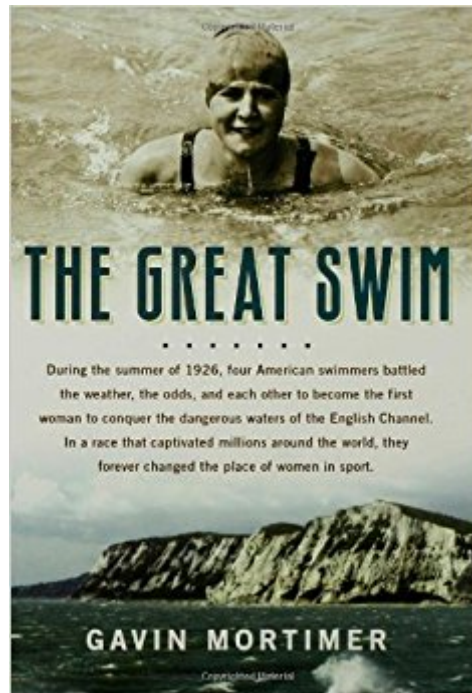




The book was found

The Great Swim



Synopsis

The dramatic story of the four courageous female swimmers who captivated the world in the summer of 1926. Despite the tensions of a world still recovering from World War I, during the summer of 1926, the story that enthralled the public revolved around four young American swimmers—Gertrude Ederle, Mille Gade, Lillian Cannon, and Clarabelle Barrett—who battled the weather, each other, and considerable odds to become the first woman to conquer the brutal waters of the English Channel. The popular East Coast tabloids from New York to Boston engaged in rivalries nearly as competitive as the swimmers themselves; each backed a favorite and made certain their girl—in bathing attire—was plastered across their daily editions. Just as Seabiscuit, the little horse with the big heart, would bring the nation to a near standstill when he battled his rival War Admiral in 1938, this quartet of women held the attention of millions of people on both sides of the Atlantic for an entire summer. Gavin Mortimer uses primary sources, diaries, interviews with relatives, and contemporary reports to paint an unforgettable portrait of a competition that changed the way the world looked at women, both in sport and society. More than an underdog story, The Great Swim is a tale of perseverance, strength, and sheer force of will. A portrait of an era that is as evocative as Cinderella Man, this is a memorable story of America and Americans in the 1920s.

Book Information

Hardcover: 325 pages

Publisher: Walker Books; 1st edition (February 19, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0802715958

ISBN-13: 978-0802715951

Product Dimensions: 6.2 x 1.3 x 0.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 15 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,029,194 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #100 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Miscellaneous > Women in Sports #247 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Exercise & Fitness > Swimming #2660 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Water Sports

Customer Reviews

In 1926, when Gertrude Ederle became the first woman to swim the English Channel, the event was publicized around the world, and she was celebrated as an American hero in a series of public events, including a ticker-tape parade in New York City. Yet when she died in 2003 at the age of 97,

her accomplishment was often mentioned in newspaper obituaries in only a few brief lines. British journalist and historian Mortimer has done Ederle "and sports history in general" a huge service in this wonderfully written book by detailing what was one of the biggest media events of the 1920s: the attempt by four Americans to become the first woman to swim and survive the brutal waters of the channel. He explores in great depth their differing personalities as well as the effects the race had on their lives. He also explains the cultural impact of the great Swim, such as how the revolution in women's bathing suits from a neck-to-knee bathing dress over woolen tights and shoes to a two-piece bathing suit was a key event in getting the International Olympic Committee to begin incorporating more swimming events into its women's schedule. (Feb.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Starred Review In 1926 four American women "Gertrude Ederle, Mille Gade, Lillian Cannon, and Clarabelle Barrette" competed to do something no woman had ever done: swim across the English Channel. Tabloid newspapers promoted their favorites, and the public was enthralled, eagerly embracing the opportunity to put aside their worries (it hadn't even been a decade since the Great War). Mortimer draws on a variety of source material, from people who were involved in the competition to contemporary news reports and personal diaries, and the picture he paints from that material evokes an episode that, even though it took place eight decades ago, seems strangely familiar and contemporary. As in all the best narrative nonfiction, the text works back and forth in time, portraying the lives of the swimmers and providing vivid detail about the era, which spawned the nation's first wave of national sports heroes (Babe Ruth, Jack Dempsey, Bobby Jones, et al.). The book can be read as the story of a sporting competition or as an exploration of our timeless fascination with celebrity. Either way, it's an absorbing and inspirational saga in the Seabiscuit mold. --David Pitt

This book was great. The stories of the four American women who tried to swim the Channel in 1926 are far more interesting than I anticipated -- and the Channel swim itself is much more complicated. The story is well told and compelling. The story touches on so much more than just these women and their challenges -- it's about the culture wars of the 1920s, equality for women athletes, and the newspapers of the era. I enjoyed the book. I read the book on my Kindle 3. The formatting was really, really bad, with so many OCR errors that some passages are almost incomprehensible. I was really disappointed. This is presumably not the author's fault, but the publisher's, which is why I did not factor it into my review -- I just want to note it for other Kindlers.

Great book for women, swimmers or no. Great book for all swimmers. Thanks to my sister for the recommendation.

Really loved reading this. All about women swimming the English channel and what it was like in the 20s.

I don't remember this one, I mix it up with Young Woman and The Sea but essential reading for all those interested in Channel swimming.

I bought this as a gift for my father in law who is still competitively swimming. He read the book cover to cover and has since passed it through his entire club. An great read for anyone who loves the sport.

A really great story, well told. A must-read for anyone interested in the history of open water swimming.

Interesting, historical, inspiring, contains lessons on life. I had not heard of the endeavors described in The Great Swim previously.

I didn't expect to like this as much as I did. I learned not just about the swim but the world of 1925-1926. This was the biggest event in the world at that time and then it disappeared. Shocking facts from 1926 include that men and sometimes women would compete in major races either in full-body suits or nude, Ederle invented the bikini, Churchill spoke against America in Parliament, American tourists were attacked by mobs in impoverished Paris. Ederle was briefly worshipped by hysterical fans reminiscent of the Beatlemania of the 1960s. The author does not take sides in the rivalries between the swimmers and presents facts that put the great Ederle in various lights. It is acknowledged that Ederle went the easier route (France to England) which is no longer allowed by today's swimmers. The book ends with the presentation of the fact that Ederle's backers reserved every single tug boat to prevent them from being used by her competitors except one which was secured by Cannon. Did the presence of two tugs give Ederle an unfair advantage? Did the France to England route make it easier? The reader gets to decide.

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