



# Endurance: The Extraordinary Life and Times of Emil Zátopek (Widsen Sports Writing)

*Rick Broadbent*

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"A runner must run with dreams in his heart." Emil Zátopek.

In the summer of 1952 Emil Zátopek became the king of the running world with an unprecedented distance treble at the Olympic Games in Helsinki. Together with his wife Dana, who won another gold medal in the javelin, they were the embodiment of sporting romance. Born on the same day, they were champions on the same day too. Yet in 1968 this affable but eccentric Czech soldier was betrayed by his Communist paymasters and cast out into wilderness. Hidden from world view, monitored by the secret police and forced to live in a caravan in mining country, he became the invisible hero. 'Endurance' is the first biography to document the remarkable rise, fall and rehabilitation of a man voted the 'greatest runner of all time' by 'Runner's World' in 2013.

It is also the story of a golden age of sport played out against a backdrop of Cold War politics and paranoia. From the London Olympics of 1948 to Czech concentration camps, this is an uplifting and harrowing story of survival. As Emil rises to global fame, his old coach is locked up and tortured by StB henchmen. Their diverging paths expose the fickleness of popularity and eventually cross again when Zátopek's world is torn asunder. All both men can do is endure.

The running world of this era is brought to life by dramatic accounts of Zátopek's great triumphs, manifold records and a rich collection of characters vying to dethrone him. In Britain the sharp-tongued Gordon Pirie falls foul of the media as he becomes obsessed with Zátopek and adopts increasingly-masochistic methods; mild-mannered marathon champion Jim Peters begins a quest that would make "women weep and grown men lose their lunch??. In France Alain Mimoun crawls from the bloody carnage of his war-time exploits to overcome racial snubs and become known as Zátopek's Shadow; and in the Soviet Union, the tragic figure of Vladimir Kuts is moulded into a brutal running machine at huge cost. Only Zátopek manages to bridge this East-West divide as a savage power struggle is fought in both the Olympic arena and in the corridors of power.

Due to extensive access to those involved, including Dana herself, award-winning Times author Rick Broadbent has written a vivid history involving blood and guns and a love that sustained the cruellest twists of fate. From heady nights at White City to the brave resistance during the Prague Spring, this is a book that plants the son of a carpenter at the very centre of a revolution. Whether talking to his rivals on the track or Red Army troops as tanks roll into Prague, Zátopek's humanity shines through and carries all.

With traces of 'Chariots of Fire' and Laura Hillenbrand's 'Unbroken', Endurance is both a wonderful love story and a landmark tale of hope and strength in the face of crushing opposition.

"It's at the borders of pain and suffering that the men are separated from the boys." Emil Zátopek

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