

## Todd Balf - Author RSS - Random House

This page displays an RSS 2.0 feed for the Random House author Todd Balf.

[http://www.randomhouse.com/author/results.pperl?authorid=1269&max\\_returns=20&best=](http://www.randomhouse.com/author/results.pperl?authorid=1269&max_returns=20&best=)

---

### Major by Todd Balf

[Major](#) A Black Athlete, a White Era, and the Fight to Be the World's Fastest Human Being **Written by Todd Balf** **Trade Paperback**, 320 pages | Three Rivers Press | Sports & Recreation - Cycling; Social Science - African-American Studies | **\$13.95** | 978-0-307-23659-3 (0-307-23659-5)

The story of a man who transcended the handicaps of race to become America's first African American mega sports celebrity

At the turn of the 20th century, hundreds of lightning-fast racers won the hearts and minds of a bicycling-crazed public. Scientists studied them, newspapers glorified them, and millions of dollars in purse money were awarded to them. Major Taylor aimed to be the fastest of them all.

Taylor's most formidable and ruthless opponent—a man nicknamed the "Human Engine" was Floyd McFarland. One man was white, one black; one from a storied Virginia family, the other descended from Kentucky slaves; one celebrated as a hero, one trying to secure his spot in a sport he dominated. The only thing they had in common was the desire to be named the fastest man alive. Finally, in 1904, both men headed to Australia for a much-anticipated title match to decide who would claim the coveted title.

Major is the story of a superstar nobody saw coming, the account of a fierce rivalry that would become an archetypal tale of white versus black in the 20th century, and, most of all, the tale of our nation's first black sports celebrity.

<http://www.randomhouse.com/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780307236593>

---

### Major by Todd Balf

[Major](#) A Black Athlete, a White Era, and the Fight to Be the World's Fastest Human Being **Written by Todd Balf** **Book** | Crown | Sports & Recreation - Cycling; Social Science - African-American Studies | **\$13.95** | 978-0-307-40976-8 (0-307-40976-7)

At the turn of the 20th century, hundreds of handsome, lightning-fast racers won the hearts and minds of a bicycling-crazed public. Scientists studied them, newspapers glorified them, and millions of dollars in purse money was awarded to them. Major Taylor aimed to be the fastest of them all. A prominent black man at a time when such a thing was deemed scandalous, his mounting victories, high moral virtue, and bulletlike riding style made him a target for ridicule from the press and sabotage by the white riders who shared the track with him.

Taylor's most formidable and ruthless opponent-a man nicknamed the "Human Engine"-was Floyd McFarland. One man was white, one black; one from a storied Virginia family, the other descended from Kentucky slaves; one celebrated as a hero, one trying to secure his spot in a sport he dominated. The only thing they had in common was the desire to be named the fastest man alive. Their rivalry riveted first America, and then the world. Finally, in 1904, both men headed to Australia for a much-anticipated title match to decide, beyond dispute, who would claim the coveted title.

Major is the gripping story of a superstar nobody saw coming-a classic underdog, aided by an unlikely crew: a disgraced fight promoter, a broken ex-racer, and a poor upstate girl from New York who wanted to be a queen. It is also the account of a fierce rivalry that would become an archetypal tale of white versus black in the 20th century. Most of all, it is the tale of our nation's first black sports celebrity-a man who transcended the handicaps of race at the turn of the century to reach the stratosphere of fame.

From the Hardcover edition.

<http://www.randomhouse.com/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780307409768>

---

**The Darkest Jungle by Todd Balf**

[The Darkest Jungle](#) The True Story of the Darien Expedition and America's Ill-Fated Race to Connect the Seas  
Written by [Todd Balf](#)

Read by [Ray Childs](#) **Abridged Audiobook Download** | Random House Audio | History - Central America | \$14.95 | 978-0-7393-0353-5 (0-7393-0353-8)

"Commit yourself to the Virgin Mary, for in her hands is the way into the Darién-and in God's is the way out."

