



[Cooper not out]

By Smith, Justin

First published in 2022

Genre and Subject

Cricket players -- Fiction

Police -- Fiction

Newspapers -- Sections, columns, etc. -- Sports -- Fiction

Cricket stories

Australian fiction

Synopsis

In the Australian summer of 1984, in the small country town of Penguin Hill, Sergeant Roy Cooper is making a name for himself. He's been batting for his local cricket club for decades — and he's a statistical miracle. He's overweight, he makes very few runs, he's not pretty to watch, but he's never been dismissed.

When local schoolgirl Cassie Midwinter discovers this feat, she decides to take the matter further. The remarkable story finds its way into the hands of Donna Garrett, a female sports columnist who's forced to write under a male pseudonym to be taken seriously.

That summer, the West Indies are thrashing Australia, and the Australian people's love of cricket has never been lower. But Donna's columns on Roy Cooper capture the imagination of a nation, and soon there's pressure to select him for the national team. This would see him playing at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, carrying the spirit of every small country town in Australia along with him. Could such a miracle actually happen?

Author Biography

Justin Smith is a Melbourne writer, journalist and broadcaster. He's a columnist with the Melbourne Herald Sun and a weekly guest on Channel Seven's Sunrise program and Sky News.

Justin has had a long career in radio as a presenter and executive producer. He has hosted national programs, he was embedded with Australian troops in Afghanistan, and was the Drive host on Sydney's 2UE. He's won multiple awards for journalism and broadcasting.

Discussion Starters

1. What was your favourite part of the book?
2. What was your least favourite?
3. Did you race to the end, or was it more of a slow burn?
4. What did you think of the writing? What passages strike you as insightful, even profound? Perhaps a bit of dialog that's funny or poignant or that encapsulates a character? Maybe there's a particular comment that states the book's thematic concerns?
5. How did you experience the book? Were you engaged immediately, or did it take you a while to "get into it"? How did you feel reading it—amused, sad, disturbed, confused, bored...?
6. Describe the main characters—personality traits, motivations, and inner qualities.
 - Why do characters do what they do?
 - Are their actions justified?
 - Describe the dynamics between characters (in a marriage, family, or friendship).
 - How has the past shaped their lives?
 - Do you admire or disapprove of them?
 - Do they remind you of people you know?
7. Are the main characters dynamic—changing or maturing by the end of the book? Do they learn about themselves, how the world works and their role in it?
8. What surprised you most about the book?
9. How did your opinion of the book change as you read it?
10. Has this novel changed you—broadened your perspective? Have you learned something new or been exposed to different ideas about people or a certain part of the world? Do you think you'll remember it in a few months or years?
11. If you could ask the author a question, what would you ask? Have you read other books by the same author? If so how does this book compare. If not, does this book inspire you to read others? How does the book's title work in relation to the book's contents? If you could give the book a new title, what would it be?
12. Is this book overrated or underrated?
13. Did this book remind you of any other books?
14. Would you ever consider re-reading it? Why or why not?
15. Are there lingering questions from the book you're still thinking about?
16. Did the book strike you as original?
17. Is the ending satisfying? If so, why? If not, why not...and how would you change it?

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- *Someone else's shoes by Jojo Moyes*