



An Epic Swindle: 44 Months with a Pair of Cowboys

Brian Reade

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This book tells, through the personal experiences and insights of the key people involved, the true horror of Tom Hicks' and George Gillett's disastrous 44-month reign at Anfield. It will tell how two men who knew nothing about football, and whose only ambition was turning a fast buck, managed to take over Liverpool.

An Epic Swindle: 44 Months with a Pair of Cowboys Details

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Author : Brian Reade

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From Reader Review An Epic Swindle: 44 Months with a Pair of Cowboys for online ebook

Mark says

A decent enough read, although it does play up to the Scouse "woe is me", permanently aggrieved mentality.

A thoroughly-researched examination of Gillet and Hicks' takeover of Liverpool, why it failed so badly and the effect it had on the club, its fans and staff.

Could have been improved with fewer examples of tabloidese language sneaking in (almost forgivable as Reade is a tabloid sports reporter in his day job) and by continuing on for another year to show how things changed under NESV.

Trevor says

A great book for Liverpool supporters and for those interested in the growing trends of leveraged buyouts in football in general.

Brian Reade writes an in-depth account of what went on at Liverpool football club between 2007 and 2011 under the reign of Tom Hicks and George Gillette. Taking in the stories of a number of actors ranging between the SOS campaigners to the Dubai Investment Capital consortium, the book is hugely compelling due to a combination of great story telling and the real drama of events at Liverpool in the eponymous 44 months. The drama boils over in last few chapters which cover the final High Court case that turned the club over to NESV.

Alan Behan says

Great in sight to how these cowboys nearly destroyed the best club in the world....

Terry Clague says

Brian Reade is a journalist with the Daily Mirror and I remember enjoying his columns back when I used to read that paper in the smoking room at Safeway's (not that I smoked, but that's where everyone sat). I have a vague memory that he wrote a few columns which annoyed me to the extent that I stopped paying him any attention but after rediscovering him via @ourcraig on twitter I thought I should finally check out his take on Liverpool's ownership saga. I'm glad I did.

This book didn't really teach me anything I didn't already know, but it added fat to the meat on the bones of my understanding. David Moores was the last of the amateur English chairmen of Liverpool - his era was cloaked in cock-ups and no true Liverpool fan was displeased to see the back of the man associated with the Souness (who sold his story to the S*n on an anniversary of Hillsborough), Evans (Mr. Nice Guy) &

Houllier (no Plan B) regimes. His desperation to find a suitable "out" led him from one despicable buyer to the next until he fell for the confidence tricks of Messers Gillett & Hicks. Initially welcomed by naive Liverpool fans who were too keen to separate themselves from the anti-Glazer brigade at Old Trafford, the new ownership took a club which had not long since won the European Cup in heroic circumstances and pushed them toward points deduction and relegation under the stewardship of Fleet St favourite Roy Hodgson.

Reade narrates the story from the perspective of a well connected die-hard fan. Interesting snippets include godlike manager Rafael Benitez's despair and paranoia; long-serving players Carragher and Gerrard and their refusal to speak out; and the back story of the passionate campaign by true kopites to kick the cowboys out.

The story told in this impressive book could be a case study in any number of other collections - be they analyzing capitalism; confidence tricks; or sports ownership more generally. The overwhelming feeling is that people involved with the sport are too eager to believe the hype surrounding it and those who are able to see through the hype can either achieve amazing success on the field or can take advantage of the blind to make millions. The happy ending (so far) in this story is that our cowboy owners got too greedy and wouldn't let go of the bone until it fell into the water. They are now continuing to try to recoup their losses via the courts.

Steve says

Important reading for all Liverpool fans showing how low things were and how close it got to going into administration and how off the field civil war had a massive impact on the field. Not overly impressed with the writing style. This is a valuable piece of journalism for the history of LFC but the author couldn't resist pointless digs at United that just detracted from the importance of the narrative. His reference to Martin Broughton as Sir Humphrey Bufton-Tufton especially in the chapter where Mr Broughton is seeing off the enemy in the High Court seems a tad unnecessary when he is basically saving the club. Nevertheless, excellent especially the bits about the fans' involvement.

