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This extended edition is to celebrate the work of Robert Edgren

The Syracuse Herald

17 Dec 1911


Robert Edgren

The Only Three World's Boxing Champions in America By Robert Edgren

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JIMMY CONLON,
BANTAM CHAMPION
WHO CLAIMED HIS TITLE



AD WOLGAST.
THE ONE CHAMPION
OF THE PRESENT DAY
WHO WON HIS TITLE
BY WHIPPING AN
UNDISPUTED CHAMPION
OF THE WORLD.

R. Edgren



ABE ATTELL,
FEATHERWEIGHT CHAMPION
BY VIRTUE OF HAVING
CLAIMED THE TITLE
AND OF HAVING DEFENDED
IT FOR MANY YEARS

There are just three world's boxing champions in America today, Johnny Coulon, bantamweight; Abe Attell, featherweight, and Ad Wolgast, lightweight. Of these Coulon and Attell obtained their titles by claiming them, and then defending them against all comers. Fortunately, they have been successful for several years, and there can be no question that they have earned a right to call themselves champions. There's no flaw in the title to-day.

With Wolgast it is a different affair. Wolgast is the only champion of the world in the ring (since Johnson's retirement) who earned his title by whipping the former holder. Wolgast whipped Battling Nelson, who had defeated Joe Gans, who had defeated Frank Erne, who had defeated "Kid" Lavigne, who had won the championship of America and clinched his right to the world's championship by going to England and knocking out the famous Dick Burge, greatest lightweight; known to England's ring followers in many long years—perhaps in all the history of the game.

There is no possible flaw in Wolgast's title. He is of the direct descent from the old line of kings of the lightweight class. When he stopped Battling Nelson in that gory ring at Port Richmond, Cal., he won his title on the spot, and there are only three ways in which he can lose it again. He can retire from the ring or die, or be officially beaten in a battle where his opponent makes the weight. Wolgast's enforced retirement for a few months, owing to an operation, doesn't invalidate his right to be called champion according to our American custom.

Ad will come out and fight again as soon as he is able to, for he's the busiest little champion we have had in some time, with the possible exception of Battling Nelson. Bat Nelson was a better champion than Wolgast in one way. He was so willing to fight that he always gave his victims a second chance if they wanted it. He fought Britt, Corbett and Gans each two or three times, these being the toughest men on his list. Perhaps Wolgast will do the same after a while. Up to date he's been keep busy by the new claimant, and to give him credit for his work, he surely has shown that he's the best in the world over the long route.

Now Johnny Coulon — no one disputes his right to be called champion in his class, although he came into the title in a roundabout way. Frankie Neil years ago took the bantam championship from Harry Forbes in San Francisco. Neil, later on, went to England expecting to pick up some easy money, and was trimmed by Joe Bowker in his first fight. Nell, sr., sent up some frightful shrieks of agony over the decision, but that made no difference. Bowker won the decision, and no doubt he was entitled to it. Bowker didn't pass the title along legitimately. He grew out of the class and began fighting featherweights. He lost several battles by the knockout route, came to America, was whipped by Al Delmont in Boston and Tommy O'Toole in Philadelphia, and went back to England and oblivion.

The bantamweight title had no real claimant, Delmont was over the weight and was mixing with featherweights and lightweights. Johnny Coulon, after beating Murphy, the 105-pound champion, claimed the bantam title and began "defending" it at 115 pounds ringside. After a while he fought his way into public recognition all over the country, and to tell the truth, he's a corking little fighter and well worth looking over when he fights. Abe Attell is one of the wonders of the ring. He started in San Francisco nearly twelve years ago, knocked out his

opponents as fast as they could be tossed into the ring with him. Went "East" as far as Salt Lake City, cleaned up there and afterward fought all over the country. He became wonderfully clever, and for a long time contented himself with winning on points. He still had a "knockout wallop" when he wanted to use it, however and has it to-day.

Abe "claimed" the featherweight championship when Terry McGovern had ceased defending it. Terry didn't lose that title to "Young" Corbett. The latter never held a championship, for his fight with McGovern was 126 pounds, weigh in the afternoon. while the class limit is 122 ringside. Attell has always been able to make 122 easily, and even two or three pounds less. But to show that he was genuine as a champion he often gave away weight and fought desperate battles with such men as Battling Nelson (who couldn't do anything with Abe in six and fifteen rounds). Tommy O'Toole. Freddy Welsh, Wolgast (then a feather), Owen Moran, Tommy Murphy, Johnny Marto and Matt Wells. Among the featherweights Attell is supreme.

We have no welterweight champion. Honey Melody has some sort of a claim to the title because he whipped Joe Walcott and never lost the championship by losing a fight "at weight." But Honey lost several fights and "went back" until people no longer regarded him as champion. He says he is in shape again — but they all think that. He'll have to prove it in the ring. At present the title is being tagged about by all sorts of claimants, none of whom can establish a legitimate claim or make a show of defending the honor against all challengers.

An exception to this latter statement is Mike Gibbons, who certainly can beat all of the welterweights with ease, judging by his recent fights. The only doubt connected with Gibbons as a welterweight champion is his weight. He scaled 146 ½ pounds against Cofey. and he'll have to "show" in the matter of weight before he can take it upon himself to defend the title he has claimed.

There is no recognized middleweight champion. Papke inherited the title, perhaps, after Ketchell's death, as he is the most recent of former holders. But he lost to Thompson in Australia, and since returning to America Thompson hasn't shown anything worth mentioning in the line of fighting ability. Papke himself lost a decision to Bob Moha, a middleweight, in Boston. On this score Moha's claim might be recognized. But there are Frank Klaus, who claims the title and who has whipped good middleweights all over the country, and Buck Grouse, whose claim looks at least as good as that of Klaus. It will take a series of battles to decide which is the best man amongst the claimants.

The light heavyweight championship has died out. Tommy Burns won that title from Jack O'Brien, but Tommy toured the world, became heavyweight champion by right of conquest, lost to Jack Johnson, and retired from the ring without taking the trouble to do anything with his light heavyweight crown. Langford and Jeanette claim it. but both are over the recognized weight. Jack Johnson's retirement has left the heavyweight title without a real holder. If Johnson fights again he'll be recognized as champion until he is defeated. But he may not fight again. In that case McVey and Langford fighting in Australia, will come as near battling for the heavyweight championship as any one else. None of the present "hopes" are in the running.

end

Fort Wayne Journal Gazette 26 September 1915

**IN THE DAYS OF REAL FIGHTING
BEGINNING today, the Journal-Gazette with the New York World will
print a series of ring stories, written by Robert Edgren, under the title
of "IN THE DAYS OF REAL FIGHTING."**

This series will deal with famous ring contests, some of which will stir up memories of the old sport and be of interest to the fight followers of the present day.

