

S.A. Paddler
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MEN, RIVERS AND CANOES

By Ian Player

As we carry on with our daily grind in offices and homes around the country, it's easy to forget the feeling we experience when we're on the water. Paddling is an intensely reflective and spiritual pastime, particularly hard to explain in words to an audience. Ian Player has become a master of this down the years, primarily through his tell-it-like-it-is approach and utter respect for the natural world. He is well known through the world as a pioneering nature conservationist, and more famous in paddling circles for having started the Dusi Canoe Marathon. To read about the very first expedition down the Umsundusi and Umgeni Rivers is humbling and awe-inspiring. The obstacles, the spirit, the camaraderie, the determination and the mindset involved are aspects that anyone would do well to apply to everyday life. The sheer-minded drive and enthusiasm to complete what he started is what sets Ian Player apart from any other gung-ho adventurer. He was constantly faced with what other may call the end of the road, but he always pressed

on with his positive attitude.

The book was re-released just before the Dusi this year, and maps the very first few Dusi-Umgeni expeditions/races, and trips on the Umkomaas and Pongola Rivers. Player writes in good detail about particular incidents en route downriver that must be forever etched in his memory, but his engaging style leaves you wanting even more detail to fill in all the possible gaps. A new introduction from Dusi legend Graeme Pope-Ellis and an insightful extra chapter on paddling's relationship with the local Valley people complete what can only be described as a must-read for anyone who has ever paddled a canoe down a river.