Rohan Kallicharan says

Brian Reade stands apart from so many of his contemporaries who have worked in the tabloid press. The word that I am looking for is simple: HONESTY.

Whenever I think of him, I always think of Istanbul and that wonderful European Cup Final of 2005. I make no apologies for calling it the European Cup for that is what it is! He appeared in a documentary called 'One Night In May', one which became one of Sky Sports' most successful non-live productions.

He spoke then of his feelings at Half-Time, of the transformation in the early stage of the Second Half, and more than anything about trying to make any sense of it as he stood with his young boy. Simply, he was another fan, a family man, looking after his son, watching his football club. All that stood him apart is the ability to articulate his thoughts better than most.

'An Epic Swindle' illustrates exactly that. A man absolutely passionate about his club, and utterly in despair at the depths to which the previous owners had brought it - literally to its knees, and 2 hours from going into

administration.

His own knowledge and passion is evident, but it is his reputation as an honest and articulate writer / journalist that gains the trust of the most eminent figures in the football club, to include Rafael Benitez, Steven Gerrard and Jamie Carragher, and gets a totally authentic inside view as to the turmoil in which the club found itself.

This is a story told in the words of many, but put together beautifully and with great passion by Reade. Nothing to this point has so accurately and in detail chronicled the journey of one of sport's most famous establishments to its very knees at the hands of 2 unscrupulous business men who had no regard for each other, let alone the supporters of this special club.

Julie Villar says

The information was fascinating, the writing was engaging but it just seemed like it tried to hard to be the voice of the lad next to you in the pub.

Astrid Amelia says

As a newbie long-distance fan who has very little knowledge and interest of finance, I'm very thankful for Mr Reade who explained our club's saga in common words. Love the inside stories on the lads of SOS as well...I was very moved with the way the supporters come together to save the club. Along with the immense anger and hatred for the cowboys. I knew it was a bad time but now this book pointed out how bad it was. I'm also very relieved because I have more understanding on our hero's, Rafa Benitez's, departure. Maybe Torres as well (doesn't mean that he's forgiven, tho)

Greenockian says

Don't waste your money or your time on this. It's written in a style that is the worst of modern British journalism. You could sum up the whole book as follows:

1. Hicks and Gillett were not very nice men;
2. They scammed Liverpool and each other;
3. The Liverpool Board and fans were gullible;
4. Steven Gerrard et al sat back and let it happen;
5. Hindsight is a wonderful gift.

There you go - £12.99 saved to spend on a book that may tell you something you don't already know!

Ajay says

Just done with this. And add to it Parry coming out of his closet just today. If not for a few good things that fell into place, Liverpool football club would have been history. Can't help but be thankful to Rafa for being

a dick towards them, and FSG.

Reade's passion is the same as what he showed in the other '44' book. And gives you a sort of Layman's explanation to how such huge businesses work and what will go wrong, and what did go wrong in this case.

Great read for a neutral. Terrible to go through it for a Liverpool supporter, if you know what I mean.

Duncan says

An interesting story written by a local journalist. The plot is rather laboured and not enough weight is given to the US businessmen's point of view.

Adam Stone says

An Epic Swindle, or to give its full and unexpurgated title An Epic Swindle: 44 Months with a Pair of Cowboys is a book written by Daily Mirror columnist and lifelong Liverpool fan Brian Reade (the author of another superb book about LFC 44 Years with the Same Bird).

It tells the story that any Liverpool fan worth their salt are very much aware of about the 44 month tenure of Messer's Hicks and Gillette and a lot more else besides. It delves into the business practices of both men and the kind of people that they were (i.e. totally amoral greedy bastards) and basically what a gigantic mess (and boy what a mess they ultimately made) they made of the club, and of plenty of other business ventures besides, some of them sports teams just like our beloved LFC.