This is the story of two of the greatest fighting men of fifteen years ago, matched to fight twenty rounds for a purse that amounted to about 3 per cent, of the money paid Mike Gibbons and Packey McFarland for their skilful ten round exhibition. It is a story of a fight that was a fight — a fight in which each of the principals, without the slightest timidity over loss of reputation or prestige, went in to win with a knockout.

Incidentally, it is the story of the quickest knockout ever known in the ring.

Fifteen years ago, in New York city and in other parts of the country where ring sport was popular, fighting men were always ready to fight and to risk everything in the hope of winning. Fighting was more of a sport than a business then.

Long bouts were the rule and in every bout there was a decision. Many referees were opposed to calling any bout a draw, preferring to give an outright decision when either man had the slightest advantage. The result was that fighters gave the best they had. There was little stalling. And in spite of the general idea to-day that skilful boxing doesn't go with hard fighting, there were twenty clever and skilful boxers for every one developed under our spiritless no-decision system.

Both Men Had Great Ring Record!.

The men were Matty Matthews, destined a few months later to become welterweight champion of the world by knocking out the great Mysterious Billy Smith, and Kid McPartland, one of the greatest lightweights of his day. In the year 1900, when the match was made. Matty Matthews had been fighting five years, and had defeated many of the best men in the country.

He was a tall rangy fellow, formally a truckman, powerful, game and possessing a wicked punch. Among the famous ones he had beaten were Stanton Abbott, George Kerwin. Mike Leonard, Austin Gibbons, Tom Broderick, Owen Ziegler, Otto Sieloff, Eddie Connolly. Bobby Dobbs and Kid Carter. Incidentally he had fought Kid McPartland a twenty-round draw in 1898, and a six-round draw in 1899.

McPartland began fighting a year before Matthews, and developed almost at once into a

remarkably skilful boxer. His skill never interfered with his knockout punch, which he put over often. Among his victims by knockout or decision, were Bob Farrell. Jack Burge, George McFadden, Jimmy Potts, Stanton Abbott Jimmy Handler. Tommy Butler, Tommy Ryan, Spike Sullivan, Otto Sieloff, Tommy McCune, Tom Tracey, Owen Ziegler and Jack Daly. A list of men famous fifteen years ago.

He also fought the then invincible Kid Lavigne, losing the decision in twenty five rounds, and fought Joe Wallcott to an eight-round draw. McPartland had one of the most remarkable records ever made in the ring, no decisive defeat being marked against him until after five years, during which he met scores of the best men in his class.

There was of course a great rivalry between Mathews and McPartland. The two draws added to the personal feelings between them, each being dissatisfied and anxious to try it out again to a more definite conclusion.

Matty Mathews had come under the management of Johnny Dunn, then a famous manager of fighters and today still handling a successful "stable." Dunn had a habit of thinking. According to his ideas Matty did too much swinging. Matty hitting straight would be invincible. He coached Matthews, who also had the advantage of boxing with his friend Tommy West, and the result was that Matty became the most dangerous hitter of his weight in the ring, not even excepting the marvelous Joe Gans.

Fought for \$1,000 Purse, Winner Take All.

Kid McPartland met John Dunn and told him that he'd like to fight Mathews again. As it happened Dunn had a warm personal friendship for McPartland. "Kid" said he "Don't ask me to match you with Matty now. He's improved a lot since you fought him last, and you haven't. He'll knock you out for sure. You don't have a chance, I don't want to profit by your misfortune, fight somebody else. You're a left hander fighter and matty has one punch you have no defense for. He'll get you with it".

McPartland didn't care for the advice. He went to his manager and had him see Mathews. Mathews went to Dunn and said McPartland wanted to fight him and he wanted to fight McPartland. And so Dunn made the match.

Mathews and McPartland agreed to fight for a purse of \$1,000, winner to take all, twenty rounds at the Hercules Athletic club of Brooklyn, whose palatial quarters were in the old Myrtle avenue car stables, near Broadway. The weight was 135 pounds.

McPartland went through his usual training. Matthews trained, too, but he worked on the development of the one punch with which he intended to knock McPartland out. He had developed a corking straight right, short punch with a mule's kick concealed in it, a wallop that was full of dynamite.

Johnny Dunn, now that the match was made, laid aside his friendship for McPartland temporarily and spoke to his man Matty like this: "Look here. Matty, you can win this

fight with the first punch. McPartland is left handed. He stands with his left foot out, but he always starts by drawing his left hand back three times. He feints twice, and the third time he hits, you can count on it as a sure thing.

"When you meet in the first round take your distance and watch him. He'll make two moves with his left. The third time, instead of waiting for him to lead, step in suddenly and shoot your right straight to his jaw. You'll knock him out."

The old Hercules club was packed that night. They were hanging on the rafters." The usual ceremonies having been observed the bell clanged. Matty advanced quickly to the middle of the ring and stopped. McPartland advanced no less quickly and stopped. Crouching, McPartland feinted—twice—and started his left jab. On the instant Matthews shot across a terrific short right to the Kids jaw. McPartland pitched forward on his face. The ten count tolled over him and he never stirred. The first blow struck had knocked him cold.

A world's record that was even quicker, than the Hawkins knockout of Martin Flaherty at Carson City. Shortly afterward Matthews knocked out Owen Ziegler in two rounds. Dan McConnell in three rounds and Mysterious Billy Smith in nineteen rounds, becoming welter weight champion.

Then, as McPartland insisted he had been knocked out by a fluke punch, he gave the Kid another chance and stopped him in seventeen rounds of desperate fighting at the old Broadway A. C., where Choynski fought Maher and Dixon fought McGovern.

Gibbons and McFarland drew down \$33,700 for ten rounds of clever boxing. Matthews got \$1,000 for knocking out McPartland in a punch. McPartland didn't get even a carfare for his lost reputation. To-day Matthews is a stage carpenter and McPartland earns his living as a referee of boxing bouts.

End

The Fort Wayne Journal Gazette

3 October 1915

In The Days Of Real Fighting

**Ritchie Once Won Fight After Being
Knocked Out In The Opening Round**

Sometimes it is necessary to go back fifteen or twenty years to find a fight. Willie Ritchie the American lightweight champion is one fellow who, like the old timers, never disappoints those who expect to see action when he steps into the ring. Willie Ritchie has shown some fighting in New York. Once, just after becoming champion, he boxed Leach Cross here and just to show his goods stepped into Leachie and slugged all the way.

