



The Pulitzer Air Races: American Aviation and Speed Supremacy, 1920-1925

Michael Gough

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Three years after American raceplanes failed dismally in the most important air race of 1920, a French magazine lamented that American "pilots have broken the records which we, here in France, considered as our own for so long." The Pulitzer Trophy Air Races (1920 through 1925), endowed by the sons of publisher Joseph Pulitzer in his memory, brought about this remarkable turnaround. Pulitzer winning speeds increased from 157 to 249 mph, and Pulitzer racers, mounted on floats, twice won the most prestigious international air race--the Schneider Trophy Race for seaplanes. Airplanes, engines, propellers, and other equipment developed for the Pulitzers were sold domestically and internationally. More than a million spectators saw the Pulitzers; millions more read about them and watched them in newsreels. This, the first book about the Pulitzers, tells the story of businessmen, generals and admirals who saw racing as a way to drive aviation progress, designers and manufacturers who produced record-breaking racers, and dashing pilots who gave the races their public face. It emphasizes the roles played by the communities that hosted the races--Garden City (Long Island), Omaha, Detroit and Mt. Clemens, Michigan, St. Louis, and Dayton. The book concludes with an analysis of the Pulitzers' importance and why they have languished in obscurity for so long.

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