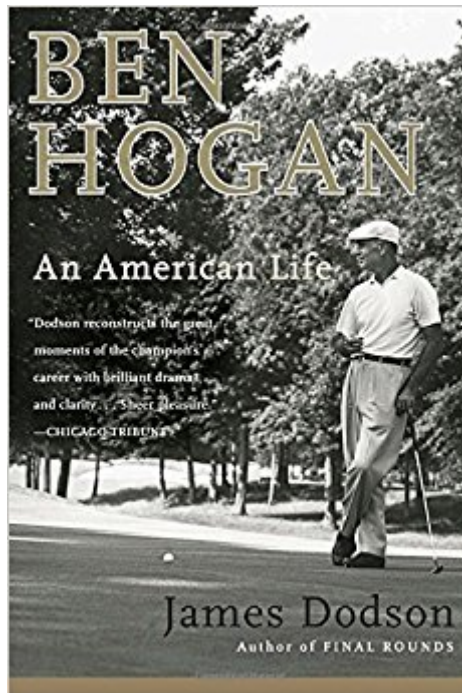




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# Ben Hogan: An American Life



## 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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ben Hogan is widely credited with ushering in the modern era of golf. His legendary practice sessions, intense perfectionism and iron determination helped turn a lazy gentleman's game into a high-stakes, competitive sport. Yet Hogan's unprecedented achievements on the golf course were often overshadowed by his fierce demeanor and public reticence, which fueled wild speculations about every aspect of his guarded life and gave birth to countless myths and misrepresentations. Dodson (Final Rounds) resurrects the flesh-and-blood man from the ashes of apocrypha, providing the most intimate and richly textured portrait of the famous golfer to date. Although reverential, Dodson doesn't shy away from the darker aspects of the Hogan story, exposing a vulnerable and pathologically obsessive man whose dogged resolve and incomparable success were matched only by his hidden shame and self-doubt. Reared in Depression-era Texas, nine-year-old Hogan witnessed his father's suicide, a formative event that Dodson believes spurred Hogan's prodigious ambition and drive, as well as his compulsive tendencies and extreme need for privacy. All the mesmerizing stories-including Hogan's near-miraculous comeback and triumph at the 1950 U.S. Open after a debilitating car crash, and his record-setting 1953 season in which he won the Masters, U.S. Open and British Open-are related in lush and loving detail, without overlooking anecdotes about the era's other great players and colorful personalities, such as Sam Snead, Byron Nelson and Jimmy Demaret. As much about the game as about Hogan himself, Dodson's nuanced and engrossing biography adds new depth to a figure who has been excessively scrutinized but rarely understood. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

**\*Starred Review\*** In contrast to the reverence now accorded him, the real Ben Hogan's brusqueness fostered antipathy from the sportswriters of the 1940s. Then came the most shocking nongolf event in the history of golf, the 1949 car-bus smashup that almost killed Hogan and his wife.

Hogan's return from death's door to dominate golf is an integral inspirational element in the several extant biographies (most recently, Curt Sampson's *Hogan* in 1996). With authorized access to Hogan's papers, Dodson, author of the well-received *Final Rounds* (2002), brings new information and a new interpretation to the question of Hogan's personality, both before and after the accident. While noting the golfer's modest mellowing following the collision, Dodson considers the key to Hogan's taciturn attitude to be a secret he guarded his entire life: the witnessing at age nine of his father's suicide. Although no proof of Hogan's presence at the scene of his father's death exists, Dodson makes a good circumstantial case. In addition to probing his subject's personality, Dodson ably dramatizes the best remembered of Hogan's on-course heroics, although he avoids the kind of numbing, shot-by-shot detail that rarely holds the interest of even fanatical fans. This is the first Hogan biography to do justice to an enigmatic and complex sports hero, and as such, it becomes the instant standard. Gilbert Taylor

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As an authorized biography of Hogan, Dodson offers a sympathetic view of the golfing great. Although he tries to show the happier and private side of Ben Hogan's personality, there is no question that he was introverted and irascible. Dodson highlights some amazing facts about the man including the fact that he was born left handed, and that he "hit at least six hundred balls twice a day, three balls every minute for three hours in the morning, followed by three and a half hours of practice in the afternoon. Playing in the actual tournament became, he insisted, "Almost secondary, an anticlimax for him simply going through the motions, as he put it. He also reveals that during his 1953 win at Carnoustie Hogan hit every fairway in route to his victory and used hand-warmers to fight the chilly Scottish weather. Dodson had access to Valerie Hogan's scrap book and she authorized the biography, thus there is as intimate a look into the man and his personal history as you will get. The U.S.G.A. awarded Dodson its annual award for this book in 2005 for good reason, although it is a surprise that he spells people's name wrong (It's Geoff Shackelford not Shackelton) and gets other historical facts and course names wrong (it's Sequoyah golf course in Oakland not Sequoia) occasionally.