**The Darkest Jungle** tells the harrowing story of America's first ship canal exploration across a narrow piece of land in Central America called the Darién, a place that loomed large in the minds of the world's most courageous adventurers in the nineteenth century. With rival warships and explorers from England and France days behind, the 27-member U.S. Darién Exploring Expedition landed on the Atlantic shore at Caledonia Bay in eastern Panama to begin their mad dash up the coast-hugging mountains of the Darién wilderness. The whole world watched as this party attempted to be the first to traverse the 40-mile isthmus, the narrowest spot between the Atlantic and Pacific in all the Americas.

Later, government investigators would say they were doomed before they started. Amid the speculative fever for an Atlantic and Pacific ship canal, the terrain to be crossed had been grossly misrepresented and fictitiously mapped. By January 27, 1854, the Americans had served out their last provisions and were severely footsore but believed the river they had arrived at was an artery to the Pacific, their destination. Leading them was the charismatic commander Isaac Strain, an adventuring 33-year-old U.S. Navy lieutenant. The party could have turned back except, said Strain, they were to a man "revolted at the idea" of failing at a task they seemed destined to accomplish. Like the first men to try to scale Everest or reach the North Pole, they felt the eyes of their countrymen upon them.

Yet Strain's party would wander lost in the jungle for another sixty nightmarish days, following a tortuously contorted and uncharted tropical river. Their guns rusted in the damp heat, expected settlements never materialized, and the lush terrain provided little to no sustenance. As the unending march dragged on, the party was beset by flesh-embedding parasites and a range of infectious tropical diseases they had no antidote for (or understanding of). In the desperate final days, in the throes of starvation, the survivors flirted with cannibalism and the sickest men had to be left behind so, as the journal keeper painfully recorded, the rest might have a chance to live.

The U.S. Darién Exploring Expedition's 97-day ordeal of starvation, exhaustion, and madness-a tragedy turned "triumph of the soul" due to the courage and self-sacrifice of their leader and the seamen who devotedly followed him-is one of the great untold tales of human survival and exploration. Based on the vividly detailed log entries of Strain and his junior officers, other period sources, and Balf's own treks in the Darién Gap, this is a rich and utterly compelling historical narrative that will thrill readers who enjoyed **In the Heart of the Sea**, **Isaac's Storm**, and other sagas of adventure at the limits of human endurance.

From the Hardcover edition.

<http://www.randomhouse.com/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780739303535>

---

**The Darkest Jungle by Todd Balf**

[The Darkest Jungle](#) The True Story of the Darien Expedition and America's Ill-Fated Race to Connect the Seas  
Written by [Todd Balf](#)

Read by [Scott Brick](#) **Unabridged Audiobook Download** | Random House Audio | History - Central America  
| **\$17.95** | 978-1-4159-0132-8 (1-4159-0132-5)

"Commit yourself to the Virgin Mary, for in her hands is the way into the Darién-and in God's is the way out."

**The Darkest Jungle** tells the harrowing story of America's first ship canal exploration across a narrow piece of land in Central America called the Darién, a place that loomed large in the minds of the world's most courageous adventurers in the nineteenth century. With rival warships and explorers from England and France days behind, the 27-member U.S. Darién Exploring Expedition landed on the Atlantic shore at Caledonia Bay in eastern Panama to begin their mad dash up the coast-hugging mountains of the Darién wilderness. The whole world watched as this party attempted to be the first to traverse the 40-mile isthmus, the narrowest spot between the Atlantic and Pacific in all the Americas.

Later, government investigators would say they were doomed before they started. Amid the speculative fever for an Atlantic and Pacific ship canal, the terrain to be crossed had been grossly misrepresented and fictitiously mapped. By January 27, 1854, the Americans had served out their last provisions and were severely footsore but believed the river they had arrived at was an artery to the Pacific, their destination. Leading them was the charismatic commander Isaac Strain, an adventuring 33-year-old U.S. Navy lieutenant. The party could have turned back except, said Strain, they were to a man "revolted at the idea" of failing at a task they seemed destined to accomplish. Like the first men to try to scale Everest or reach the North Pole, they felt the eyes of their countrymen upon them.

