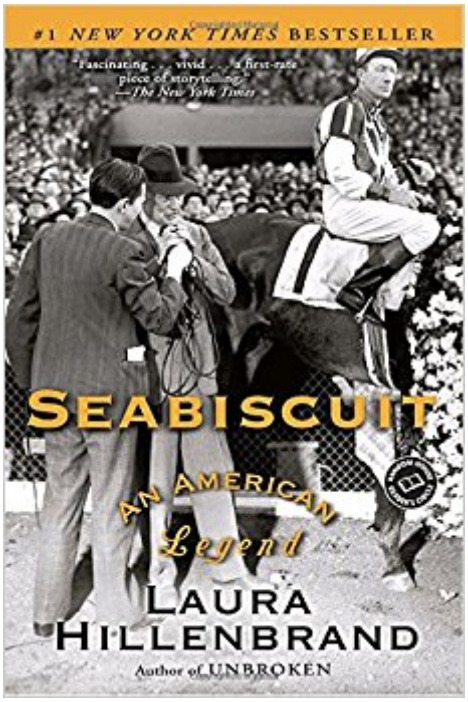
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Seabiscuit: An American Legend (Ballantine Reader's Circle)



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Synopsis

Laura Hillenbrand, author of the runaway phenomenonÃ Â Unbroken, brilliantly re-creates a universal underdog story in this #1 New York Times bestseller.Seabiscuit was one of the most electrifying and popular attractions in sports history and the single biggest newsmaker in the world in 1938, receiving more coverage than FDR, Hitler, or Mussolini. But his success was a surprise to the racing establishment, which had written off the crooked-legged racehorse with the sad tail. Three men changed SeabiscuitÃ¢â ¬â„¢s fortunes: Charles Howard was a onetime bicycle repairman who introduced the automobile to the western United States and became an overnight millionaire. When he needed a trainer for his new racehorses, he hired Tom Smith, a mysterious mustang breaker from the Colorado plains. Smith urged Howard to buy Seabiscuit for a bargain-basement price, then hired as his jockey Red Pollard, a failed boxer who was blind in one eye, half-crippled, and prone to quoting passages from Ralph Waldo Emerson. Over four years, these unlikely partners survived a phenomenal run of bad fortune, conspiracy, and severe injury to transform Seabiscuit from a neurotic, pathologically indolent also-ran into an American sports icon.From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

He didn’t look like much. With his smallish stature, knobby knees, and slightly crooked forelegs, he looked more like a cow pony than a thoroughbred. But looks aren’t everything; his quality, an admirer once wrote, "was mostly in his heart." Laura Hillenbrand tells the story of the horse who

became a cultural icon in Seabiscuit: An American Legend. Seabiscuit rose to prominence with the help of an unlikely triumvirate: owner Charles Howard, an automobile baron who once declared that "the day of the horse is past

HGifted sportswriter Hillenbrand unearths the rarefied world of thoroughbred horse racing in this captivating account of one of the sport's legends. Though no longer a household name, Seabiscuit enjoyed great celebrity during the 1930s and 1940s, drawing record crowds to his races around the country. Not an overtly impressive physical specimenD"His stubby legs were a study in unsound construction, with huge, squarish, asymmetrical 'baseball glove' knees that didn't quite straighten all the way"Dthe horse seemed to transcend his physicality as he won race after race. Hillenbrand, a contributor to Equus magazine, profiles the major players in Seabiscuit's fantastic and improbable career. In simple, elegant prose, she recounts how Charles Howard, a pioneer in automobile sales and Seabiscuit's eventual owner, became involved with horse racing, starting as a hobbyist and growing into a fanatic. She introduces esoteric recluse Tom Smith (Seabiscuit's trainer) and jockey Red Pollard, a down-on-his-luck rider whose specialty was taming unruly horses. In 1936, Howard united Smith, Pollard and "The Biscuit," whose performance had been spottyDand the horse's star career began. Smith, who recognized Seabiscuit's potential, felt an immediate rapport with him and eased him into shape. Once Seabiscuit started breaking records and outrunning lead horses, reporters thronged the Howard barn day and night. Smith's secret workouts became legendary and only heightened Seabiscuit's mystique. Hillenbrand deftly blends the story with explanations of the sport and its culture, including vivid descriptions of the Tijuana horse-racing scene in all its debauchery. She roots her narrative of the horse's breathtaking career and the wild devotion of his fans in its socioeconomic context: Seabiscuit embodied the underdog myth for a nation recovering from dire economic straits. (Mar.) Forecast: Despite the shrinking horse racing audienceDand the publishing adage that books on horse racing don't sellDthis book has the potential to do well, even outside the realm of the racing community, due to a large first printing and forthcoming Universal Studios movie. A stylish cover will attract both baby boomers and young readers, tapping into the sexiness and allure of the "Sport of Kings." Hillenbrand's glamorous photo on the book jacket won't hurt her chances, and Seabiscuit should sell at a galloping pace. Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I reread this book after my initial read several years ago, and it was just as enjoyable as my first. Ms. Hillenbrand's extremely well-researched story puts you right in the saddle alongside Seabiscuit