It also tells the story of a how a small group of fans started a concern in the back rooms of a pub (which is easily the greatest triumph of the entire story) that bought these billionaires to account for their malpractices in their plan for the club, the lies they told, the promises that the failed to keep, all for the sake of making a quick buck for themselves and then bailing out when the club was at its most valuable, which was always their ultimate aim no matter how much they tried to deflect attention away from that.

If you ever wanted a blueprint for how not to run a football club and how to pull the heart and soul out of a team then this would be the perfect book for you as it would show you exactly how to go about doing such a thing, but it would not tell you how to do it and get away with it.

If you thought that you knew everything there was to know about the whole kit and caboodle then read this book and think again, because this is the real story and although it is totally biased towards the club (which is also one of its strengths and major selling points) and against the Yanks of the title, it is a fascinating read that really shows you how close the whole club came to being wound up at one point, and that is a really scary fact considering what has just happened to Glasgow Rangers.

Pick this book up and read it, I can assure you that you won't regret it if you have any interest in Liverpool Football Club.

Catherine says

So I started reading this waaaaay back in the summer of last year. It took me ages because I was only dipping into it now and then. I'm not brilliant at reading non-fiction, so. But I just finished with a bit of a gallop today and wow... what an ending to the book that was! I seriously felt myself catapulted back to October 2010 and was reliving all the court drama all over again, but this time with a front row seat.

Brian Reade really captured all the key moments with some really brilliant, imaginative, hard-hitting writing. He covered so many different aspects of the 44 months of hell and really illustrated the part the fans played in it, a lot of which I had been unaware of before. The job the likes of Mick Carroll and Alan Kayll did in orchestrating different movements to try and get the Americans out was nothing short of heroic and I never realised it until I read Reade's book.

That all taken into account, I feel like a much better, more well informed Liverpool supporter having read this book. It only loses a star because I found some of it really hard going, but that is really more to do with me than the book itself. Amazing read!

Kahn says

The troubled tenure of George and Tom is given the Brian Reade treatment - complete with interviews with the key players (both named and unnamed).

On the one hand, there is insight which hadn't been made public before - and not all of it to do with the Americans. The work of the fan groups and the details of the legal battle are particularly good to read.

On the downside, the book does feel a little rushed - not surprising given how quickly it has been published since the new Americans replaced the old ones.

What also lets the book down is Reade's penchant for adding his own asides and witty observations - fine if we were chatting down the pub, but it feels slightly out of place in what is claiming to be a serious account of a tortuous period in the club's history.

Maitrey says

Made an excellent and quick read. Reade made a convincing case of how two greedy American businessmen tried to squeeze a venerable sporting institution for every last penny in the hope of making a tidy profit (while at the same time, they had staked almost nothing).

Reade recounts everything from the brief honeymoon period between the new American owners: Tom Hicks and George Gillett and Liverpool FC (which they had purchased thanks to financing from RBS); to how things started getting ugly after the credit crunch and the owners unable to live up to their sky-high promises of an improved stadium and massive transfer funding. Reade also tries to be as neutral as possible in the ensuing "Anfield Civil War" where the owners fell apart and lines were drawn among the manager, the CEO, the Staff, and later on, even among the squad!

Reade is a passionate Liverpool fan (and a Daily Mirror columnist), and presents their side of the story most

compellingly. How finally, a bunch of passionate Liverpudlians took it upon themselves to get rid of the owners and organised a massive union which mobilized itself to dissuade any company/group from refinancing the Americans (although they were dubbed "internet terrorists" by Hicks), and finally, a British High Court ruling had to force the Americans to part with the club because they were both broke and RBS wanted their money back.

The message that I took away from the book was that a bunch of passionate, determined people could, with hard work and diligence, bring down two Wall-Street spin-masters to their knees. YNWA!
