



CSS Alabama vs USS Kearsarge: Cherbourg 1864 (Duel)

Mark Lardas

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By the time of American Civil War things had changed from the Age of Fighting Sail - steam power and explosive shells were transforming naval warfare. Iron was beginning to supplant wood. Britain had just finished HMS Warrior, an iron-hulled warship and coastal ironclads dominated the waters off the United States. The changes meant that ships sank, during battles instead of afterwards. The fights were no less bloody, but in addition to flying splinters, a host of other dangers were added - burst steam boilers, fire due to exploding shells, and the burst from the shells themselves. But, just as in the age of sail, warship captains that won one-on-one battles with another warship became as famous as modern sports stars.

During the course of the American Civil War, three single ship actions were fought between Union cruisers and Confederate raiders: CSS Florida vs. USS Wachusett, CSS Alabama vs. USS Hatteras, and CSS Alabama vs. USS Kearsarge. This book will present those, with an emphasis on the most famous battle: Alabama's fight with Kearsarge. Next to the battle between USS Monitor and CSS Virginia, no other naval duel of the American Civil War drew as much interest. That story is told from the eyes of the participants filtered through the lens of historical analysis available since the battles were fought. This includes archeological studies of wrecks of some of these ships, making this book an indispensable guide for anyone interested in Civil War and naval history.

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