Yet Strain's party would wander lost in the jungle for another sixty nightmarish days, following a tortuously contorted and uncharted tropical river. Their guns rusted in the damp heat, expected settlements never materialized, and the lush terrain provided little to no sustenance. As the unending march dragged on, the party was beset by flesh-embedding parasites and a range of infectious tropical diseases they had no antidote for (or understanding of). In the desperate final days, in the throes of starvation, the survivors flirted with cannibalism and the sickest men had to be left behind so, as the journal keeper painfully recorded, the rest might have a chance to live.

The U.S. Darién Exploring Expedition's 97-day ordeal of starvation, exhaustion, and madness-a tragedy turned "triumph of the soul" due to the courage and self-sacrifice of their leader and the seamen who devotedly followed him-is one of the great untold tales of human survival and exploration. Based on the vividly detailed log entries of Strain and his junior officers, other period sources, and Balf's own treks in the Darién Gap, this is a rich and utterly compelling historical narrative that will thrill readers who enjoyed **In the Heart of the Sea**, **Isaac's Storm**, and other sagas of adventure at the limits of human endurance.

From the Hardcover edition.

<http://www.randomhouse.com/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9781415901328>

---

**The Last River by Todd Balf**

[The Last River](#) The Tragic Race for Shangri-la **Written by [Todd Balf](#)** **Trade Paperback**, 304 pages | Three Rivers Press | Travel - Adventure; Sports & Recreation - Kayaking | **\$14.00** | 978-0-609-80801-6 (0-609-80801-X)

**The Last River: The Tragic Race for Shangri-la** is a breathtaking account of the ill-fated October 1998 expedition of an American whitewater kayaking team who traveled deep into the Tsangpo Gorge in Tibet to run the Yarlung Tsangpo, known in paddling circles as the "Everest of rivers." For Wick Walker and Tom McEwan, extreme whitewater pioneers, best friends, and trip leaders, the Tsangpo adventure was the culmination of a twenty-five-year quest for glory. Yet the team's magnificent dreams crumbled when their ace paddler was swept over a thunderous eight-foot waterfall, never to be seen again.

Here is a fascinating exploration of both the seething big water and perilous terrain of the legendary Shangri-la, and the men who dared challenge the furious rapids that raced through this 140-mile-long canyon. **The Last River** invites us to view the Himalayas from a totally new perspective -- on a historic river so remote that only the most hardy and romantic souls attempt to unlock its mysteries.

<http://www.randomhouse.com/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780609808016>

---

### **The Last River by Todd Balf**

[The Last River](#) **Written by [Todd Balf](#)**

**Read by [Dennis Boutsikaris](#)** **Abridged Audiobook Download** | Random House Audio | Nature - Rivers; Sports & Recreation - Kayaking | **\$12.95** | 978-0-375-41747-4 (0-375-41747-8)

**The Last River: The Tragic Race for Shangri-la** is a breathtaking account of the ill-fated October 1998 expedition of an American whitewater kayaking team who traveled deep into the Tsangpo Gorge in Tibet to run the Yarlung Tsangpo, known in paddling circles as the "Everest of rivers." For Wick Walker and Tom McEwan, extreme whitewater pioneers, best friends, and trip leaders, the Tsangpo adventure was the culmination of a twenty-five-year quest for glory. Yet the team's magnificent dreams crumbled when their ace paddler was swept over a thunderous eight-foot waterfall, never to be seen again.

Here is a fascinating exploration of both the seething big water and perilous terrain of the legendary Shangri-la, and the men who dared challenge the furious rapids that raced through this 140-mile-long canyon. **The Last River** invites us to view the Himalayas from a totally new perspective -- on a historic river so remote that only the most hardy and romantic souls attempt to unlock its mysteries.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

<http://www.randomhouse.com/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780375417474>

---