Again he chased Freddy Welsh for ten rounds, hammered him into and out of every corner of the ring, and outclassed the Briton so far that every spectator was convinced the English

decision that took Ritchie's lightweight title away must have been one of the most astonishing even given in a ring, Ritchie has had some hard fights, Joe Rivers once nearly finished him in the first round, and Willie came through and knocked the Mexican cold a few rounds later. Charlie White nailed him with a right on the chin that nearly robbed him of his senses in the first round, and Willie fought himself out of the hole and at the end of the decisionless six was piling into White and doing his deadly best to even the score.

But the toughest fight of his life was on New Year's day, 1912, nearly eleven months before he became champion. What happened then came near killing Ritchie's chance to get the fight that earned him the title. Ritchie began fighting when he was eighteen. He had a lot of short bouts and won often. His first long fight was with Matty Baldwin, whom he beat in twenty rounds in San Francisco.

Boxed Welsh 20 Rounds on Short Notice

Just four months after this fight Ritchie was at home and not very busy when he received a wire asking him to start at once for Los Angeles, several hundred miles away, to substitute for Ad Wolgast in a twenty round bout with Freddy Welsh. Wolgast had suddenly been knocked out by an attack of appendicitis and was in the hospital. Ritchie accepted by wire, rode all night, arrived in Los Angeles in the afternoon and fought Welsh the twenty rounds that night.

Although Ritchie had gone in without a day's training he fought a fast twenty rounds and lost a decision to the clever English boxer only by a narrow margin. Welsh was trained to the moment for an attempt to take the title from Wolgast. Ritchie's sensational exploit established him as one of the best lightweights in the country and he started for the east to increase his reputation and gather some coin.

One month after meeting Welsh Willie fought Paul Koehler in Cleveland. Koehler was a tall, rangy fellow with boxing skill and a punch. He had fought Packey McFarland and had given Packey the toughest time in his experience while the bout lasted He was no easy mark.

Willie, anxious to make a hit in the east, walked straight at Koehler ready to begin hostilities without any preliminary sparring. Right here Willie made the mistake of underestimating his man. It was Koehler who began, not Willie. As "Willie stepped within range Koehler suddenly slammed a right fist over on his jaw with all the strength of arm and back and shoulder and legs behind the blow.

Ritchie Never Knew What Struck Him

Ritchie never knew he was hit. He flopped over forward like a man struck down by a bullet and fell flat on his face, knocked out cold.

It was so sudden that Koehler stood staring at Ritchie paralyzed with astonishment. The referee laughingly turned to Koehler and waved him to his corner. Emil Thiry, who was supposed to be his chief advisor, turned his back on his man and walked away from the ring. He deserted the ship. When three or four seconds had passed it suddenly occurred to the referee that

he might as well count over Ritchie and announce his official finish. He began. Ritchie lay on his face completely out. The referee, Koehler being a local favorite was enjoying his task. He smilingly glanced at the wildly enthusiastic spectators. At "seven" something stirred in the back of Ritchie's brain. Perhaps he didn't actually think. Some instinct aroused by the slow tolling of the ten-count drove him to action. Mechanically he rolled over to his knees and just at "nine" pushing himself to his feet and stood tottering. If the referee had begun counting at once no doubt Willie would have been counted out and in that case he wouldn't have had the match with Wolgast later on. Such small things, two or three apparently unimportant seconds, sometimes make all the difference in the world.

Ritchie was up, but was in bad shape. His hands hung at his sides, Koehler rushed in anxiously to finish him. Ritchie swaying, reeling falling headlong forward, somehow managed to move his chin away from the blows that were rained upon him. And round after round his strength slowly returned. At first, in his corner, he made no answer to the deserting Thiry, who had been brought back and was anxiously asking Willie "how he felt."

After the seventh round Ritchie came to his corner with the dazed look gone from his eyes.

"What happened ?, is the first round over" he asked. He had been fighting for seven rounds purely on the fighters instinct. He never remembered anything about the beginning of that fight.

Furiously trying to finish the work he had begun Paul Koehler had fought himself arm weary. He had nearly shot his bolt. And now in the seventh round Ritchie turned the tide of battle against him. Ritchie had come back. He pressed his rival hard. Koehler was as game as Ritchie. He fought his best to the end. In the last round, the twelfth, Ritchie beat Koehler until he was hanging over the ropes. There Ritchie was trying to turn him around in time to put over a knockout punch when the last bell rang. Knocked cold in the first round Ritchie had beaten the man who had put him down, for the referee's decision was that Willie had won.

Ritchie's end in this fight was \$800, less than 5 per cent, of what McFarland received for boxing ten rounds safely and cleverly with Mike Gibbons. Willie made such a hit that he was matched to meet Koehler again at the Eagles' club of Cleveland, but Koehler drew out and Yankee Schwartz was substituted. Ritchie knocked him out in three rounds.

End

The Washington Post

14 May 1916



"Fighting Face" Has Proved to be a Myth, and "Looks" Offers No Criterion of Pugilistic Ability

Robert Edgren

You've heard them when a new man steps into the ring. I remember one night when Al Palzer, a giant Minnesotan, appeared for the first time in New York pugilistic society. There was a momentary hush. Then every spectator turned to every other spectator and exclaimed- "**Great Scott — what a face for a fighter!**"

Al Palzer certainly had the ideal "Fighting face." His well-rounded jaw was thrust forward like the ram of a battleship. There was firmness and courage in the lines of his mouth. His nose was short, and not too prominent. His eyes were protected by high cheekbones and the brow of a caveman. His neck was like a column, well set on broad and sloping shoulders that promised plenty of strength and hitting power. Palzer's eyes were clear blue, like those of his Viking ancestors, bold and steady. When fighting they held a berserk glare.

Where is Al Palzer now? Why, out West again, fighting occasional preliminaries in third-rate boxing shows. No other heavyweight in recent years has fallen so fast or so far. He had all the looks of a champion, but in his case the camera lied.

Looks Like World Beater.

About the time that Al Palzer was beating Bombardier Wells and Al Kaufman and scoring his few ring victories, another temporary heavyweight wonder flashed across the horizon. This was Soldier Kearns, an almost exact counterpart of the old timer, Tom Sharkey in feature and physique. The only apparent difference was that Kearns was 20 pounds bigger than Tom at his best. Kearns certainly did look like a world-beater for a while. He had a tremendous punch and a knack of landing it well. With his high boned, wide face, powerful jaw and great thick neck set on a pair of shoulders like Hackenschmidt's, he looked absolutely invincible. A horseshoer by trade, he had the iron endurance horseshoeing gave Fitzsimmons.

