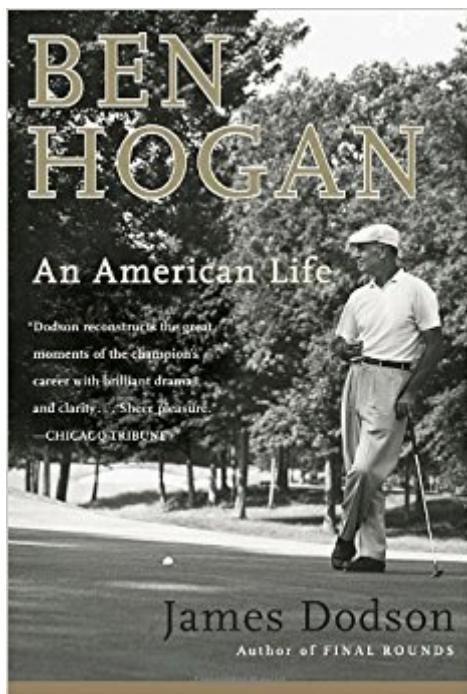


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Ben Hogan: An American Life



Synopsis

Authorized, intimate, and definitive, Ben Hogan: A Life is the long-awaited biography of one of golf's greatest, most enigmatic legends, narrated with the unique eloquence that has made author James Dodson a critically acclaimed national bestseller. One man is often credited with shaping the landscape of modern golf. Ben Hogan was a short, trim, impeccably dressed Texan whose fierce work ethic, legendary steel nerves, and astonishing triumph over personal disaster earned him not only an army of adoring fans, but one of the finest careers in the history of the sport. Hogan captured a record-tying four U.S. Opens, won five of six major tournaments in a single season, and inspired future generations of professional golfers from Palmer to Norman to Woods. Yet for all his brilliance, Ben Hogan was an enigma. He was an American hero whose personal life, inner motivation, and famed "secret" were the source of great public mystery. As Hogan grew into a giant on the pro tour, the combination of his cool outward demeanor and invincible, laser-guided accuracy on the golf course froze formidable opponents in their tracks. In 1949, at the peak of his career, Hogan's mystique was reinforced by a catastrophic automobile accident in which he and his wife, Valerie, were nearly killed after being hit head-on by a Greyhound bus. Doctors predicted Hogan might never walk again "let alone set foot on another golf course. But his miraculous three-year recovery and comeback led to one of the greatest performances in golf history when in 1953 he won the Masters, the U.S. Open, and the British Open (something that's never been repeated). In this first-ever family-authorized biography, renowned author James Dodson expertly and emotionally reconstructs Hogan's complicated life. He discovers an intensely honest man handicapped by self-doubt, buoyed by the determination to prove his own abilities, and unable to escape a long-buried childhood tragedy "the core of the Hogan secret." Dodson also reveals both the legendary devotion and eventual strain in Hogan's sixty-two-year marriage, and a Hogan rarely seen by the public: a warm, jovial man whose charitable spirit and sharp business sense enabled him to build the powerful golf equipment company bearing his name to this day. Ben Hogan: A Life is the authoritative inside portrait golf fans have long awaited.

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Customer Reviews

During the 1977 U.S. Open at Southern Hills in Oklahoma, sportswriter Dave Anderson asked golfer Tommy Bolt to compare the careers of Jack Nicklaus and Ben Hogan, two golfers who dominated previous decades of professional golf. Bolt's response was immediate. "Well," he drawled, "I've seen Nicklaus watch Hogan practice. I've never seen Hogan watch Nicklaus practice. Thus is the mystique of golfing legend Ben Hogan. He was the golfer's golfer, the man who other golfers sought to emulate. To capture the essence of a great man's life is a difficult task. BEN HOGAN: An American Life by James Dodson accomplishes that task in superb fashion. The biography is a homage to a man who overcame incredible obstacles to become the greatest golfer of his generation. It captures the essence and spirit of the sphinx-like man known to many as the Garbo of golf. Like all great biographies it builds on the life of its subject by allowing the reader to live in the Hogan era; to experience his accomplishments and share the disappointments of his life. Those with even the slightest knowledge of golf history are familiar with the defining event in the life of Ben Hogan. In 1949, after having achieved stardom on the professional golf circuit, Hogan was nearly killed in a head-on collision with a Greyhound bus on a foggy two-lane Texas highway. Doctors feared for Hogan's life and doubted that he would ever walk again if he survived. Hogan not only recovered, but in 1950 he won the U.S. Open at Merion, a grueling physical feat that required Hogan to walk and play 36 holes of golf on the final Saturday of the tournament. Hogan's triumphant comeback was a story that Hollywood producers would reject as one that audiences would never believe.

I have to admit three things in the interest of full disclosure. One - I am an unabashed James Dodson fan - I have read everything he has written and have enjoyed them all. Two - If anyone other than James Dodson had written this book, I would have never read it. Three - I am now an unabashed Ben Hogan person, because I now know the story of his life which has been told in a

truthful and powerful manner. I wish I had seen more of him and I wish that when I did see him on television that I would have appreciated what I was looking at. James Dodson has written several books about his own personal experiences which have been well received and rightly so, especially the book, *Final Rounds*, which put him on the literary map. He was also Arnold Palmer's "co-author" for his auto-biography, a pleasant book and which achieved Jim's goal of having the reader feel that he had the chance to sit down and have a few Scotches with "The King." In this book, he is working without a net. He has accepted the challenge and the honor of being the family authorized biographer of one of the greatest golfers of all time. In recreating "An American Life" he has devoted at least three years of his life to the research necessary to marshall the facts. Then he had to take the results of his research and do justice to the lives of Ben and Valerie Hogan. No easy chore. In judging how successful he was I have to only look at my perception of Hogan before I read the book. He was basically a name from the past. (I am 66) His greatest accomplishments were not on TV. He was said to be aloof. A loner. A perfectionist. When he finally made it to TV, he was past his prime, but still playing well enough. He was a ghost hanging around in the early days of Palmer, Nicklaus and Player.

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