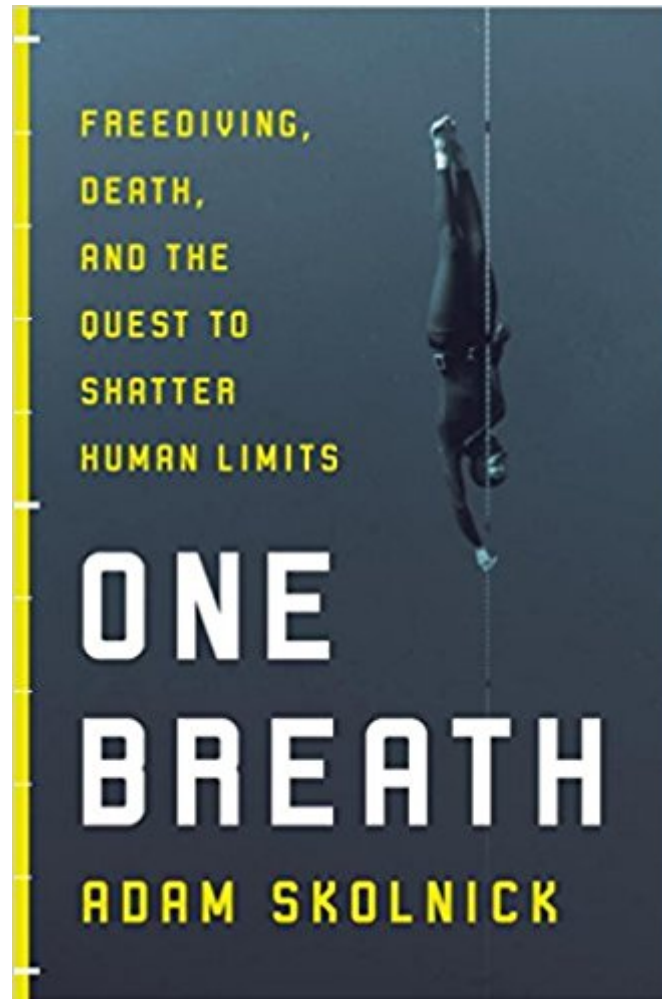


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One Breath: Freediving, Death, And The Quest To Shatter Human Limits



Synopsis

One Breath is a gripping and powerful exploration of the strange and fascinating sport of freediving, and of the tragic, untimely death of America's greatest freediver. Competitive freediving is a sport built on diving as deep as possible on a single breath—it tests the limits of human ability in the most hostile environment on earth. The unique and eclectic breed of individuals who freedive at the highest level regularly dive hundreds of feet below the ocean's surface, reaching such depths that their organs compress, light disappears, and one mistake could kill them. Even among freedivers, few have ever gone as deep as Nicholas Mevoli. A handsome young American with an unmatched talent for the sport, Nick was among freediving's brightest stars. He was also an extraordinary individual, one who rebelled against the vapid and commoditized society around him by relentlessly questing for something more meaningful and authentic, whatever the risks. So when Nick Mevoli arrived at Vertical Blue in 2013, the world's premier freediving competition, he was widely expected to challenge records and continue his meteoric rise to stardom. Instead, before the end of that fateful competition Nick Mevoli had died, a victim of the sport that had made him a star, and the very future of free diving was called into question. With unparalleled access and masterfully crafted prose, One Breath tells his unforgettable story, and of the sport which shaped and ultimately destroyed him.

Book Information

Hardcover: 336 pages

Publisher: Crown Archetype; F First Edition edition (January 12, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0553447483

ISBN-13: 978-0553447484

Product Dimensions: 6.5 x 1.1 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars — See all reviews (82 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #100,474 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #35 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Outdoor Recreation > Scuba #38 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Extreme Sports #255 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Water Sports

Customer Reviews

This is an excellent book. It is well written and reads like a novel rather than the non-fiction account that it is. It starts with the death of Nick Mevoli after a competitive free dive. A strange place to start,

but from there, it goes into Nick's life story. The organization of this book is genius. The chapters alternate between Nick's personal history, and the history of freediving and stories of other competitors. Eventually, their stories intertwine. Once Nick diesâthe first ever to do so during a freedive competition-- the inquiry is "what happened?" and they try their best to answer that question. The "characters" here are Nick's family members and the freediving competitors and friends of Nick. Each is described in enough detail that you get to know them and care about what happens to them and their sport. Overall it is a fascinating account and an enjoyable book.

