



Mystery Spinner: The Life and Death of an Extraordinary Cricketer



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Gideon Haigh

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It is no mystery that today the name of Jack Iverson is virtually unknown. For most of his life he was an unexceptional estate agent in Australia. He died in obscurity, by his own hand, at the age of only 58. He was a clumsy fielder, and a hopeless batsman. But for four years he was the best spin bowler in the world. The story of Jack Iverson is one of the most remarkable in the history of cricket. 'Every now and then,' wrote one journalist, 'there comes a man whp can do the right thing the wrong way round.' Iverson took up cricket, at the advanced age of 31, as capriciously as he left it, joining a club 3ds XI in Melbourne one day, and instantly announcing himself as the most prodigious and improbable spinner of a cricket ball. Mystery Spinner is more than the beautifully written life of an elusive and forgotten hero who, after his brief burst of celebrity, has left strangely little trace in posterity. It is also the utterly compelling story of Gideon Haigh's quest to solve the enduring riddle of Jack Iverson's life. And above all it is a moving study, for an age that presumes sporting prowess to be the ultimate definition of personal identity, of how skill is half the battle in sport, and how it takes an extraordinary individual to cope successfully with extraordinary achievement.

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Review

One of the best cricket biographies I have ever read. -- *Wisden Cricket Monthly*

With sympathetic yet rigorous analysis of personality, and wonderful writing, (Haigh) has produced a classic. -- *Sunday Times* About the Author

GIDEON HAIGH has covered all recent Ashes series in both Australia and England for The Times, the Guardian, or Wisden Cricketer, and written books about each one for Aurum. He is the author of a number of acclaimed cricket books, including *Mystery Spinner*, which was voted Cricket Society Book of the Year and recently chosen by The Times as one of its 50 greatest sports books of all time; *The Big Ship* (a biography of the Australian Test captain Warwick Armstrong); *Many a Slip* (a hilarious diary about his club side); two anthologies of material from Wisden Cricketers' Almanack, *Peter the Lord's Cat* and *Parachutist at Fine Leg*; and several collections of essays. He lives in Melbourne with his wife and daughter.

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