

# not just Augusta

## The ultimate road warrior

### BOOKREVIEW

Merckx: Half Man, Half Bike, by William Fotheringham

William Fotheringham wastes no time describing Eddy Merckx's courage, recalling an incident from the 1975 Tour de France in the introduction to this excellent biography.

Despite experiencing a crash in the early part of a tough stage through Alpine passes as the peloton headed towards the finish at Avoriaz ski station, Merckx managed to close the gap on the race leader.

There's nothing necessarily unusual in that, except, as Fotheringham tells us, "for a man who had broken his jaw that morning the series of brutal accelerations and the miniscule time gain were truly remarkable."

X-rays revealed Merckx had suffered a double fracture of his cheekbone and had a bone splinter floating near his sinuses. He could only take fluids and had no sensation on one side of his face.

There were only six days of Le Tour remaining. Merckx could have retired to nurse his injuries. Instead, he chose to fight on, contesting the race right to the finish line, so ensuring the winner, Bernard Thevenet, enjoyed a 'total triumph'.

Between 1969 and 1974, Merckx won the Tour de France five times and the equally difficult Giro d'Italia four times.

He was crowned world champion on three occasions and racked up more than 400 victories in other races, bludgeoning his rivals into submission. Little wonder he was known as 'The Cannibal'.

This could have been a book simply laden with statistical evidence but Fotheringham chooses to add another dimension by investigating the Belgian's ultra-competitiveness.

■ We've teamed up with Sports Book of the Month and have a signed copy of Merckx: Half Man, Half Bike to give away. For your chance to win go to www.sportsofthemonth.com and

# The financier turning donation into an art

## KATKEOGH

Education Correspondent

He may be worth nearly £300 million but he hasn't forgotten the Birmingham school which kick-started his rise to the top.

And now Sir Paul Ruddock has paved the way for more student success at his alma mater with a £10 million arts centre.

The financier, who was knighted for services to the arts in the most recent New Year Honours, is a key benefactor behind the new performing arts centre at King Edward's School in Edgbaston.

Named the Sir Paul and Lady Ruddock Centre, the building will be shared with the neighbouring King Edward VI High School for Girls.

The project is just weeks away from completion and will be officially opened by Education Secretary Michael Gove later this month.

An Oxford graduate, Solihull-born Sir Paul has long been a supporter of his old school, which has raised £10 million in recent years for building work and a scheme to fund school places for poorer students.

In an exclusive interview with the Birmingham Post, Sir Paul revealed how receiving a scholarship to King Edward's in 1969 proved to be a turning point in his life.

"My father was a civil servant, my mother was a teacher and I went to my local junior school," he said.

"I got a scholarship and the school was an inspiration for me. I had fantastic teachers and fantastic opportunities in areas like sport, music, theatre and drama.

"That gave me a platform for my passions later in life. Not only did it help me to get into university and in my career, but it opened up my mind to history and the arts.

"I've no clue where I would be now if I had not got the scholarship, but King Edward's has always been one of the great academic schools in this country and I just wanted to say thank you."

Up to 100 staff have been working around the clock on the performing arts centre ahead of

the April 27 opening. The din of hammers and drills will be replaced with the sound of music, with facilities including a 400-seater concert hall with room for an 80-piece orchestra, plus drama and dance studios.

Sir Paul's knighthood aroused controversy as he is also a Tory donor until it became clear his honour was for services to the arts and education.

Co-founder of hedge fund company Lansdowne Partners, he has been the chairman of the Victoria and Albert Museum since 2007 and has donated many tens of millions of pounds to the institution as well as supporting the British Museum, Oxford University and his old school.

King Edward VI High School for Girls head teacher Sarah Evans said the centre would benefit all students, not just those with a talent for the arts.



The performing arts block nears completion

She said: "We have all these incredibly talented young people and we have had very limited facilities for them in the past.

"Suddenly, we are moving from that into a state-of-the-art space for them.

"The opportunities for students on the technical side will be incredible.

"And it will give those young people who maybe don't want to be the stars of the show the chance to use professional equipment you would only usually get in theatres."

Sir Paul said: "It's not just about being the star, it's about having as many children as possible participating in music and theatre and dance.

"I was in school plays when I was here, and frankly, I was pretty awful.

"I played violin for seven years and I still sounded horrendous at the end. But the school gave me a love of theatre, of the arts and music,

and gave me that exposure to be able to learn and find where talents lie."

The performing arts centre is part of a £20 million building programme at King Edward's to improve existing facilities for teaching, music drama and sport.

Work is set start in the summer on a new £5 million centre, which will house the modern languages department and a new sixth form centre, as well as the extension and revamp of existing science laboratories.

Half of the money for the new languages centre was donated by an anonymous ex-pupil, in what was believed to be one of the largest single donations made to any UK school.

Former pupils have also been generous in helping King Edward's assisted places scheme, which helps families on lower incomes afford the £10,000-a-year fees.

King Edward's is one of 80 independent schools calling for additional state help to pay the fees of bright youngsters from deprived backgrounds.

It is supporting a new Open Access scheme, proposed by education charity the Sutton Trust, which pushes for "needs blind" school admissions - with children winning places based on ability, not parental income.

If given the go-ahead, it could pave the way for 30,000 children being awarded places.

King Edward's chief master John Cloughton said he had been "deluged" with applications for the assisted places programmes.

He said: "We do not want to be a private school, we do not want to be separate.

"Next September, we will have 35 boys or more coming on assisted places, and 25 or so will be coming here for free.

"We would welcome anything we could do to increase that number."

He added: "We had 600 applicants this year, of whom more than 300 were for an assisted place.

"We have raised an awful lot of money over the past two or three years but there are still boys who pass the examination but have not got the funds.

"Putting money into selective schools may seem politically difficult - but all it is doing is bringing these kind of schools into the world of education."



King Edward's has always been one of the great academic schools and I just wanted to say thank you



Hedge fund boss Sir Paul Ruddock, who is the key benefactor in the new £10 million King Edwards School Performing Arts Centre, opening later this month

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