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King, Madonna - *Hockey: Not Your Average Joe*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 2014, pp. 308, ISBN: 978-0-7022-5014-9

Reviewed by Lynette Sheridan Burns - University of Western Sydney

At 308 pages, *Hockey: Not Your Average Joe* is longest media release this reviewer has ever read. The author claims to have interviewed hundreds of people about the Federal Treasurer but she failed to find almost anyone who criticised Joe. Even the mildest criticism is followed by a comment by the author exonerating the man. When a former colleague describes receiving a torrent of abuse from Joe, the author condones this behaviour as 'leading from the chin'.

And so it goes.

Although written in the third person, this is a more a ghost written autobiography with the ghost writer's name on the cover. It is certainly a portrait of Joe Hockey's view of himself, his successes and his ambitions. The book lacks any of the thoughtful critical analysis that separates biography from simple journalism. And simple journalism it is, accepting information at face value and repeating it without any interrogation.

For some reason, the author insists on using her subject's full name Joseph *Benedict* Hockey with irritating frequency. Or perhaps she uses it to remind us of the deep and abiding link between Hockey and the Catholic Church, which is a major theme of the book and is used to establish his integrity.

Another theme is not Hockey but the struggles of his father who migrated to Australia in 1948 with the help of an Australian Cardinal when he was 21 and married the only daughter of an heiress 15 years later.

The book does lay out, in the best possible light, the progress of a person who has been determined to be a successful politician all his life. It describes obstacles he has encountered, such failed policy attempts and his inability to control his weight, and the steps he took to overcome them. From student politics all the way on to the front benches of politics, this book shows how a mixture of pragmatism and ideology has shaped a political leader.

It's a concern that Hockey's current position was inspired by advice that he need to 'stand for something' if he wanted to be prime minister.

“ The campaign to sell who he was and what he stood for culminated in a speech in London, calling for 'The End of the Age of Entitlement' (241) ”

The book is sobering reading for those engaging in tertiary education, as the record of Joe's university days revolves around alcohol, rugby and student politics. How times have changed for university students.

An academic colleague described the book as an insight into how politics works and perhaps it is. Mostly this is a book for fans of Joe Hockey and possibly those who are interested in how Joe sees himself – as a man on a mission to become prime minister who believes he has God on his side.

About the reviewer

Lynette Sheridan Burns is Professor of Journalism and Deputy Dean of the School of Humanities and Communication Arts at the University of Western Sydney. She has been a journalist for more than 30 years. Professor Sheridan Burns is the author of *Understanding Journalism* (2013, Sage), now in its second edition. The second edition was translated into Chinese in 2014. The first edition, published in 2002, was translated into Czech in 2005.

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