

RUSSELL MOCKRIDGE: The Man In Front

In September 1958, only minutes into a professional road race, Australia's best cyclist, Russell Mockridge, was dead, his head and body crushed under the wheels of a bus.

The death of the Olympic Gold medallist and Tour de France competitor was an embarrassment for cycling officials. Mockridge was 30 when he was killed and planning a new assault on European professional racing.

On the 50th anniversary of his death Melbourne journalist Martin Curtis revisits the life and death of Russell Mockridge. He finds a literate, urbane, but shy man, an outsider in the rough-and-tumble world of professional cycling. He also investigates passionately held family views that the death was not properly investigated.

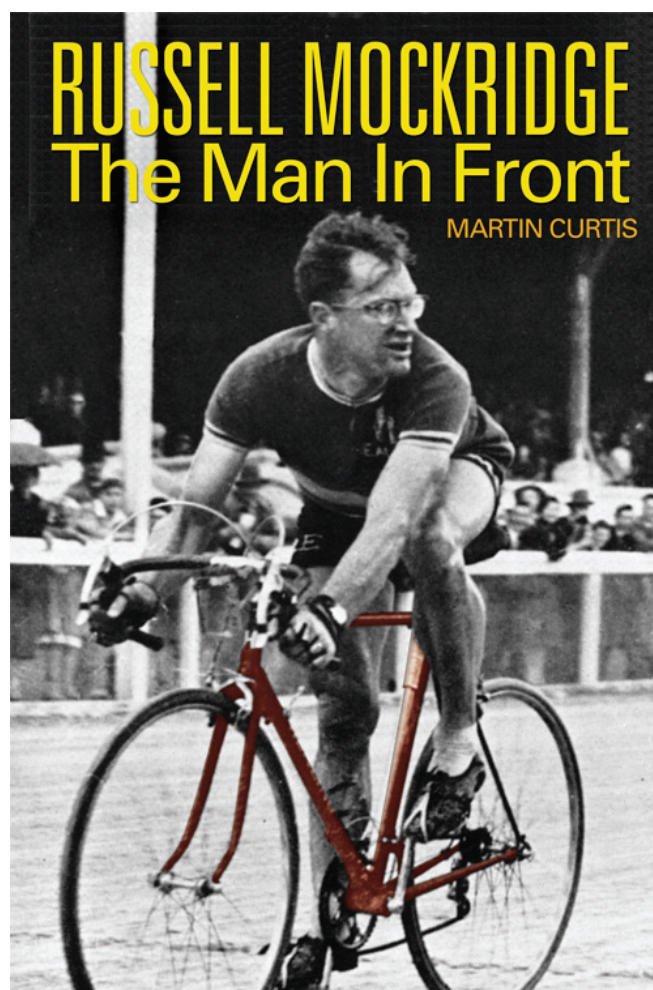
This is a compelling account of a legendary Australian sportsman and one that will be of real interest to the growing number of cycling enthusiasts as well as a broad general readership.

The Author: Martin Curtis is a Melbourne journalist who became interested in the Russell Mockridge story while working for Leader Newspapers.

"I realised that the corner where he died was in my patch, so I tried to get a campaign going for a memorial to mark the spot. But Irene Mockridge wouldn't have a bar of it. She thought he deserved better than a marker on the footpath. She was still very upset about his death and blamed cycling officials for it."

Curtis started researching and realised there was a lot of misinformation circulating about Mockridge's life and death.

"Cyclists knew the name, knew he was special, but didn't know that he'd ridden a Tour de France for example. Also accounts of where and how he died were sketchy



and the facts hard to access. On top of that I wanted to investigate his widow's claims that cycling officials were not doing their job on the day he was killed."

"It's a timeless story in many ways. Catastrophe sets off waves that run for a long time. It's a tragedy and a story of unrealised potential, but it's also a love story, and a long-overdue tribute to a man who applied high standards in his private and public life."

Curtis began his career in journalism at the Border Mail in Albury in 1970. He has worked for the ABC, the Herald and Weekly Times and as a media adviser. He's also one of the thousands of weekend warriors who enjoys the simple pleasure of riding a bike. As Russell Mockridge did.