A soldier serving through the Philippine campaigns, he was fearless. A punch was a joke with him, after bullets and fevers. Many prophesied that he'd surely become heavyweight champion. He knocked out several opponents quickly. He met "One Round" Davis, another sensational fighter with a remarkable knockout record, and he knocked Davis cold in less than 2 minutes of fighting. A week later Kearns met young Jess Willard, a tall, lanky Kansan, whose clown like antics had made him a joke in local rings. Kearns was grim. Willard was all smiles. Kearns intended to knock the giant out in a round or two.

Willard, laughing and joking with the spectators, looked as if he saw some hidden humor in the whole thing. Kearns looked a champion. Willard looked as much out of place in the ring as if he'd been a circus clown in paint and pantaloons.

Yet see what happened. For several rounds Kearns grimly plunged in and swung furiously at the giant's jaw, while Willard leaned back out of range, winked at the spectators and laughed like a comedian who appreciates his own jokes. Then Kearns grew impatient of hitting at a mark he couldn't reach, and drove a terrific smash into Willard's solar plexus. The laugh on Willard's face disappeared. Kearns stepped back to let him fall, as all others had fallen when he drove that right hand in. But instead of falling Willard lunged at Kearns and shot out a right arm that looked as long as a fence rail. His glove hit Kearns on the chin so hard that the soldier turned a somersault in the air and struck the floor on the back of his neck. He was paralyzed by that blow, and even after being counted out couldn't get to his corner without help.

Willard, the laughing, careless clown.

has become world's heavyweight champion, and is regarded as one of the greatest heavyweights that ever held the title. Kearns, after losing to Willard, fell into a long string of defeats, and at last dropped out of sight. For all I know he may be shoeing horses again. You can't know a man's fighting ability by his looks. The "aggressive" jaw, the short, thick neck tell us nothing at all. If you have trouble on the street the slender soft looking fellow may be ten times as dangerous as the man who carries the "earmarks" of a slugger.

Sullivan's Fighting Face.

John L. Sullivan set the style in fighting faces for a generation or two John had a heavy neck, a bold profile and a rounded, heavy, protruding jaw that gave him the fighting look of the

bulldog. Jim Corbett, who whipped him, was slender, clean cut and so ordinary in appearance that he'd have been lost anywhere in a group of college boys. The next champion, Bob Fitzsimmons, might be taken for a preacher or a doctor. He has a rather high nose, a round, smooth face and a well-set chin that is a trifle retreating rather than protruding. His eyes, instead of carrying a "fighting expression," show only a mild, innocent baby stare when he's in action. And Fitzsimmons has knocked out more men — in nearly 400 ring battles—than any other fighter that ever lived.

Typical "Ring Countenance."

Jeffries, of course, looked like a fighter. He was thick-necked, short-nosed, heavy boned, with protruding brows, a strong jaw and a grim and surly appearance in the ring. Tommy Burns looked like a fighter. So did Johnson. But Jess Willard—perhaps the greatest of them all—is just a big, smiling, good-natured farmer still. He's a fighter because he's a wonderful man physically, and because, besides his physique, he has what many other big men have lacked. Intelligence enough to know that skill would make him invincible, and patience enough to work and study for years to acquire the skill.

Among the smaller men Terry McGovern had a typical "**fighting face**" He had the glaring eyes, the short nose, the out-thrust lower chin. Also he had a very long neck. He won his fights by carrying such a furious pace that the other fellows didn't have time to think of hitting him. But I remember another fighter who was no less aggressive and relentless. This was "Fighting Dick" Hyland, and "**Fighting Dick**" had buck teeth and a retreating chin and about as much alert aggressiveness in his appearance at ordinary times as a marshmallow. Kid Lavigne was a furious fighter, but the famous Kid looked like a cherub even when in the ring.

Tommy Ryan, who had a large "**beak**" and a small head that ran right up to a point, and hair that grew nearly down to his eyebrows, was everything that he didn't look He was one of the cleverest and most crafty fighters that ever fought. He looked sad and apologetic until he found his opening for the knockout Nobody would have picked him out of a crowd as a fighter. Yet he was one of the most wonderful men of his time.

And there was Kid McCoy. The Kid has always been an exceedingly troublesome person in any fight, either in or out of the ring. He's as peaceful as a stepped-on rattler. His brown eyes smile so much that they carry wrinkles at the corners. His face is nearly always smiling. He is slender and graceful in build. His forehead is high and broad, his features regular, his chin small and set back instead of pushed forward like that of the man with a "**fighting face**" McCoy was as desperate a fighter as ever lived, utterly game and utterly relentless.

He put Tom Sharkey flat on his back twice with his "**corkscrew punch**" He fought Ruhlin and Maher and many other heavyweights while he was still only a middleweight himself. He out-tricked Tommy Ryan and he outfought others. Joe Gans was a marvel in the ring. He had a profile which was more Arab than Ethiopian in character with a well shaped head and a strong well rounded chin. Gans had a high, thin nose. His expression was never savage. Rather it was melancholy. He neither smiled nor scowled while fighting, but went through his work as if his

body was a perfect machine driven by a well-ordered and smooth calculating brain.

Sharkey Appears Ferocious.

You can argue either way on the "fighting face." There was Sailor Tom Sharkey, who had one of the most ferocious "fighting faces" I've ever seen in a ring - a bony, big-jawed face with caveman brows, set on a great thick neck. His fighting expression was simply cold, icy ferocity and grim determination combined. He fought like a fury. And then we have Squires, of Australia who was a marvel — in looks.

The "fighting face" is a delusion and a snare, and not worth a bet.

**The Fort Wayne Journal
21 Jan 1917
By Robert Edgren**



Have the days gone by when a sturdy Fighting man can come from nowhere and leap to the championship class in a single bound?. It seems that way, with our modern innocuous ten-round no decision boxing. To-day a champion ignores all challengers and waits months, or years, without taking the slightest risk of losing a title to a formidable rival.

Each challenger is as carefully inspected as an insurance applicant, his weak and strong points tabulated and the risks matched and balanced and summed up before the champion even

deigns to answer his challenge. It wasn't like that in the old days..Then champions were jealous of their ring fame and too quick to oppose aspiring rivals. Consequently it happened now and then that an unknown found his chance to become world famous over night.

I was in San Francisco when Tom Sharkey came ashore at Vallejo from the cruiser in Philadelphia and fought some fireman bruiser from another ship. Sharkey knocked his man out with the first punch struck, won thousands of dollars for his shipmates, who had wagered six months' pay on their Champion, and made such an impression that he was talked of even in San Francisco forty miles away.

