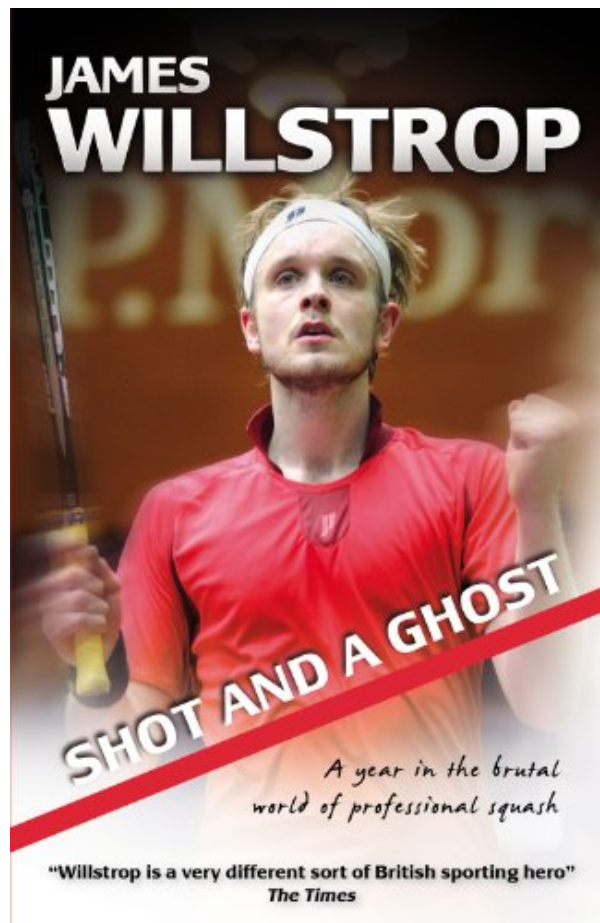
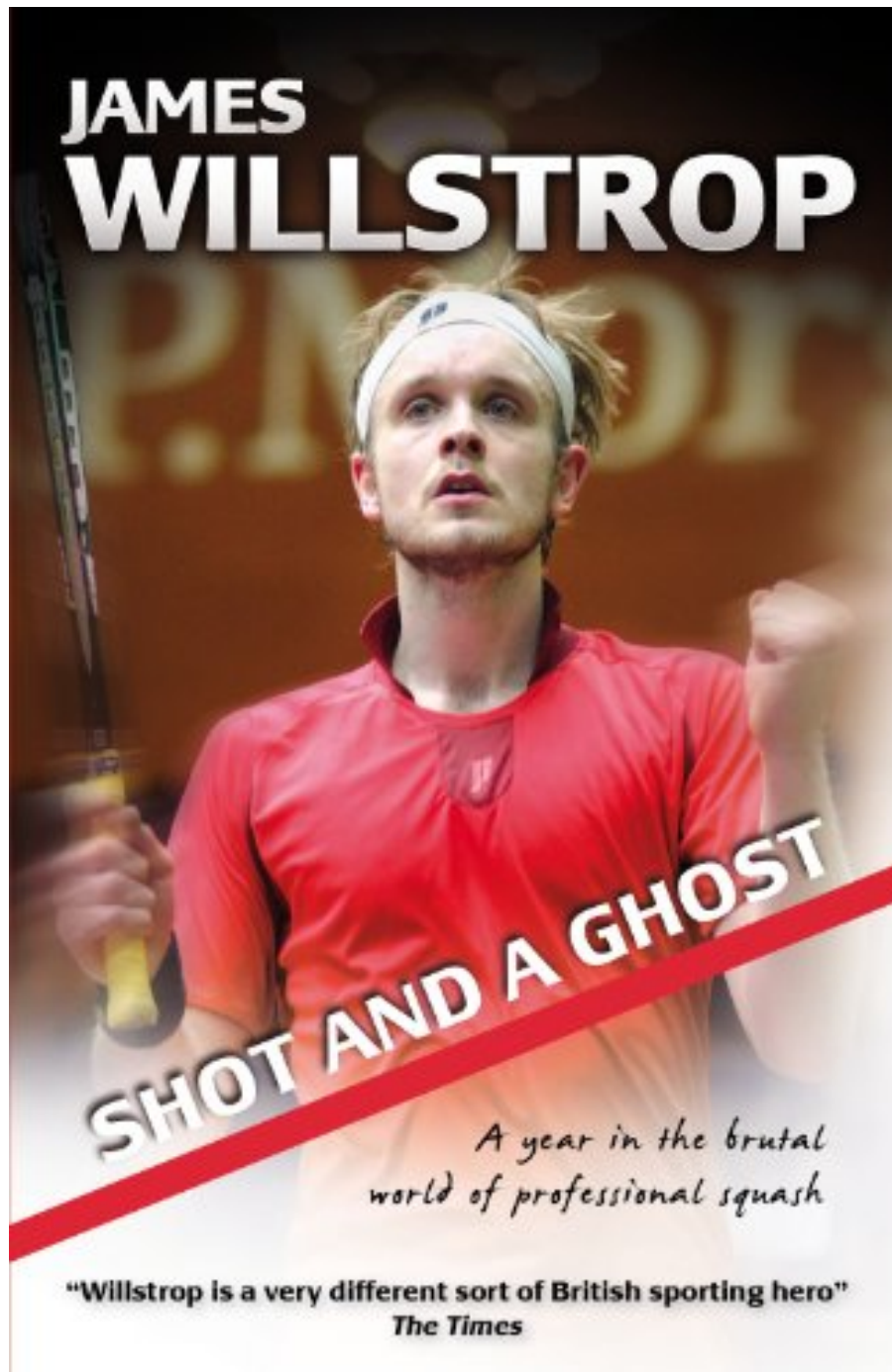


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SHOT AND A GHOST: A YEAR IN THE BRUTAL WORLD OF PROFESSIONAL SQUASH BY JAMES WILLSTROP PDF

James Willstrop is one of the world's leading squash players and one of the sport's most complex and cerebral characters.

