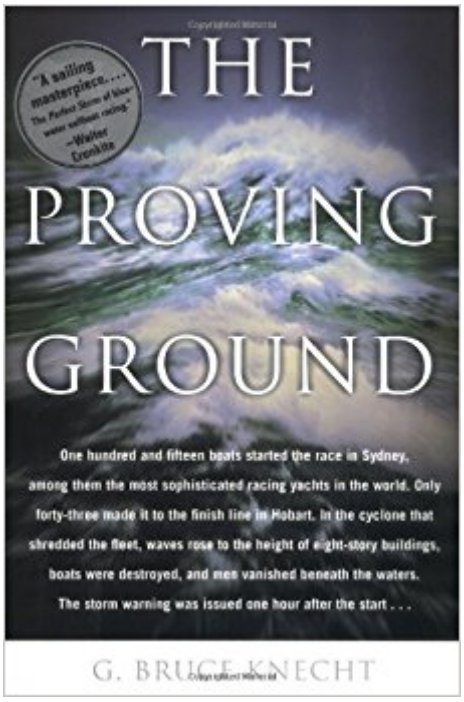
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The Proving Ground : The Inside Story Of The 1998 Sydney To Hobart Race



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Synopsis

On December 26, 1998, 115 sailboats set out on the annual race from Sydney to Hobart; only 43 would make it to the Tasmanian city, and six sailors would be dead, the race having turned in the worst modern sailing disaster since the 1979 Fastnet Race. Combining the best elements of The Perfect Storm and Barbarians at the Gate, The Proving Ground is a gripping narrative that follows the fates of three yachts, including Sayonara, owned by Larry Ellison, the founder of Oracle and the worlds second richest man. From the chilling explanation of how an Olympic sailor came to be catapulted from a yacht and why its crew could do nothing to save him, to the dramatic journey of two leaky life-rafts, The Proving Ground is an exhilarating read. Knechts research, which included eight trips to Australia was unprecedented and exhaustive, involving extensive discussions with both Larry Ellison and Lachlan Murdoch and every survivor with two other yachts. The Proving Ground is destined to be a sporting disaster classic like Into Thin Air and Fastnet Force 10.

Book Information

Hardcover: 320 pages

Publisher: Little Brown and Company; 1st edition (June 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0316499552

ISBN-13: 978-0316499552

Product Dimensions: 9.5 x 6.2 x 1.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 15.2 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 134 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,569,152 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #75 inÃ Â Books > Sports & Outdoors > Outdoor Recreation > Sailing > Narratives #982 inÃ Â Books > Science & Math > Earth Sciences > Natural Disasters #1414 inÃ Â Books > Sports & Outdoors > Outdoor Recreation > Boating

Customer Reviews

In The Proving Ground, journalist and lifelong sailor G. Bruce Knecht tells the staggering story of the 54th Sydney to Hobart yacht race--an annual event that is always an extreme test of courage and skill in some of the world’s most treacherous seas, but which in 1998 would become the most disastrous race in modern yachting history. Although he was already fifty feet from the boat, Brownie didn’t have any trouble spotting Glyn. He looked small, and utterly helpless.... Glyn was already having a hard time keeping his head out of the water, and everyone quickly reached the

same unthinkable conclusion--Glynn was going to die and there was nothing to do but watch.... Steve Kulmar was more shaken than anyone. When he first came on deck, he believed Glyn was looking directly back at him. Of the 115 boats that started under clear skies in Sydney, just 43 would finish. Six sailors lost their lives, and a further 55 were plucked from the storm after the fleet had been decimated by unforecast hurricane winds and 80-foot-high waves. Knecht's style is novelistic, though measured, with a strong journalistic sensibility marshaling what must have been at times appallingly poignant eyewitness testimony into a coherent account of the disaster. His intended focus is beyond the headlines, and by concentrating on the experiences of a handful of individual crews, The Proving Ground succeeds in conveying the agonies of their desperate, sometimes futile struggles to survive--and offers some insight into what drew them to the sea in the first place, and why so many of the survivors have felt compelled to face it again. --Alex Hankin, .co.uk

Coolness under extreme pressure marks not only the subject of Wall Street Journal correspondent Knecht's highly praised book about the ill-fated 1998 Sydney to Hobart yacht race but also its writing and reading. Knecht, a sailor as well as a journalist, uses good journalism and novelistic flourishes to tell the story of one of the worst disasters in modern yachting history. Of the 115 boats that started under clear skies in Sydney, just 43 would finish. Many sailors lost their lives, while others were rescued by airborne heroics after the fleet had been ripped apart by unforecast winds and 80-foot-high waves. Matching Knecht's cool professionalism, veteran actor Stanley Tucci who has himself played journalists as diverse as Walter Winchell and Joe Mitchell reads the story with a minimum of melodrama, letting the words and deeds of those involved re-create the danger, horror and final triumph of man over nature. Simultaneous release with Little, Brown hardcover (Forecasts, May 28). Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