In those days the good fighters, went at the sport like huntsmen. They weren't rabbit hunters. They liked to go after bear and elk and big game. So when Sharkey's name appeared in the sporting columns all the skilled fighting men in his class immediately took interest in him. Result, in a few days the sailor, who had finished his term of enlistment in the United States Navy, was offered a number of good matches. He didn't look for soft marks to work up on — which is the modern practice. He took them as fast as they came. First he knocked out Australian Billy Smith in seven rounds, then John Miller in nine, and then fought an eight-round draw with the great old veteran of those days, Alex Greggains.

The sailor having shown himself to be a mighty tough customer, Joe Choynski gave him a match. Joe always was a sport. And Sharkey, coming with a rush knocked Joe out in eight rounds. That fight made Sharkey famous. Choynski was a tremendous hitter and as clever as any heavyweight. Twice he knocked the raw sailor clean through the ropes and out of the ring, to fall on his head on the floor. And twice Sharkey ran around the ring to his corner, climbed in under the ropes, and leaped to his feet and after Choynski like a wildcat. After beating Choynski, Tom knocked out Jim Williams in three rounds.

By this time he had attracted the attention of Jim Corbett. then heavyweight champion and the idol of the Queensberry world. Jim came to San Francisco and at once consented to take Sharkey on for a four-round bout. It was a risky thing to do. No modern champion would have considered such a risk for a second. Sharkey had shown himself a tremendous mauler.

I was in both camps during the training, Corbett, secure in his dazzling skill, laughed as he said he'd make a fool of "**that sailor dub**". Sharkey grimly declared he'd lick Corbett. When the fight came off Sharkey rushed the champion with a speed and fury that offset his skill and forced him to cling desperately to avoid the bewildering flurry of unscientific blows that came from every angle. Time and again Sharkey threw Corbett off and rushed him into the ropes before he could even place a simple jab. Half a minute before the end of the fourth round a police lieutenant leaped into the ring to save Corbett from a knockout in the roughest mauling the champion had ever taken.

The bell clanged the official end of the round and the referee called it a "draw." Sharkey, with that other half minute, might have become world's champion. Think of It—a raw sailor, with a half dozen land fights under his belt, beating a Jim Corbett in four rounds. The mere possibility made Sharkey famous all over the country. From that time on until he fought Jim Jeffries for the title, three years later, Sharkey was always a championship possibility – always in the position

of runner-up. He was the man who had to be whipped before a heavyweight, champion could wear his crown with ease and security.

In that battle with Jeffries Sharkey was again within reach of the world title - only a doubtfully close referee's decision at the end of twenty-five furious rounds barring his way. Sharkey carried the fight to Jeffries every minute of the twenty-five rounds. After the twentieth Jeffries, realizing that the decision was lost unless he fought desperately, hammered with all his might at Sharkey's heart every time Sharkey plunged in. He broke three of Sharkey's ribs, battered him so that, although he whipped many good men afterward, he never was the same untamable fighter again, and put him out of the title hunt.

The leap of Jim Jeffries into the top rank of fighting men was even more sudden than that of Sharkey, he was given his chance to fight a champion before he had long been in the ring, and Jeffries won. Big Jim was a boiler maker near Los Angeles. He began fighting by knocking out a negro heavyweight quite famous on the coast in those clays. He joined Jim Corbett's training camp at Carson before the Corbett-Fitzsimmons fight and learned a lot about boxing by studying Corbett's action.

After Carson Jeffries fought eight fights in California and one in the east, then retired to Los Angeles only a fairly well known heavyweight. Billy Brady, the famous theatrical man, had a world of faith in Jeffries . he persuaded Jeffries to come East again. Meanwhile Brady had talked of a Jeffries match to Bob Fitzsimmons, then champion, and had suggested that as Jeffries weighed about 225 pounds to Fitzsimmons 158, Fitz's great skill and hitting power might be offset by Jeff's strength and bulk sufficiently to make it a good match. Incidentally, Brady told Fitz that they would draw a good gate because Fitz hadn't been in the ring for some time and people wanted to see him. Fitz took the match on , confident that he'd knock Jeffries out with ease. He believed in his own adage that “ **The bigger they are the harder they fall**”.

On the night of the fight Fitzsimmons walked to Jeff's dressing room to throw a scare into Jeff. Brady had his giant boiler maker artistically stretched out on a cot to show his tremendous chest and huge muscles. Fitzsimmons came in, and even Fitzsimmons was impressed with that first glance that he stopped for a long look. Jeffries got up with a grunt and shook hands. Fitz began discussing the way in which they were to fight. He illustrated hitting in the breaks.

“**You'll have to protect yourself at all times**” said Fitz. “**How about that ?**”. “**Oh fight any way you please**” growled Jeff, and putting his hand against Rob's shoulder he shoved him away so violently that he fell against the wall. Jeffries stretched himself on the cot as if to take a little nap before the fight. Fitz awed for once in his life walked out.