Pretty thorough tome. A bit tedious and tendentious as to be expected. Covered Hogan pretty well, I thought. A must read for any Hogan-phile. I suspect it might be a bit tedious for non-Hogan-philes. Don't read it expecting to get a golf lesson. It's about Hogan's life as an authorized biography should be... not an exposition of the five lessons. I'm still not sure it covered the essence of Hogan who

pretty much went through his competitive golf life as an intensely & incredibly focused, almost mean, tough as nails, stoic, yet with barely-controlled-snarling-anger-simmering-under-the-surface competitor playing with a chip on his shoulder while reveling in the underdog role. But it did capture "An American Life." Hogan rose from the most difficult of beginnings in the Depression and despite lacking as much talent as some other, more gifted golfers (i.e. Byron Nelson and Sam Snead), rose to become arguably the greatest golfer of his generation thanks to single-purposed time, immense effort and incredibly hard work. The epitome of the American dream where hard work, time and effort results in success. (depending upon what your definition of success is... there certainly was a cost for Hogan's success and a tense married life with no children may have been a result). I should leave it at that but I'll take issue with Dodson's opinion of why Hogan did not like Oakland Hills following the Robert Trent Jones' makeover even though most people, including Dodson thought Jones made it right up Hogan's alley. Hogan thought it essential to use strategy in playing a golf course. Attack the pin from the left if it's back right and vice versa, etc. Robert Trent Jones removed strategy by forcing all competitors to hit balls to the same locations due to bunkering and needle thin fairways and high rough. That it played to Hogan's strength to hit the ball where he wanted to; better than any other golfer wasn't Hogan's point. His point was that it removed strategy from the game and that's why he didn't like what Robert Trent Jones did to Oakland Hills. A point that's even more valid today on most US Open courses than it was then. Enjoy.

This book is very thorough and really well written. The author is a real pro. It is entertaining, but don't expect a memoirish-type read. It is more like a historical book. The author has a real thesis about the defining event in Hogan's life, and he develops it throughout. I'm a golf nut, and a Hogan swing disciple so learning about exactly how Hogan "dug it out of the dirt" was really interesting to me. I also enjoyed learning about Texas golf history and about the various tourneys and the other players, Byron Nelson, particularly. I haven't read the other major biographies on Hogan, so I can't compare, but I was pleased to find that the author took a journalistic neutrality to Hogan, for the most part. It's definitely a good read for any budding golfers or golf fan or historians. You'll get to know a uniquely American icon, and Hennie Bogan. Enjoy.

As a former avid weekend golfer born during the war, I only had a fleeting memory of Hogan as his career was largely over by the time I took up the game at the end of the 60's. To think Hogan was 30 before he won his first professional tournament -- the LA Open -- but then dominated the pro tour for the next 20 years, winning 4 US Opens (he counts one of his former wins as a National Open

win and thus claimed 5 US Opens) all between 1948 and 1953 and the first to complete the modern grand slam when he won the British Open on his first and only try. In 292 career PGA Tour events, the Hawk as Ben Hogan was called, finished in the Top 3 in almost 50% (47.6-percent) of them. He finished in the Top 10 in 241 of those 292 events. He finished his career with 64 total wins and 9 majors. Had his career not been interrupted by WWII and a near fatal car accident in the late 40's that left him with a severely injured leg and requiring over a year of rehab at the very peak of his career, he could well have won several more majors and who knows how many more regular tour events. This book could well make the case that Hogan was the best golfer of all time. He certainly was the most feared competitor of his day .

Once again I get so tired of having to read books about everything in the world except what I want to read about AND PAID FOR!! This Hogan book is over 500 pages long and now I see why. Thinking it was everything about Hogan I was wrong. It tells so much about the players he faced and the clubs and how golf tour went as well as how his friends got started and the economics of the culture during each year and on and on it went about things I didn't really care about. I would have enjoyed it much more to have been about Ben and simply name his friends and what they did and tell us the economic times were tough in 1939. I didn't buy the book for a history lesson is my point.

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