
OUTSIDE EDGE

Tea Tree Players

Tea Tree Players Theatre

Until April 16

Review by Simon Slade

A collection of men are living out their dreams of heroism on the local cricket field as their partners look helplessly (often irritably) on. Richard Harris wrote "Outside Edge" over thirty years ago, but it could just as well have been last weekend on a cricket ground near you.

It is not, as Harris himself says, a play about cricket, but a play about certain types of people. We don't really relate to them; they are not true individuals or true characters, thus we are free to laugh at them without getting too close to home - until the dreadful thought dawns that we might be looking into a mirror.

As Peter Kentish's Roger organises everyone into submission, we begin to get the message. Now as then, people are concerned only for themselves. Adrenne Gorringe as Roger's long-suffering wife Miriam manages to portray both the pride in doing something well, and her frustration at the secondary role Miriam plays, not only at the Pavillion, but also in Roger's life. Her attempts to confront Roger about "Dorking" will strike a chord with many women with sport-obsessed partners.

Some of the cast certainly got the runs on the board and Gorringe in particular, was excellent. The usually good David Kenna had some trouble creating a strong impression as the recently divorced and re-married Bob, in one of the more varied roles. The volatile yet loving relationship between Maggie (Gabbie Brown) and Kevin (Eric Smith) was beautifully conveyed and brought many of the evening's laughs.

Michael Terwell did well creating a thoroughly dislikable Alex, and Stephanie Goodwin was hilarious in the scene-stealing role of Sharon.

There were times when the on-stage action (which needs to be fast and furious) almost ground to a halt failing to capture the plot's rising tensions and much of the humour was lost. Some of this may be attributable to opening night nerves, but the problems with lines and pace seemed to go a little deeper.

Even Robert Andrews' set did not seem quite up to the usually very high Tea Tree Players standard, which Andrews fine work in the past is largely responsible for. The overall effect is somewhat uneven.

In Act II, the cast do manage to create the sense that a game is actually being played in the middle of the auditorium, but by this time the required run rate is just that bit too high!