When you read this book and learn about the feats these divers perform - attempt to hold your breath for even 1 minute - let alone the 3-4 they hold theirs for while diving to 100 meters - or the 7-10 minutes they hold it in the pool. This book does an incredible job of describing the world of freediving, its participants, the beauty, and the dangers. I'll admit to feeling pangs of claustrophobia while venturing down into the depths alongside them through Skolnick's illustrative narrative. The story of Nick Mevoli is also captivating. A true 'free-spirit', Skolnick captures Mevoli's life from childhood all the way through his death, finding the soul of a tortured and gifted diver and human being. He also discovers the mystery surrounding his death and the impacts it has on the sport itself. I think some readers will walk away from this thinking Nick a narcissist - but those readers will be missing the point. Nick was rare and unique in that he could do things other humans can only dream of and what it means to find your passion later than you'd like. Nick is Icarus. You can appreciate him for his gifts or you can scold him for flying too close to the sun. But for Nick Mevoli, life wasn't worth living unless he was on that edge every day. A rare inside look into the world of freediving, Skolnick delivers on all levels and I couldn't recommend this read more. It's a beautiful book about an incredible man and an incredible sport.

Totally fascinating, and I am not a sports freak at all. In fact, the water creeps me out. But Skolnick is very convincing when he describes the thrill of the sport. I was also fascinated by Nick Mevoli--very interesting to read about the Philly squat scene and Occupy from this unlikely angle. And great peripheral people, all very well developed, especially considering how many! The one drawback, which is probably a plus for people who are actually sporty and interested in the mechanics of freediving competition, is that the descriptions of the competitions later in the book start to blur together. But Skolnick does have a great sense of pace and drama.

I enjoyed reading about Nick's life and a look into the players of competitive freediving in that era.

As a new freediver, the book reminded me just how dangerous the sport is, and why I chose to get certified.

It's a hard reality to grasp, that there are athletes in the world willing to die for moments of glory, willing to ignore the signs that death is awaiting them on their next dive (or next catch across the middle of the football field, or the next leap off a steel cage), but that is the world to which we are introduced when we read about the sport of freediving. We are carried through the life of Nick Mevoli, a diver who risked it all and lost it all, becoming the first in his sport to die in competition. Sadly, it's also a world yet (as of publication) to truly develop safety protocols for its athletes, mostly because the science of what they are going through is so understudied. What happens to the body at 100 meters of depth? Can repeated lung squeezes wear a body out? How much time is needed for recovery from just one lung squeeze? A day? Two months? Could Nick have been saved? We're faced with a character in Nick who is presented as petulant and a bit immature, who throws tantrums when things don't go his way in competition, but are asked to see it all through an athlete's eyes. His ignoring of warning signs and apparent egotism is, says the author, better viewed as the need to push himself to be better, like any high-caliber athlete. Nick starts off as an anti-hero, a rebellious kid who finds his niche in freediving, and ends as a mixture of martyr for his sport and sad example of overextending one's abilities for the glory of goals, be they personal and private or touted for the world to share.

Other than knowing someone who recently started freediving, I knew absolutely nothing about the sport. The reviews encouraged me to try the book and I am thrilled that I did. The writing is excellent, the information enlightening, and the story kept me hooked to the end. No need to even be a swimmer! An excellent read.

Having basically zero knowledge of the sport and community of freediving, I found *One Breath* an educational and informative read that taught me a lot about the sport itself, the community within the sport as well as the triumphs and challenges that both faced. *One Breath* also told the tale of Nick Mevoli - a freediver who unfortunately passed away. The author does an incredible job of telling Nick's story from the very early stages of his life to the very end. I loved reading about each of the people in the book and felt that the author portrayed them in such high detail that it made me feel like I had met them all in person. For me, *One Breath* was a perfect mix of biographical storytelling and informative writing. And even though I am not a freediver or knew anything about freediving, it

was still a book that I felt like I was able to relate to (through the story of Nick Mevoli) and found it incredibly hard to put down.

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