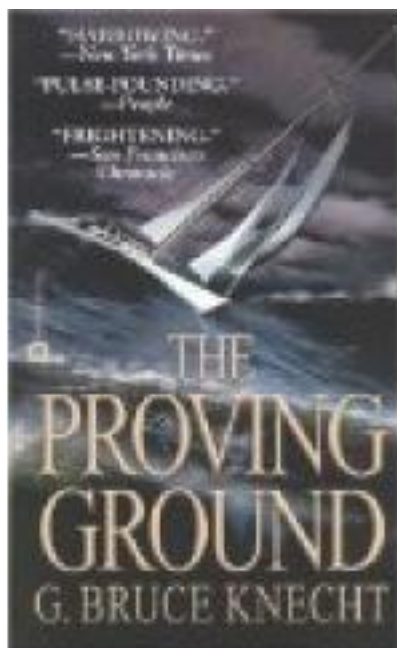


The Proving Ground



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In *The Proving Ground*, journalist and lifelong sailor G. Bruce Knecht tells the staggering story of the 54th Sydney to Hobart yacht race--an annual event that is always an extreme test of courage and skill in some of the world's most treacherous seas, but which in 1998 would become the most disastrous race in modern yachting history. Although he was already fifty feet from the boat, Brownie didn't have any trouble spotting Glyn. He looked small, and utterly helpless.... Glyn was already having a hard time keeping his head out of the water, and everyone quickly reached the same unthinkable conclusion--Glyn was going to die and there was nothing to do but watch.... Steve Kulmar was more shaken than anyone. When he first came on deck, he believed Glyn was looking directly back at him. Of the 115 boats that started under clear skies in Sydney, just 43 would finish. Six sailors lost their lives, and a

further 55 were plucked from the storm after the fleet had been decimated by unforecast hurricane winds and 80-foot-high waves. Knecht's style is novelistic, though measured, with a strong journalistic sensibility marshaling what must have been at times appallingly poignant eyewitness testimony into a coherent account of the disaster. His intended focus is beyond the headlines, and by concentrating on the experiences of a handful of individual crews, The Proving Ground succeeds in conveying the agonies of their desperate, sometimes futile struggles to survive--and offers some insight into what drew them to the sea in the first place, and why so many of the survivors have felt compelled to face it again. --Alex Hankin, Amazon.co.uk

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