

Men, Rivers and Canoes – How the Dusi Canoe Race Began

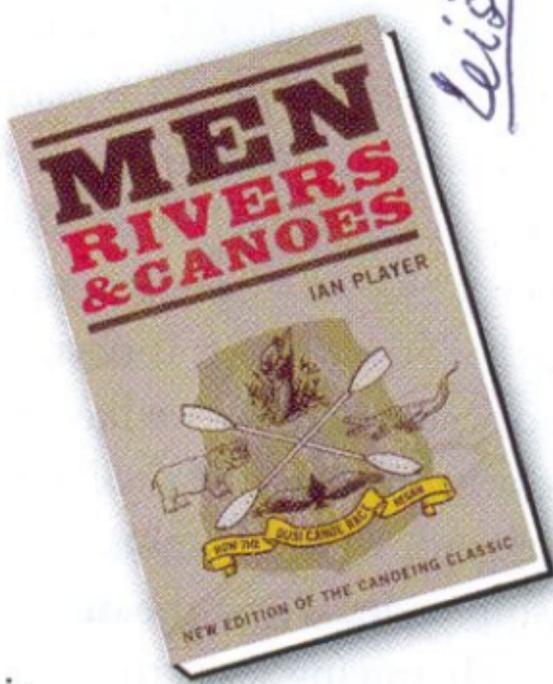
By Dr Ian Player

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This book is about much more than the title suggests. Yes, the Dusi Canoe Marathon and its origins feature strongly; and a fascinating account is given of this great event's meagre beginnings, paying just tribute to those 'sterk okes' who followed the author's lead and tackled the river course between Pietermaritzburg and Durban with little or no resources. Their equipment and non-existent backup to those early expeditions were a far cry from current 'Dusi necessities' including: state-of-the-art boats, paddles, waterproof cellular phones and GPSs that link the competitors to their 'seconds', who scurry about the valley driving air-conditioned 4x4s. The recounting of pioneering trips down the Umkomaas and Pongola Rivers, peppered liberally with the author and his friends' considerable knowledge of the indigenous inhabitants – "with legs and without legs", provides for extremely interesting reading. Encounters with the crocodile population of Tongoland leave the neck-hairs very erect!



Apart from its obvious adventure content, this book constantly allows the essence of the South African tragedy and miracle to filter through. Inkosi Zibuse Mlamba's foreword picks gently at South African emotions and emphasises the significance of the positive results achieved by the proactive efforts of the Dusi people.

In short, an excellent and informative read for paddlers, 'wannabe' paddlers and nature lovers. Maybe a little too dangerous for couch potatoes!

Reviewed by Ian Walker (Senior)