

Seabiscuit by Laura Hillenbrand (2001)

Charles Howard [CH] came to San Francisco in 1903 with 21 cents and a dream. He was a salesman & somehow, he opened a bicycle-repair shop. Soon people brought him the cars to repair & he opened a Buick franchise. Some would trade-in their horse & he learned more about horses. He loaned GM money in return for stocks & profits. He became wealthy.

Tom Smith [TS] was a man of few words, but was the best horse trainer. During the early Depression, he was paid with a worthless horse instead of money. He turned the horse into a winner. Howard hired Smith & the long shots paid big. He bought a young horse named Seabiscuit that had a good blood-line [Man o' War], but was over-raced.

Red Pollard [RP] was a failing jockey, but did well with troubled horses. He kept his diabetes & blindness in his right eye a secret. CH hired him. His blindness cost them a race when another rider came around on his right. They cut a hole in the horse's blinders. 1934 Tijuana racetrack closed & Santa Anita opened. In the 30s, horses had to get from race to race in a railcar, which was hard on the horse. During the depression, people would go to movies or the racetrack to escape their problems or find hope.

Seabiscuit [S] didn't respond well to commands, so Smith told the rider to let him run himself tired. Then let him learn to love running again. He had more drive than any other & would demoralize the other horses. Some races would assign extra weight to faster horses [at times, S was given an extra 20 lbs]. Many times, the handicap was unfair. RP was suspended & CH hired George Woolf [GW]. GW was suspended. RP was back, but got injured. GW was back.

11.1.1938 was the race of the century between War Admiral [WA] & Seabiscuit. WA ran his fastest time of his life, but S broke him & won by four lengths. Running the 1.19-mile in 1:56. S was assigned a 134-lb handicap & injured his legs. After recovering, he ran a 1.36-mile & 2:01-1.25 mile in 1940. Can you imagine what he could have done without the handicap.

Quotes: "You don't have to tell good horses when they win or lose, they know." (George Woolf)

Note: every 2 or 3 pounds slows a horse by a length in a mile race. Most horses can only sustain their maximum speed for 3/8 of a mile.

Definitions:

51- penury = extreme poverty

88 – halcyon = calm

102 – obstreperousness = unruly

108 – anthropomorphism = resemble human form

131 – hyperbole = obvious exaggeration

141 – dyspeptic = irritable

159 – excoriation = verbally abuse

168 – analgesia = feel no pain

169 – predilections = partiality

222 – assuaged = appease

252 – antithesis = opposite