

The All Americans



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On November 29, 1941, Army played Navy in front of 100,000 fans. Eight days later, the Japanese attacked and the young men who battled each other in that historic game were forced to fight a very different enemy. Author Lars Anderson follows four players--two from Annapolis and two from West Point--in this epic true story.

Bill Busik . Growing up in Pasadena, California, Busik was best friends with a young black man named Jackie, who in 1947 would make Major League Baseball history. Busik would have a spectacular sports career himself at the Naval Academy, earning All-American honors as a tailback in 1941. He was serving aboard the U.S.S. Shaw when it was attacked by Japanese dive-bombers in 1943.

Hal Kauffman . Together, Busik and Kauffman rode a train across the nation to Annapolis to enroll in the Naval Academy. A backup tailback at Navy, Kauffman would go on to serve aboard the U.S.S. Meredith, which was sunk in 1942. For five days Kauffman struggled to stay alive on a raft, fighting off hallucinations, dehydration, and--most terrifying of all--sharks. Dozens of his crewmates lost their minds; others were eaten by sharks. All the while Kauffman wondered if he'd ever see his friend and teammate again.

Henry Romanek . Because he had relatives in Poland, Romanek heard firsthand accounts in 1939 of German aggression. Wanting to become an officer, Romanek attended West Point and played tackle for the Cadets. He spent months preparing for the D-day invasion and on June 6, 1944--the day he would have graduated from West Point had his course load not been cut from four years to three--Romanek rode in a landing craft to storm Omaha Beach. In the first wave to hit the beach he would also become one of the first to take a bullet.

Robin Olds . The son of a famous World War I fighter pilot, Olds decided to follow in his father's footsteps. At West Point he became best friends with Romanek and the two played side-by-side on Army's line. In 1942, a sportswriter Grantland Rice named Olds to his All-American team. Two years later Olds spent D-day flying a P-38 over Omaha Beach, anxiously scanning the battlefield for Romanek, hoping his friend would survive the slaughter.

The tale of these four men is woven into a dramatic narrative of football and war that's unlike any other. Through extensive research and interviews with dozens of World War II veterans, Anderson has written one of the most compelling and original true stories in all of World War II literature. From fierce fighting, heroic rescues, tragic death, and awe-inspiring victory, all four men's suspenseful journeys are told in graphic detail. Along the way, Anderson brings World War II to life in a way that has never been done before.

作者介绍:

目录:

[The All Americans_下载链接1_](#)

标签

评论

[The All Americans_下载链接1_](#)

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