared for a few years in the 1970s.

It is curious that in the UK the relevant period was covered by a single specialist cricket magazine, the long and to this day still running *The Cricketer*, and not a great deal else as far as magazines were concerned. There was at least one general sport magazine available here at the time, *World Sports*, on the subject of which Dave Wilson has written us a couple of nostalgic articles. They can be read [here](#) and [here](#). It is not a magazine I had ever seen before reading Dave's articles, and surprisingly is not mentioned in *Padwick*. In contrast all three of *Sport Magazine*, *Sports Novels* and *Sporting Life* have entries in the game's bibliography.

Books about magazines have appeared before. There have been a number of anthologies taken from the pages of particular publications, but those generally contain only the briefest background. The only true history that springs to mind is Tony Laughton's excellent *Guide to Cricket*, an absorbing book that appeared in 2013. Did *A Sporting World* use Laughton's work as a template? Definitely not is the answer to that one. Lloyd's book is much more of a story, without the tables and neat compartments that characterise Laughton's work. In terms of the quality of the read however there is little to choose between the two books.

Its subject matter means that *A Sporting World* is not going to appeal to many, but to those whose interest is piqued by the prospect of reading the stories of these magazines and the people who were responsible for them it is certainly recommended. One, presumably intended, consequence of reading the book is to instil in its reader a desire to actually find a few of these magazines. There were some excellent writers in Australia at the time and they made many contributions to *Sport Magazine*, *Sports Novels* and *Sporting Life*. Ray Robinson is this reviewer's favourite, but AG 'Johnny' Moyes, RS 'Dick' Whittington and Jack Pollard were all top class writers. I wonder if Lloyd's next project should be an anthology? In three parts, naturally.