jockeys Red Pollard and George Woolf. My Uncle Nori owned several thoroughbred race horses - most of them Claimers - and told me something that I had always taken as a trainer's unfounded superstition when he said, "...you can tell if a horse is ready to run by feeling his ankles." We were in a stable at Caliente Race Track at the time, and I was just 10 years old. Uncle Nori knelt beside his horse, Toro Tuck, and wrapped his hands around the horses lower leg. "Cold as ice," he smiled back at me. "He's ready to go today." I recall being up in the grandstands watching the finish of the race - and hearing my uncle yell his lungs out, "Look at him go! Look at him go!" When the results were posted, and Toro Tuck was declared the winner, I turned to my uncle and asked him if he had put any money on his horse. He smiled down at me and fanned about a half-dozen $100 Win tickets at me. Hillenbrand's book brought all these vivid memories rushing back to me, and verified the truth behind my uncle's insight into a thoroughbred's race readiness.

First, I am grateful for Ms Hillenbrand's second book, Unbroken (an excellent book by itself). Otherwise I would not have discovered Seabiscuit. I read the book, Secretariat, by William Nack, but did not give much thought to reading Seabiscuit. I was so impressed with Laura Hillenbrand's story-telling ability, however, that I knew I had to read it. Second, the story's underlying theme is as relevant today as it was in the 1930s and 1940s: then, as now, our country needed something or someone to cheer for; a positive story, or a role model, to unify and uplift its people. And the human and equine qualities that defined the story's characters, such as the will to persevere against all odds, are timeless and are meticulously presented. And what more can I possibly say about Seabiscuit? Unlike Secretariat, a thoroughbred in every official sense, Seabiscuit lacked the conformation that thoroughbred horses usually possess. But what he lacked in structure, he possessed in spirit, courage and the unbounded ability to run. So, we can learn a lot from this horse, and this beautifully written story, if we pay attention. I highly recommend this book; you will marvel, shake your head in disbelief and you will cry, if you're inclined to do so.

What a phenomenal writer she is! Horse racing has never been a subject I had much interest in nor knew much about, though I do love horses (from afar). But this book is so captivating and well written - as was the other book of hers that I read, "Unbroken"- that I could barely put it down. In this book, Ms Hillenbrand had the ability to uncover the back stories of so many of the players in Seabiscuit's life and racing career. She continuously drew out the most interesting and exciting pieces as she put together the whole story. While reading this book, I became so caught up in the characters and the progression of events; rooting for the jockey(s), the trainer, and of course

Seabiscuit, himself, that I was truly sorry when I finished the book.

This is am amazing book about an amazing horse and the humans who had faith in his greatness. The mater-of-fact description of the lengths to which jockeys went to make weight, the mortal danger they faced each time they rode and the abuse heaped upon them by owners and tracks was chilling. The descriptions of the races were thrilling and made me feel like I was there on the rail myself. This is a page turner with a heart as bid as its subject.

This was absolutely fantastic!While written in the same manner as Unbroken....this book just drew me in!I absolutely loved learning about the ins and outs of horse racingThe story of Seabiscuit and Red Pollard is nothing short of awe inspiring.It’s a fabulous read.....don’t let the historical aspect turn you off from it.Loved it. A book to read again

Well written. I felt like a true insider to the events. The author did a good job of gathering and analyzing the information available. The characters were believable and real. He gave a good understanding of the evolvement of not only the main characters but also of the sport. I enjoyed not only the story behind the legend of the horse but the knowledge gained about racing and the people and animals involved. There was not a a chapter that was boring.

The author did extensive research to bring this historical event so everyone could read it. I am now fascinated with horse racing. I admit I skipped a few paragraphs where it did not interest me, but so well documented and organized. I could see those horses racing in the dust, rain, mud, and whatever else. The flair and flavors were there!

An amazing story about how the lives of a simple brown horse, unknown trainer, and unlikely jockey came together, overcame problems and obstacles to become a force to be reckoned with on the racetrack! At a time of war and world turmoil, their story of hope and victory took the country by storm! The beginning detail sets the stage for the story to unfold in all it’s glory. An uplifting must read!

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