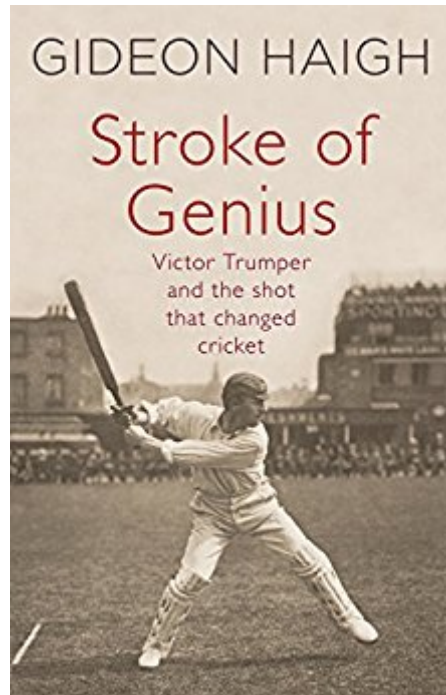




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Stroke Of Genius



Synopsis

Today Victor Trumper is, literally, a legend - revered for deeds lost in time, a hallowed name from the golden era from before the moving image began to dictate memories and Bradman reset the records. In life, Trumper was Australia's first world beater - at his peak just after Federation, he was not just a cricketer but an artist of the bat, the genius of a new era, a symbol of what Australia could be. Crowds flocked to his club matches, English supporters cheered him on in Tests, and at his early funeral in 1915 - even amidst the grief of war - mourners choked the streets of Sydney. Trumper lives on, not just as the name of a stand at the SCG, or a park near his former home ground. He lives in an image that captures him mid-stroke: a daring player's graceful advance into the unknown, alive with intent and controlled abandon. Reproduced countless times in cricket books and pavilions around the world, it conjures an era, an attitude - cricket's first imaginings of itself - and encapsulates the timeless beauty of sport like none other. If Trumper is a legend, George Beldam's 'Jumping Out' has become an icon. But that image has almost paradoxically obscured the story of its subject. Man and photograph have entranced Gideon Haigh since childhood, and in *Stroke of Genius* he explores both the real Victor Trumper and the process of his iconography. Together they inspired a profound moral and aesthetic revaluation of the game, and changed the way we think about cricket, art and Australia. In this inventive, fresh and compelling work of history, Haigh reveals how Trumper, and Beldam's incarnation of his brilliance, are at the intersection of sport and art, history and timelessness, reality and myth. 'Haigh, cricket-lover and polymath, couldn't write a dull book if he tried ... the book equally qualifies as art and social history.' - *The Saturday Paper* 'Gripping ... Haigh draws on an encyclopaedic knowledge of cricketing fact and folklore ... [and] evokes an era retrospectively made golden.' - *The Times*

Book Information

File Size: 46287 KB

Print Length: 336 pages

Publisher: Penguin eBooks (August 29, 2016)

Publication Date: August 29, 2016

Language: English

ASIN: B01I8RL4DI

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #714,160 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #48

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Sports > Other Team Sports > Cricket #104

in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Other Team Sports > Cricket

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