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West Wind, Flood Tide: The Battle of Mobile Bay

Jack Friend

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Immortalized by David Farragut's apothegm, ""Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead,"" the Battle of Mobile Bay remains one of history's great naval engagements, a contest between two admirals trained in the same naval tradition who once fought under the same flag. This new study takes a fresh look at the battle-the bloodiest naval battle of the Civil War-examining its genesis, tactics, and political ramifications. If the Confederacy had been able to deny the Union a victory before the presidential election, the South was certain to have won its independence. The North's win, however, not only stopped the blockade-runners in Mobile but insured Lincoln's re-election. Although the Union had an advantage in vessels of eighteen to four and an overwhelming superiority in firepower, it paid dearly for its victory, suffering almost ten times as many casualties as Franklin Buchanan's Confederate fleet. The author traces the evolution of the battle from the time Farragut took command of the West Gulf Blockading Squadron in February 1862 until the battle was fought on 5 August 1864. He then continues the narrative through the end of the war and explains how the battle influenced ship design and naval tactics for years to come.

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