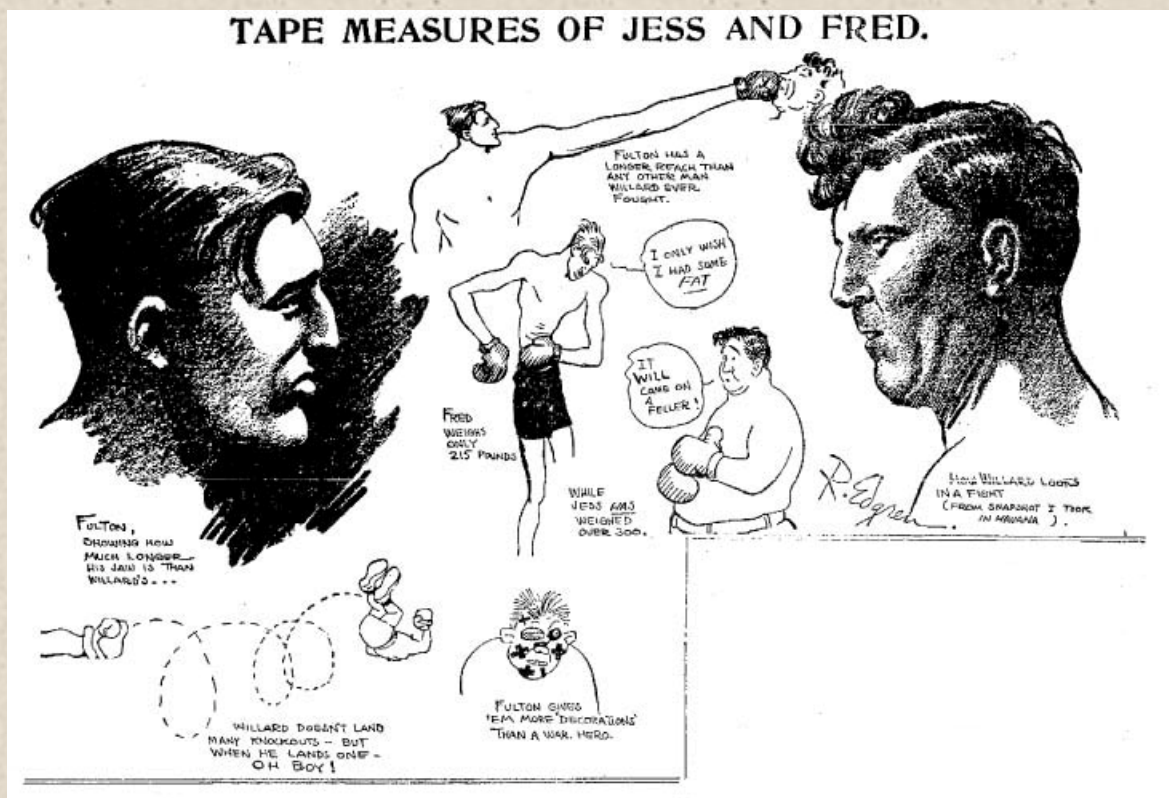
But Fitzsimmons was the gamest man in the ring and a real champion. Impressed as he was with the gigantic strength of his youthful rival he carried the fight right to Jeffries furiously from the start. The end began to show when Jeffries knocked Fitzsimmons flat on his back with a straight left on the mouth. Although he fought with even greater fury afterward Fitz never fully recovered from that blow and when Jeffries measured him and struck him fairly on he point of the chin in the eleventh round, the freckled champion fell like a log. Jeffries, twenty four years old and only two years a professional fighting man, had won the world's heavy weight championship.

If Jeffries could come along to day, just the same powerful boiler maker of twenty years ago he'd be allowed to mingle with our present heavyweight champion. Willard might be willing to fight him, but fighting has become purely a business affair. A champion is managed by a syndicate, like a railroad or a gold mine. And no syndicate would give Jim Jeffries a chance.

So unless another chance comes along in the sport of boxing we're not going to see any more champions come up in the mushroom fashion of twenty years ago. To day they like the "soft ones" too well.

End

The Fort Wayne Journal
28 April 1918



Jess Willard and Fred Fulton will furnish the next heavyweight championship fight, whether it's held on July 4 or some other time. Fulton is Willard's natural rival for the title. He will be the first, man of his own height Willard ever met in the ring. He will be the cleverest boxer Willard ever met, with the single exception of Jack Johnson. And, unlike Johnson, Fulton is coming, not going.

Fulton has a longer reach than any other man Willard ever fought. He has bigger fists than any other man Willard ever fought, and a harder punch than any other man Willard ever fought. It may be that when he fought Willard Gunboat Smith could hit as hard as Fulton does now, but he was a wild swinger, not a clean and scientific puncher. Smith beat Willard in twenty rounds, being the referee's decision.

Fulton isn't the heaviest man Willard ever fought, but he is the fastest big man so far. Johnson and Morris were both, heavier, which was a handicap.

Fulton has a frame fit to carry 240 pounds. He might weigh 240 without carrying fat. But he is of the leanly muscular type, like Bob Fitzsimmons. Fulton is not inclined to take on fat. He trains regularly and fights often. Willard trains little, being lazy and fights less, because he has no ambition to fight.

Fulton has a habit of knocking out opponents. Willard has the ability to knock out opponents, but doesn't do it except on rare occasions. He lacks natural aggressiveness. He is satisfied to lead, to avoid punishment himself, and to show off his own skill without making too much effort. Again, he is lazy in the ring as well as in the training quarters. Also he has an overwhelming sense of caution. In his early fights, when it was hard to win he had streaks of aggressiveness, usually a flash after being hurt.

Willard was as big and as fast before fighting Johnson as he was at Havana, although he, lacked the really great skill he showed in that fight. If he had been a Fulton in aggressiveness and fighting spirit, he would have knocked out Arthur Pelky, Luther McCarty, Carl Morris, Gunboat Smith, Charley Miller, George Rodel, Tom McMahon and Frank Moran. He had the power and the ability to beat all these men, but he didn't use it through sheer lack of aggressive spirit.

Of course when he fought McCarty ten rounds Willard was a novice and McCarty counted the best white heavyweight, in the country, so when Willard outfought McCarty and met his rushes with solid counters through ten rounds he did well enough, and much more than was expected of him.

Willard Can "Take It."

Willard, in shape to fight, has better assimilating powers than Fulton. I saw Fulton badly dazed twice by Al Reich's right handers, he recovered finely and stopped Reich in a few rounds more. But the fact remains that he was badly shaken by two hard blows on the jaw. And I don't believe either of those blows would have troubled Willard in the least.

I have seen Willard take blows. I saw Soldier Kearns, who was a tremendous hitter then, land a crashing swing in Willard's body and step back to let him fall. And Willard lunged forward and knocked Kearns cleanly out with one blow.

I saw Jack Johnson, in Havana, work for two rounds for the opening he wanted, and finally sink his glove to the wrist in Willard's solar plexus — and Willard countered and knocked Johnson about ten feet. I saw Johnson catch Willard with a fearful left hook on the chin, and as Willard was hammered over to one side by the blow, lift a swinging right-hander from his knee and catch Willard flush on the other side of the jaw with what looked like a sure knockout punch. And Willard, with a quick shake of his head, ripped in a body blow that took all the aggressiveness out of Johnson for a couple of rounds. He told me afterward that the swing on the jaw dazed him for a second, but he showed no effect of it. In the Frisco fight Gunboat Smith

caught Willard on the jaw with a smashing right swing. The giant didn't totter, but he was so careful afterward that he lost the decision.

Several men have given Fulton a severe shaking. When he was a beginner Al Palzer stopped him. Porky Flynn, never a very hard hitter, is said to have staggered him once at New Orleans. I saw Reich stagger him twice. Miske gave him a hard fight, and Cowler shook him up and dazed him badly in their first, round.

Fulton Come Back Fighting.

There's one thing in Fulton's favor in all this. He comes back very quickly when dazed by a blow, and uses good judgment when in trouble of any kind. He outfought Miske, and he outfought Flynn, and stopped Reich, and knocked out Cowler.

