

**Tyger Tyger – Magpie Review- March 2002**  
**Helen Purdie**

Johnny Carbone has the weight of the world on his shoulders: his football game is off, his coach is about to give up on him, and he is plagued by nightmares of a predatory dog-like creature with cavernous jaws.

At 17 he's very young to play football for the Ballantyne Tigers but, as his eccentric cub reporter mate Morrison says, Johnny is *Brilliant one minute, heart-stoppingly bad the next*. And in those brilliant moments he's worth the risk the club has taken in promoting him.

The legendary Charlie Farrell, founder of the club thinks Johnny only has a case of the yips. Club trainer, Katherine, the *Absolute Babe* with whom both Johnny and Morrison are infatuated, is also sympathetic. Tearing a hamstring gets Johnny up close and personal with her.

When his mother sensibly sends him to recuperate with his grandparents in Tasmania, where he is surrounded with warm affection, Johnny is able to exorcise a number of demons as well as heal his leg injury.

For older readers who enjoy football – and even for those who don't – this novel is a good introduction to the game's more fascinating aspects. With its budding romances (and quirky humour supplied by Morrison who is truly an original) the story's appeal is broad and Johnny's honesty and self-analysis are attractive features. Locker room antics are frankly described, older characters are depicted interestingly and Johnny and his mother have a healthy and loving relationship. There is a warmth about the writing which is beguiling. Johnny's narrative unfolds the story and Morrison's newspaper articles provide the sporting commentary. The language and age of the subjects mark this as a good one for older readers.