

Under the Hood

The year's best books took us deep into the psyches of competitors like Lance, Yao, Belichick—and race car driver Janet Guthrie, who wrote her own profile in courage



BEFORE DANICA Patrick finished fourth in the 2005 Indianapolis 500, the best showing by a woman at the Brickyard came in 1978, when Janet Guthrie steered a mediocre car to a ninth-place finish despite having broken her wrist two days earlier. Patrick has since become a star. But following her run, Guthrie was subjected to the same harassment and prejudice that dogged her before the race. Two years later she left the



sport. And for the next quarter century, Guthrie recently told SI, "the first thing on my mind was [writing a] book."

She has finally done that, without a ghostwriter, and the result, *A Life at Full Throttle*, is a fascinating read that details her entry into the sport in the Northeast the 1960s and also the abuse she endured. Guthrie is not afraid to be frank about her emotions and her quirks. Away from the track she swooned at Tchaikovsky and Ten-

PIONEER WOMAN Guthrie was Indy's first female finisher, in '78.

nyson. Before a race she prayed to Athena, goddess of wisdom. But on the track she was a warrior as cold and hard as the steel she drove. While racing, she writes, "your emotional steam, superheated, is harnessed, entirely at the service of your will." After a crash once, her blood pressure checked out normal.

It will be obvious to readers that Guthrie, the daughter of a commercial pilot who taught her how to fly Pipers when she was 15, was born to race. People in her sport, though, did everything they could to thwart her. One columnist wrote that if women could race, drunk drivers ought to be allowed to, also. Richard Petty said that Guthrie was "no lady" because "if she was, she'd be at home." Driver Billy Vukovich said if she ever finished a 500, he'd eat his hat. (Vukovich later admitted he was thinking of having a hat made of chocolate.)

Reliving those experiences for the book was painful for Guthrie. "Sometimes," she says, "it felt like taking an X-acto knife, cutting open your arm, dipping your pen in the wound, and then writing with blood." For her efforts, though, Guthrie turned out an uplifting work that is one of the best books ever written about racing—and establishes her as one of the sport's most eloquent voices.

—Charles Hirshberg

The Brow Beat

Highbrow

Bullfighting isn't for writers intimidated by Hemingway, but Edward Lewine does Papa proud with

DEATH AND THE SUN. Part bullfighting primer, part travelogue, it depicts a matador's year in heroic detail.



Lowbrow

They're not the Brownings, but Jose Canseco and ex-wife Jessica (*below*) can titillate. He exposed baseball's steroid problem in **JUICED.** Her **JUICY** is *Hollywood Wives* on steroids: life as a slugger's spouse.



By the Numbers

397 That's the number of pictures and illustrations in **SPORTS ILLUSTRATED's** recently published *The Football Book*, a 294-page, coffee-table-sized celebration of America's Game. It has vivid

writing from the magazine's first half century, plus photos that capture the sport's grit and glory.

