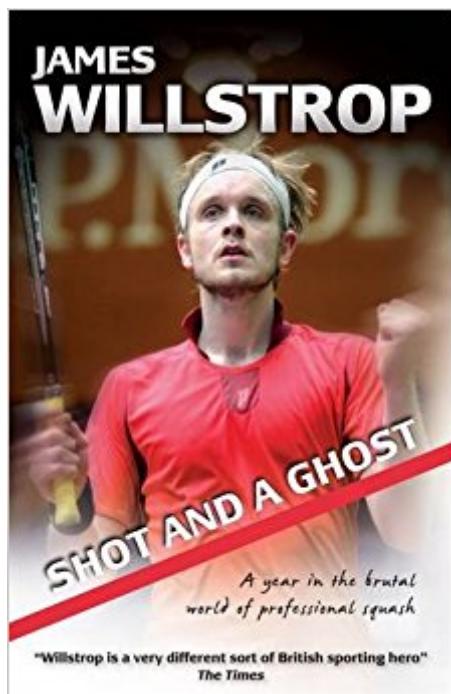


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Shot And A Ghost: A Year In The Brutal World Of Professional Squash



Synopsis

Honest and raw view of a life of James Willstrop, a professional squash player. This is a great read for athletes and fan of any sports.

Book Information

Paperback: 208 pages

Publisher: James Willstrop (March 1, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0957139101

ISBN-13: 978-0957139107

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.7 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars 16 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #556,422 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #7 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Racket Sports > Squash #2559 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Sports & Outdoors

Customer Reviews

Honest and raw view of a life of James Willstrop, a professional squash player. This is a great read for athletes and fan of any sports.

Definitely a lot of interesting information and insight into the psychological perspective of a top athlete. In a lot of ways the book is more about how James "feels" about various events, circumstances, victories, and failures. At times, it's quite interesting to see just how much of an emotional rollercoaster his career is, full of the highs and lows of winning, losing, being injured, and being bored with inactivity. At other times there's an intense anger, indignation, and arrogance that is both repugnant, yet also honestly portrayed, which ironically is the one thing that seems humble about the author's life. I came away with a lot of mixed feelings about James Willstrop as a person and as a player. I'm undecided as to whether his work ethos is really as grand as he proclaims it to be and undecided if his anti-social behavior outside of the court is truly justified. Frankly, the fellow seems to demonstrate knowledge in a very narrow band of experience (just competitive squash) and his approach to life as a result is somewhat strange and alien to most people. I wanted to chide him for telling an amateur club player that he wouldn't play him unless he was paid to...but perhaps it's not that he was wrong to turn down an amateur, but that he was wrong to be so upset about it. There is a lot of discussion of his mother and her battle with cancer as well. This is a sensitive

topic, but I'm not sure how much of its inclusion is really an honest appraisal of a squash career and how much it just feels like the sort of obligatory "tragedy" that Bob Costas would have milked relentlessly in regards to any Olympic athlete. Having also lost my mother to cancer (when I was 16), I find it hard to relate to the idea that it has vastly shaped my career or that it's a noteworthy aspect of who I am - but everyone interprets grief differently, so I can't completely fault Willstrop for bringing it up. I would have vastly preferred a great deal more information about the ins and outs of training for squash, what works and what doesn't work, what strategies to apply, what drills etc. But this is more of an autobiography than a squash training manual, so don't get your hopes up on becoming a better player as a result of the book. Instead take it more as a bizarre journey into a very harsh and often unpleasant sports career.

As a intermediate-level recreational squash player who plays 2 to 3 times a week (if I am in a city that has good squash court), it is easy to recommend this book to both squash players and non-players. I found it refreshing to have a first hand peak into the mind of professional squash player, James Willstrop. As I read the book I was reminded how lucky I am to be a recreational squash player, someone who plays for fun, versus someone who tours the world and plays for money. James Willstrop shares the pain and suffering of a pro as he travels from tournament to tournament, following an often brutal travel schedule, to compete in perhaps the most demanding, underrated and unappreciated sport today. Constantly on guard for colds, flu, infections, food poisoning, sleepless nights, fatigue, injuries, stress, isolation, depression and loneliness, James Willstrop paints a somewhat bleak picture of the life of a world class, professional squash player. All I could think during my time reading James' thoughts were "what a tough and unappreciated way to make a living"; there was little to no glamour or celebrity appeal to speak of in James Willstrop story; however, there was plenty of agony, pain and suffering. I'm not sure how reading this insightful book will effect my "fun and friendly" squash play or even my active sports lifestyle in general; but I did develop a deeper respect and sympathy for these touring players; and as mentioned, am thankful I can rest as much as I like between matches and cancel a match if I feel sick or fatigued; options mostly not available to these touring pros. It's one thing to be a great player, but it's quite another thing to be a happy, healthy, great touring squash player; and James Willstrop accounting of his life as a squash pro takes the shimmer and shine out of the "outsiders view" of professional squash play; something that we would not have at our fingertips if it was not for James Willstrop writing this account of his life as a pro. Thank you James and best of luck to you in your career! I will be following you more closely and cheering you on.

I was really impressed with James' writing style and the way this book read, as it was not ghost written.. It's such a good read you're going to blow right through it. He covers a year of his life on the way to his #1 ranking. At the same time he hits a lot of flashbacks of his youth and how he arrived at where he is as a professional athlete. He tells a very honest story, going into detail about his obsessive compulsive habits, some of which we all have.. Anyone who has lost a parent to cancer can relate and appreciate James's relationship with his mother. I highly recommend this book, not only to squash players but to anyone who enjoys autobiographies by great writers. I would love to see James write a book on Squash Training & Fitness, amassing all he's learned throughout the years. I really think his honest approach to writing would result in a much needed book on the modern approach to squash training.

I really enjoyed this book. In fact I couldn't put it down once I picked it up. It delivers an open and honest insight into the mind of James Wilstrop and a fascinating look at what it takes to be a World Class squash player. From the rivalry with Nick Matthew, to life with a dad as a coach, with insight into his levels of obsessive compulsiveness, and taking on board the effects of his mom dying too soon, James tackles all topics and delivers both a gripping story and a very human one. For anyone who's ever picked up a squash racket or a racket of any sort and wondered what is going on in the heads of the top players then this book is a must read.

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