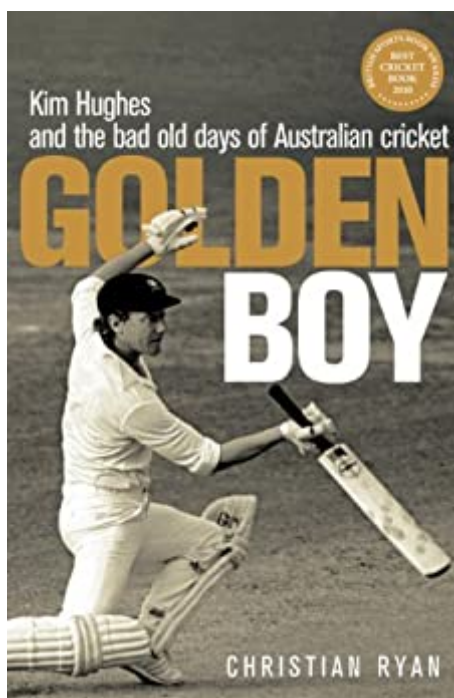


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Golden Boy: Kim Hughes And The Bad Old Days Of Australian Cricket



Synopsis

Kim Hughes was one of the most majestic and daring batsmen to play for Australia in the last 40 years. Golden curled and boyishly handsome, his rise and fall as captain and player is unparalleled in our cricketing history. He played at least three innings that count as all-time classics, but it's his tearful resignation from the captaincy that is remembered. Insecure but arrogant, abrasive but charming; in Hughes' character were the seeds of his own destruction. Yet was Hughes' fall partly due to those around him, men who are themselves legends in Australia's cricketing history? Lillee, Marsh, the Chappells, all had their agendas, all were unhappy with his selection and performance as captain - evidenced by Dennis Lillee's tendency to aim bouncers relentlessly at Hughes' head during net practice. Hughes' arrival on the Test scene coincided with the most turbulent time Australian cricket has ever seen - first Kerry Packer's World Series Cricket, then the rebel tours to South Africa. Both had dramatic effects on Hughes' career. As he traces the high points and the low, Chris Ryan sheds new and fascinating light on the cricket - and the cricketers - of the times.

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Customer Reviews

It's uncanny how enthralling good cricket writing can be. This book about Kim Hughes, an Australian batsman and captain from the 1970s and 80s, is a story of considerable achievement with a sad, pervasive sense of missed opportunity. The best passages in the book are marvellous. On the downside, the chronology is not handled well, with some unwise hopping around in time that will surely be confusing for someone who does not have a good memory of that period. The book is worth reading both for its small touches and for its cumulative atmospheric conjuring of the on-field battles between the West Indian fast bowling titans of the day (Holding, Marshall, Garner) and the Australian batsmen, and also the regrettable off-field strife between Hughes and more senior players, especially Lillee (who does not come off well in the book). The cameo incident through which the overly tanned Australian bowler Michael Whitney decided not to tour South Africa during the apartheid era is also not to be missed. I was once in a biology seminar where the late Stephen Jay Gould opined that baseball was the only sport that generated really good writing. That was not a comment to leave untouched on the table. One of the things that makes the book so good is the strangeness and disfunctionality of cricket at the time. Cricket was a mess then, but a weighty and significant mess. Cricket is a mess again now, and a pointless one.

Seeing Kim Hughes on the telly during the Lords Test this Ashes summer - a little heavier-set, but with the same golden curls and sunny disposition - brought back memories of my school days. Kim Hughes had led the 2nd string Aussie team to India in 1979 - and scored a century in the very first test, leading from the front and making it clear that Packer devastated they may be, but Australia would still not be a pushover. That such a talent would end up being consigned to the shadows prematurely was a puzzle - one that Christian Ryan reconstructs with empathy in *Golden Boy*. His style takes some getting used to - Mr. Ryan writes for Cricinfo, the premier website covering cricket and the sudden shifts back and forth of time, place & tempo sometimes feel like articles written at different times. But readers are advised to persist, as he does a great job of immersing readers into a period (early Eighties) of great tumult in Aussie cricket. The shadow machinations that led first to the Packer revolt and later the Rebel tour to South Africa, the entitlement felt by the Packer stars when they returned to establishment cricket, the resentment of those that stuck by the Establishment at that time at their shabby treatment later, the attitudes and behaviours of some prima donnas - Lillee, Chappell and Marsh - all played a significant, and yet barely understood role in the Kim Hughes story. From leading Australia before he ever even led his state in Shield cricket, to lighting up Lords at the Centenary Test, a brave century on a minefield of an MCG wicket against the fearsome West Indies (Even Ian Chappell rated it the bravest knock he'd ever seen from an

Aussie batsman) Hughes had it all. But he also had to deal with some unique problems - the barely disguised questions by the Packer clique about his ability and suitability to captain Australia, with almost always being a temporary captain depending on the whims of Greg Chappell's availability for tours and with the small-minded noncooperation of legends Rodney Marsh and Dennis Lillee. This culminated in his tearful breaking down and relinquishment of captaincy after copping the blame for back to back drubbings from the West Indians - something that even better endowed teams had to endure during that decade. Mr Ryan, while clearly a fan of Hughes, does not pull punches in highlighting the often muddled thinking and at times unimaginative leadership of Hughes. But the feeling that a reader is left with is that of if only.....if only Hughes had got the support from experienced players, if only the Packer rebel episode had played out better, if only the captaincy was not thrust on him so early, then maybe the Kim Hughes may not have ended up being the forgotten Golden Boy.

A thoroughly researched investigation into the turbulent clash of personalities and circumstances that contributed to the dark days of Australian cricket in the 80s. Before they were world beaters they were a ragged collection of egos looking to clash more amongst themselves than with opponents. And no take is more poignant than that of Kim Hughes, the titular golden boy whose natural talents were wrecked by constant sniping from within, starting from the trio of Lillee, Marsh and Chappell to run ins with the administrators and the business interests of Kerry Packer. Today as the current Australian team is one again struggling with warring factions, this book proves that history repeats itself, first time as tragedy, second time as farce

An intriguing cricket character whose genius seems to be that he survived past the playing levels where he could easily have been killed off. Hughes has a unique kind of courage. This reads as classic Australian biography in the line of Fingleton, Robinson, Haigh etc "willingness to seek out and interview witnesses to the story, to two generations. Early story from country WA to Perth district competition very well done. Also felt that justice was done to all the later protagonists.

This is not just one of the great cricket books, this is one of THE great books. An absorbing account of the times and personalities, and it is almost impossible to stop reading. As already stated, as in so much sport, some stand out characters put themselves ahead of Australian cricket, well ahead...setting virtually treasonous standards of behaviour.

I loved this book! Gave me a great insight on how it was back then, me not being around in the 1980s its very well written and and makes you want to keep reading I would suggest this to any cricket fan!

Revealing

I would like to say that if you're a sports fan, this is one of the best books in the business. Realistically, you do have to have more than a passing interest in cricket to get the most out of it. But when you consider that the vast majority of cricket books in Australia are autobiographies, biographies and/or hagiographies, Golden Boy stands apart as a tough, entertaining and thought-provoking read. This will have you going to youtube to check out some of Hughes' best innings, which stand as some of the greatest in the game.

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