Brought up in Pontefract, UK, he is anything but the archetypal Yorkshireman - a poetry-loving vegetarian with a love of musicals, Morrissey, Oscar Wilde and Philip Larkin.

Fiercely competitive yet renowned for his sportsmanship, he became the world number one in January 2012 despite being accused by many of being 'too nice' to be a winner.

At the age of 28 James has just written his first book - a diary style account from January 2010 to February 2011 - which provides a fascinating insight into the life and pressures of an international athlete competing in a sport that takes him all over the world.

As critical of himself as of others, he talks openly about his close relationship with his father and coach, Malcolm; the devastating death of his mother, Lesley; and his fierce and often acrimonious rivalry with fellow Yorkshireman and former world number one Nick Matthew.

His account of sometimes brutal training sessions reveal the pain and dedication necessary to compete at the top of one of the most physically and mentally demanding sports.

Acclaim for 'A Shot and a Ghost':

"There aren't many sports book that I read and feel the sportsman himself jumps off the pages. James' book shows the stresses of top level sport on and off the court. A great read."

Matt Pinsent, BBC Sport and four times Olympic gold medalist

"Willstrop is a very different sort of British sporting hero: a militant vegetarian, lover of musicals, obsessive-compulsive with a constant need to wash his hands and a man who had been coached from childhood by his father. Yet he is also one of Britain's finest ever racket sports players and in this fascinating autobiography, he reveals his journey from the cold municipal courts of Pontefract, through crippling injury and personal despair to the world

No 1 ranking in squash. A sportsman who deserves greater publicity than he gets"

Patrick Kidd, The Times

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8 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

Spectacular

By Jordan

A brilliant and fantastic insight into one of the worlds most under-appreciated sports, and the stresses and strains that professional sportsmen have to endure. The story itself is as heart-warming as it is brutal - it is a true testament to what can be achieved if one is willing to put everything they physically and mentally have into a sport. At times, this is a very difficult read, highlighting the otherwise hidden world of professional sport and how crushing it can sometimes be on a person. As one of the first public outputs from the game of squash, I sincerely hope this grabs the attention of the public, as squash suffers from a severe deficiency in public awareness and support. James talks about himself and the current world no.2 Nick Matthew, who are seldom recognised as two of the greatest British sportsmen of our generation, and whom we should be incredibly proud. One can only hope that this helps to build squashing increasingly positive reputation to the point where the IOC recognise it's benefit and potential.

Most of all however, this book serves as a rare illustration to the incredibly positive effects sport and especially squash can have on a person's life and how they can become defined by it. James stands as a truly fantastic role model for sportsmen, a gentleman and a true ambassador for the game. His character will serve as a priceless positive asset for as long as James stays on the PSA Tour - a true genius with a racket as well as being an extraordinarily nice person and unflinching moral.

To the rest of the sporting world - I urge you to stand up and take note of this spectacular sport, and of this remarkable character and truly gifted sportsman.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Great insight into the world of Squash and the mind of a top athlete

By MattJT

I really enjoyed this book. In fact I couldn't put it down once I picked it up.

It delivers an open and honest insight in to the mind of James Willstrop and a fascinating look at what it takes to be a World Class squash player.

From the rivalry with Nick Matthew, to life with a dad as a coach, with insight into his levels of obsessive compulsiveness, and taking on board the effects of his mom dying too soon, James tackles all topics and delivers both a gripping story and a very human one.

For anyone who's ever picked up a squash racket or a racket of any sort and wondered what is going on in the heads of the top players then this book is a must read.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Strange Journey into Sports Trials and Tribulations

By P. Doran

Definitely a lot of interesting information and insight into the psychological perspective of a top athlete. In a lot of ways the book is more about how James "feels" about various events, circumstances, victories, and failures. At times, it's quite interesting to see just how much of an emotional rollercoaster his career is, full of the highs and lows of winning, losing, being injured, and being bored with inactivity.

At other times there's an intense anger, indignation, and arrogance that is both repugnant, yet also honestly portrayed, which ironically is the one thing that seems humble about the author's life. I came away with a lot of mixed feelings about James Willstrop as a person and as a player. I'm undecided as to whether his work ethos is really as grand as he proclaims it to be and undecided if his anti-social behavior outside of the court is truly justified. Frankly, the fellow seems to demonstrate knowledge in a very narrow band of experience

(just competitive squash) and his approach to life as a result is somewhat strange and alien to most people. I wanted to chide him for telling an amateur club player that he wouldn't play him unless he was paid to...but perhaps it's not that he was wrong to turn down an amateur, but that he was wrong to be so upset about it.

There is a lot of discussion of his mother and her battle with cancer as well. This is a sensitive topic, but I'm not sure how much of its inclusion is really an honest appraisal of a squash career and how much it just feels like the sort of obligatory "tragedy" that Bob Costas would have milked relentlessly in regards to any Olympic athlete. Having also lost my mother to cancer (when I was 16), I find it hard to relate to the idea that it has vastly shaped my career or that it's a noteworthy aspect of who I am - but everyone interprets grief differently, so I can't completely fault Willstrop for bringing it up.

I would have vastly preferred a great deal more information about the ins and outs of training for squash, what works and what doesn't work, what strategies to apply, what drills etc. But this is more of an autobiography than a squash training manual, so don't get your hopes up on becoming a better player as a result of the book. Instead take it more as a bizarre journey into a very harsh and often unpleasant sports career.

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