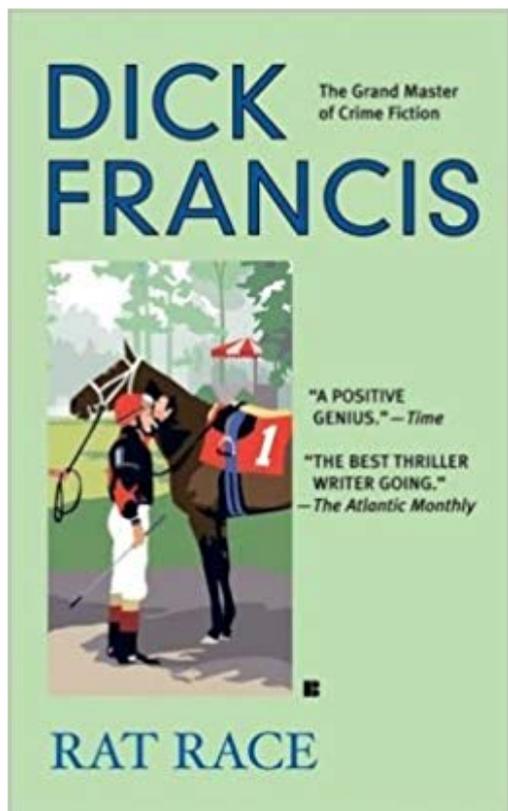


## RAT RACE *by* Dick francis



**ISBN:** 067182158X

**ISBN13:** 978-0671821586

**Author:** Dick francis

**Book title:** RAT RACE

**Publisher:** Pocket (November 1, 1978)

**Language:** English

**Category:** Thrillers and Suspense

**Size PDF version:** 1654 kb

**Size ePUB version:** 1911 kb

**Size FB2 version:** 1924 kb

**Other formats:** txt mbr docx doc

067182158X



Reviews of the **RAT RACE** *by* Dick francis

Fenius

"The Grand Master of Crime Fiction" proclaims one blurb on the cover of a Dick Francis thriller, and, most times, I feel that publishers are laying it on thick. But when it comes to Dick Francis, I feel there should be an even more generous slathering on of rampant flattery. Because this writer was that exceptional and that consistent with how he entertained his readers, how he so convincingly swept them into his many worlds, but all those worlds with a dab of horseracing in 'em. With Francis, too much praise is not enough.

RAT RACE, published in 1970, is one of my longstanding favorites. It stars Matt Shore, one of the deadest inside lead characters that ever graced a Francis novel. Life has kicked Shore to the curb and then peed on him. Bitterly divorced, scarred survivor of scandal and a loss of face, today he's keeping his head low working as a charter pilot for the modest Derrydowns air taxi service. Matt nowadays purposely keeps himself distant, tries not to make those personal connections, tries not to care. And I'm pretty sure the air taxi service, as a gig, doesn't routinely achieve giddy heights of excitement. Except that, in the hands of a master storyteller like Francis, it does. There's one particular sequence in this book that palpitates the heart, and that's Matt's brilliant mid-air rescue executed during a wicked storm.

The writer throws in various elements that work to suck you into his narrative. There's an agreeable romance what falls just short of tragedy. My heart kinda broke for Nancy and her identical twin Midge, and I thought their brother Colin Ross, England's most celebrated jockey, is a really swell, stand-up bloke. In his job, Matt gets to meet all sorts of colorful characters, and they range from blustery to scheming to straight-up nefarious. My favorite may be Honey Harley, super-competent, casually lascivious daughter of Derrydowns' owner, although vying for my attention are the dim yet big-hearted Duke and his observant kid nephew.

As per usual, you're become intrigued by Francis' latest dive into a vocation you normally wouldn't ponder for a second. The neat background to this is that Francis' wife, Mary - who is his longtime go-to researcher - had taken flying lessons as part of her research for one of his even earlier books, FLYING FINISH. To her surprise, she proved to be an adept and super-enthused pilot, and she went on to attain what passes for a master's degree on flying. She even wrote an instructional book for beginning flyers. She and her husband - himself an RAF pilot during WWII - eventually set up a small professional air taxi service, from which experience Francis drew to pen RAT RACE. I almost want to say there's even more of that concrete touch of verisimilitude in RAT RACE than in Francis' other books, except that he's such a good professional writer, and writes with such conviction and familiar ease, that he makes it seem as if he's personally lived thru those other jobs in those other books. Even if he hadn't.

I didn't think the crime sub-plot to be all that absorbing. Bits of it - something about insurance swindling - actually confused me, or maybe its details were so uninteresting to me I simply refused to pay close attention. There are explosions. There are fisticuffs. There's Derrydowns' ongoing heated rivalry with Polyplanes, a more powerful and thoroughly underhanded air taxi service. But never mind. I'd rather that the focus remained latched on Matt Shore, much lambasted, unfeeling aviator, and how he gradually allows himself to thaw as he basks under the warmth of the Ross family's regard. I am a manly man but even manly men have their mushy side.

Gelgen

Rat Race is full of tension, intrigue, desire, characters to care desperately about and rules that frustrate and anger you. Dick Francis excels at both mystery and pace and this is one of my favorites. My father kept up his flying license after WWII until his grandchildren were grown. I have first-hand experience with flying in small 4-seater planes and this book will ring true to those with like experience.

Trash Obsession

Love everything this guy has written. This was a real romance though, which was fun.

Love Me

Excellent, like all Dick Francis mysteries

Fhois

One of my favourite Dick Francis books. Its a well written story that flows well and is very enjoyable. Like many others, has a few aspects that push the bounds of believability a tad far, but overall it works well.

The NiGGa

Dick Francis is always a good read. His good guys are brave and tenacious. His bad guys are bad but he doesn't usually resort to horrible language or gratuitous violence to portray them. Francis was a jockey and each of his books have some form of racing in them but don't let that put you off. Each book is written about a main character that has a unique occupation. In this book it is about a man who flies racing enthusiasts back and forth to race tracks in a small plane. He always has me holding my breath to see how he is going to get out of the present mess he is in. His books are good on tape or cd too.

HyderCraft

As always an excellent and exciting read. Although they are not large books they are the most enjoyable time to spend reading any where.

A good read. Keeps you interested to the end. Easy to read and well written. Guaranteed a good read from this author

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