He took Moran's "Mary Ann" without flinching, and quickly stopped Moran. As a punishing hitter Fulton is far ahead of Willard. The champion strikes a terrible blow and is likely to land a one-blow knockout at any time. But Fulton wears his man down quickly and either knocks him out or has him so helpless after a few rounds that, the fight is stopped. Fulton gave Reich such a beating in seven rounds that Reich gave up the game.

He beat Carl Morris until Morris fouled persistently, preferring to lose on a foul rather than take the knock out that was surely coming. He closed both of Sam Langford's eyes, so that Sam quit. He knocked Sam down early in the fight with a left hook, and Sam got up and swung one on Fulton's ear, dazing him. Fulton told me after the fight that he didn't know what had hit him for a moment, but was able to stall Sam's next two or three rushes off and take up the lead again. He gave Moran the worst beating Moran ever had in his life, and did it in a couple of rounds.

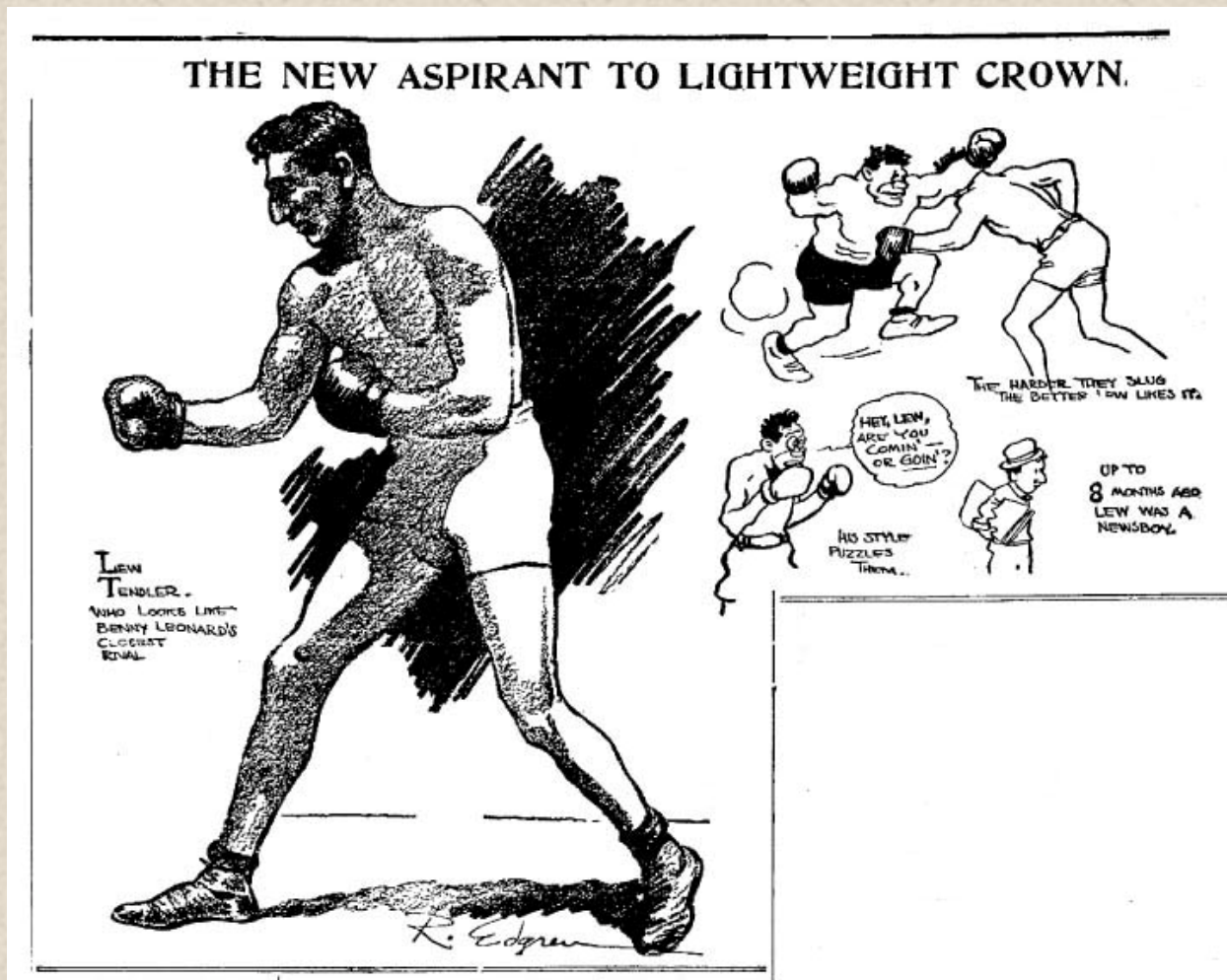
Bulk Is Willard's Only Advantage.

Willard will have some advantage over Fulton in sheer bulk and strength, an inch or two in height, and if perfectly fit will be a tougher man to hurt. But Fulton is a better hitter, more aggressive, far more willing to take risks and will be driven by ambition instead of a desire to hold something already won.

Willard has a little better defensive build. His neck is thick and short, and his well rounded lower jaw is wide and not too prominent. Fulton's jaw is wide, but projects enough to make an easier mark to bit. A long jaw is more affected by a blow than a short jaw, a matter of leverage. Willard has been loafing, while Fulton has been busy fighting the best men he could find.

End

The Fort Wayne Journal Gazette
2 June 1918



Benny Leonard is a great lightweight champion, and would be busy defending his title if he wasn't in khaki, acting as boxing instructor at Camp Upton.

The hard work of the military training camp is making Benny take on weight, and the followers of boxing are wondering if, when the war is over Benny won't be a candidate for the championship in a heavier class. Up to this time Benny has always fooled them all at the scales. Managers of other fighters have claimed freely that Benny had outgrown the lightweight class, but Benny weighed in a pound or so under the limit at ringside whenever there was any need for weighing in. He scaled 132 pounds when he fought Johnny Kilbane, and his low weight was as much of a surprise to the featherweight champion as the ease with which Leonard out-speeded and outfought and knocked Johnny out.

Leonard has had visions of fighting for other titles, for he has even spoken of an ambition to match his skill and punch against Mike Gibbons. If Leonard should grow out of the class there will be many candidates for the lightweight title. Two of the best offer a strong contrast. One is

Lew Tendler, a Philadelphian youngster unknown until a couple or months ago, and the other is Johnny Dundee, the Iron ribbed and steel jawed "**Scotch Wop.**"

As for Johnny Dundee, he was a veteran when Benny Leonard was in knickers — but although a hundred hard ring battles arc behind him, he shows no sign of losing his class. Dundee might have a chance to win the championship.

