



Titanic Thompson: The Man Who Bet on Everything

Kevin Cook

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Capturing the spirit of a freewheeling era, this rollicking biography brings to life the gambler-hero who inspired *Guys and Dolls*.

Born in a log cabin in the Ozarks, Alvin "Titanic" Thompson (1892-1974) traveled with his golf clubs, a .45 revolver, and a suitcase full of cash. He won and lost millions playing cards, dice, golf, pool, and dangerous games of his own invention. He killed five men and married five women, each one a teenager on her wedding day. He ruled New York's underground craps games in the 1920s and was Damon Runyon's model for slick-talking Sky Masterson. Dominating the links in the pre-PGA Tour years, Thompson may have been the greatest golfer of his time, teeing up with Ben Hogan, Sam Snead, Lee Trevino, and Ray Floyd. He also traded card tricks with Houdini, conned Al Capone, lost a million to Minnesota Fats and then teamed up with Fats and won it all back. A terrific read for anyone who has ever laid a bet, *Titanic Thompson* recaptures the colorful times of a singular figure: America's original road gambler.

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