This was a fascinating story about a subject with which I was completely unfamiliar. I had never heard of the Hobart and knew nothing whatsoever about sailing or yacht racing. I found that this book was an excellent introduction. The story of the disaster itself is a gripping tale - the author focuses on a few specific boats and specific crewmen, alternating between different boats and rescue professionals. I found it relatively easy to recall most of the backgrounds for each of the crewmen that were featured prominently, though some of the crewmen who were mentioned less frequently became jumbled to me.Although this is a disaster story, and many of the men found themselves in terrible predicaments, I did find that several of the sailors were unlikeable due to their

arrogance and unchecked ambition. Larry Ellison - the founder of Oracle - has always had a reputation for his aggressively arrogant nature, and this book didn't do a whole lot to cast him in a different light. Several other sailors had opportunities for growth and change during their harrowing experience and instead went on to be as self-aggrandizing as they were prior to the start of the race. It was hard to drum up sympathy for some of those individuals. However, there were several sailors who showed great strength of character before, during, and after the storm. Although he is not central to the story, Rupert Murdoch's son, Lachlan Murdoch, was aboard Larry Ellison's boat and came across as extremely hard-working and self-reflective.If you are unfamiliar with yachts, some of the technical details (such as how boats broke apart during the storm) will be lost on you. Since my understanding of yachts is virtually non-existent and comes largely from seeing pictures of recreational yachts, I found it a little difficult to envision the bunks, life rafts, and the decks on a racing yacht, and I wish the book had more pictures. I used Google Images to supplement where the book fell short.One note: I bought the Kindle edition, and I recommend bookmarking the pictures section and returning to it at the end of the book. Some of the pictures will end up being spoilers if you see them before you finish the book.

SUPERB. BRUCE KNECHT GRABS YOU FROM PAGE ONE, PULLING YOU IN AND ALONG. FELT LIKE I WAS THERE....ALMOST HAD TO DON SAILING GARB...SHOWS HOW A GREAT WRITER CAN TAKE YOU PLACES YOU'VE NEVER BEEN. CAN'T WAIT FOR HIS NEXT BOOK.

Amazing book, couldn't put it down.The worst disaster in recent ocean racing history began the day after Christmas 1998 on a postcard-perfect summer day in Sydney Harbor. One hundred fifteen yachts gathered for the start of a 630-mile race that would take them across one of the world's most treacherous bodies of water and on to Hobart, on Tasmania's rugged east coast. The December sky was a brilliant blue, and spectators crowded along the shore to cheer as the boats set off. Less than twenty-four hours later, the fleet would be shredded by hurricane-force winds and battered by eighty-foot waves. When it was all over, men would be dead, boats would be lost, and those who survived would be forever changed.The Proving Ground is the gripping account of what happened, focusing on three yachts, with a cast of characters straight out of a novel. There was Sayonara, owned by Larry Ellison, the world's second-richest man and a restless soul with an almost pathological need to win. His crew included Lachlan Murdoch, Rupert's heir apparent, a twenty-seven-year-old with an inexplicable taste for danger. On the Sword of Orion, a pharmacist-entrepreneur hoped to fulfill a childhood dream even though it would require him to

make a sudden leap from sailing novice to grand prix yachtsman -- a leap that would end in disaster. On the Winston Churchill, a classic wooden yacht that had competed in the very first Sydney-to-Hobart Race fifty-three years earlier, the crew included a nineteen-year-old whose friends called him Beaver, an investment banker, and a garbage collector. Before the race was over, the Winston Churchill would be no more.A page-turner of the highest order, The Proving Ground is more than one of the most exciting adventure stories written in years. It is also an incisive look at the forces that continue to draw men who have triumphed on land to risk everything at sea.

Well written and engaging story of the 1998 Sydney to Hobart race tragedy. Definitely would recommend to those interested in this topic.

This non-fiction sailing adventure about the 1998 Sydney to Hobart race is a real page turner. The details from many participants are first rate. The adventure was life altering for many. Read it and see for yourself.

This was a very interesting book..The world of ocean yacht racing is a world far removed from most people. It is incredible what yachting enthusiasts will go through for their sport. The book mentions several prominent people that were involved in the Hobart race. The author spares no one in his description of the participants activities. Worth reading.

I couldn’t put this book down!! I could not!!! From the first page until the last, the story was captivating. Anyone interested in sailing or ocean racing will find it thrilling. Definitely a compelling story of men in the struggle against the forces of nature, their reactions at the time, and the changes the yacht race made to their lives. This Sydney-Hobart Race was the challenge of a lifetime, and it changed many lives. I highly recommend this book!

Very exciting book about the Sydney Hobart race in 1998. I certainly would not want to sail in those waters. But it was well written and I felt I was on those boats; Sayonara and Sword of Orion especially. Very tragic that several people died doing something that is a hobby for most people. In retrospect, can’t believe that the race committee didn’t cancel the race. But fast, nerve-wracking and unputdownable it certainly was!

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