



Fastnet, Force 10

John Rousmaniere

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In August 1979, 303 yachts began the 600-mile Fastnet Race from the Isle of Wight off the southwest coast of England to Fastnet Rock off the Irish coast and back. It began in fine weather, then suddenly became a terrifying ordeal. A Force 10, sixty-knot storm swept across the North Atlantic with a speed that confounded forecasters, slamming into the fleet with epic fury. For twenty hours, 2,500 men and women were smashed by forty-foot breaking waves, while rescue helicopters and lifeboats struggled to save them. By the time the race was over, fifteen people had died, twenty-four crews had abandoned ship, five yachts had sunk, 136 sailors had been rescued, and only 85 boats had finished the race. John Rousmaniere was there, and he tells the tragic story of the greatest disaster in the history of yachting as only one who has sailed through the teeth of a killer storm can. With a new introduction by the author.



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