

Dougie Donnelly goes down memory lane

Dougie Donnelly has interviewed Billy Connolly, Bill Clinton and Paul McCartney as well as countless sporting stars. The background tales are all there to be enjoyed in the venerable television presenter's newly published autobiography entitled "My Life in Sport – Recorded Highlights".

Laughs are never far away but behind the showbizzy veneer – his route into broadcasting came by way of the music scene in his native Glasgow- lies a deep thinker who is passionate about where sporting values stand today.

"I worry that I am not as absolutely captivated by sport as I used to be he says" in response to a question about his assessment of where Scottish sport currently lies as someone with a real depth of front line knowledge to draw upon.

"Maybe it's an age thing (he's now 71-years-old) but where are the Scots in football and in rugby, for example?

"Every team seems to be full of ordinary overseas players.

"I understand why rugby, for example, looks to South Africa for players in order to be more competitive. But I regret we don't seem to be producing more young Scots players."

Donnelly returns to that theme when discussing television, the medium by which he earned a living for the bulk of his career.

“Football is club TV nowadays.

“I had it drummed into me by the BBC who always said “it NOT about you.

“But look at the recent Manchester City – Arsenal game with SIX pundits all trying to be more controversial than the other.

“Similarly you have ex-players put together according to their former clubs; (Kris) Boyd and (Chris) Sutton ex-Rangers and Celtic or (Gary) Neville and (Jamie) Carragher who are ex-Manchester United and ex-Liverpool.”

Sure, football means a lot to him but it is reassuring to hear someone with such a high sporting profile in Scotland fly a flag for less glamorous sports.

“The Commonwealth Games will be coming back to Glasgow, hopefully successfully in a new, reduced, format, but I really hope they continue to include bowls.

“The Commonwealth Games has always been the bowlers pinnacle and it would be very sad if that disappeared.”

At the other end of the scale are the vast sums invested in golf and boxing by the Saudi Public Investment Fund and it is clear in the book that Dougie Donnelly has had to work his way through this as a self confessed “traditionalist” who desperately wants golf’s internal struggles to be resolved.

“At the back of the mind is the question of whether we should be enabling but on the other hand why is it men’s golf that seems to be taking all the stick?”

Acknowledgement comes too, though, that there is an antidote to the moneyball and it is to be found far from the major

arenas.

“I have four grandsons and one of them is playing rugby at 8-years-old for Boroughmuir minis and scoring lots of tries. It’s great to hear of kids getting enjoyment from sport.”

Family is one of the reasons Dougie put pen to paper having been encouraged by a potential “ghost” writer to tell it in his own words.

“I wasn’t sure – I’m not a journalist – but the finished product has given me even more satisfaction.

“I’ve told my story partly to show my grandsons that I did do something interesting and they have become increasingly intrigued.

“But also I was so lucky to be around in a golden age of Scottish sport – (Allan) Wells, (Stephen) Hendry, two rugby grand slams etc, etc and felt I wanted to pass on what it was like.”

An engaging read for Scottish sports enthusiasts (could maybe have done with less television presenter politics!?) but doubtful if it can get anywhere near the audience Dougie recalls for a cricket broadcast he fronted when Scotland hosted India a few years ago.

Foreword by Billy Connolly



DOUGIE DONNELLY

MY LIFE IN SPORT
RECORDED HIGHLIGHTS

Inviting co-presenter Sunil Gavaskar of Test match fame to say how many were likely to be watching/listening on the sub-continent he was told "only the 40 million."

"Only the 40 million! And to think we used to think a million for Sportscene was good" was a dumb-struck Dougie's reply!

"Dougie Donnelly My Life in Sport – Recorded Highlights" is out now published by McNidder & Grace with foreword by Billy Connolly.