But the fight followers look for Leonard's coming rival among the new fighters coming up rather than to a fighter who is good but probably never will be better.

Tendler May Be Coming Champion.

They turn to Tendler.

Down In Philadelphia the fans regard Tendler as a winner every time he starts. He has the slim, wiry and half developed physique of a boy. He boxes in his own natural style, standing with right foot and right fist advanced. He is a southpaw like that great favorite of a few years ago, "Knockout Brown". But unlike K.B. he is a shifty boxer. He carries no scars, and his hair maintains its part through every fight. He has a high beak of a nose that would make it a great target if he didn't protect it well. And he has a small chin like Kid McCoy's, that is hard to reach. He is slightly built, but with good shoulders and evenly developed arms and legs.

When he boxes he shifts about lightly, and is always ready to drive a hard left for head or body, using it as other boxers use their right hands. He is one "southpaw" boxer who doesn't seem in the least awkward because he doesn't assume the orthodox position. Usually it is the other fellow who seems awkward, for while Tendler is used to fighting right handed boxers, few right-handed boxers are used to fighting a man who extends his right arm and uses it to parry a jab.

To show how rapidly Tendler has come along, March 26 Johnny Dundee had a little the better of him in a decision less Philadelphia, six-round bout. Then on April 8 Tendler startled every one by beating Patsy Cline in another six-rounder. The club that night was so packed that the police had to close the doors while thousands of people were in line before the box office.

Slugger Was Easy For Lew

April 29th Tendler, suddenly famous and in great demand among fight promoters, beat Willie Jackson in New Haven, fifteen rounds, referee's decision. Jackson (the same who knocked out Dundee) is a hulking, powerful lightweight with a tremendous punch. He had been matched with Dundee, who was prevented from fighting by an attack of pneumonia. Tendler took the bout on short notice. He had no trouble in beating Jackson.

That Jackson fight brought Tendler \$2,500, his biggest purse. He was a new boy in Philadelphia until eight months ago, when his fighting career began. In that eight months he has earned over \$10,000, and has reached a position that should command many thousands more before he reaches military age, as he is only nineteen.

End

I hunted up Jack Kearns in his office in Los Angeles and found him there sitting behind a large flat desk covered with telegrams and letters, gazing admiringly at a long typewritten list that he had just pinned against the wall at his elbow.

"There it is, up to date." Said Kearns, indicating the list with a wave of his hand. "There are the first twenty offers for the Dempsey – Carpentier match ranging from \$200,000 to \$750,000." **"I suppose you know which one you are going to take"** I suggested.

"Oh, no," said Kearns. "I'm in no hurry . I'm just looking them over. When I know the bids are all in I'll accept the one that looks best. I've had offers of \$400,000 for Dempsey's end and judging from the way the bids are growing It may be higher. But there are other things to be considered besides money. I'll have to know that the people who bundle this match will carry every thing through in the cleanest and most sportsmanlike manner.

Dempsey wants no favors because he's champion. He'll win if he can, and the man who can beat him is welcome to the title and all that goes with it. Jack would like to box every week and take on the best man in sight. But he's satisfied with any arrangement I make, and it's up to me to take care of the financial end. That's why I'm looking them over so carefully."

"You don't seem much excited over all this big money" I said.

Jack Kearns is one of those open faced, blond haired, blue eyed fellows who looks as if he were everybody's friend and had nothing on earth to conceal. He leaned back in his chair and laughed as if he'd thought of a good joke.

"It might make a fellow a little dizzy." he said, "to think that two years ago I was offered \$20 for Dempsey's end, and now they're falling over each other to hand us four or five hundred thousand dollars." Here the telephone bell rang and Mr. Kearns was told that two gentlemen from New Orleans had just arrived with a personal offer for the bout were waiting in the outer office. He disappeared for as much as five minutes.

Just as he came back the phone rang again, with the information that a representative of a certain millionaire movie magnate had just arrived from New York and was coming right up to insist upon getting a signed acceptance of a Carpentier-Dempsey proposition wired on a few days before.

"He says he knows he has outbid any one else and I have no excuse for not taking up his offer at once," explained Kearns. "I'll have to stall. Here's Cochrane all the way from London, and I told him he'd have his chance to bid. And Coffroth and some other fellows I've promised to listen to. No. I won't do any signing or accepting just yet"

Kearns Also Fought In Ring.

"While we are waiting." said I "let's go on with this story. I believe you used to do a little fighting yourself. **What was the biggest purse you ever got?"**

"**Seven hundred dollars,**" said Kearns promptly, coming right down from the realms of high finance without a jar. "That was about all the money there was in the world in those days. Why, I was born and brought up in Frisco in a fighting district. In those days a fellow was in great luck to have saloon keeper for a manager because he was sure to eat. He could get next to a free lunch.

I weighed from 128 to 135 and I fought Chicago Jack O'Keefe and Charlie Rogers and Denver Kid Parker: lost once and won once. I fought Australian Tommy Tracey twice, to a draw, and beat Mysterious Billy Smith in twenty rounds, but Billy was in pretty poor shape. I fought Mose LaFontise fifteen rounds at Idaho. He was a tough one. I fought Jimmy Potts and Billy Landon. And Aurelia Herrera knocked me out in twelve rounds. I fought Dal Hawkins twelve rounds. Those were days of real fighting.

We used to have private fights for Senator Clark and some other big millionaire mining men up north. I was a slim kid and the tough fellows I fought hammered me around the kidneys until I thought I'd be better off as a manager. So I turned right around and managed Kid Parker and kid Scales and Indian Joe Gregg and Young Peter Jackson and Freddy Weeks. Weeks was a great bantam in those days. He was a few years too soon to be in the big money he'd make today. I had Kid McFadden and Dick Hyland and Frankie Neil and a lot more.

I got together a bunch of good ones and took them to Australia. There were McGorty and Clabby and Joe Bonds, Billy Kramer and Billy Murray and Red Watson. That Watson would have been a champion if he'd taken care of himself. In Australia I signed Les Darcy to a contract and arranged to bring him here but that slipped up. When Darcy came over a bunch of managers went him and got him to throw me over.

Les Darcy was a great fighter. "After that I took Strangler Lewis to San Francisco to wrestle. "I had a training Quarters in Oakland and had Red Watson and Ortega working out there. "That was how I happened to fall in with Jack Dempsey. Jack had started fighting and lost a four round bout to Willie Meehan and been knocked out by Jim Flynn in a round and had given it up. He was working in the shipyards. I met him standing around on the corner and liked his looks.

"How'd you like to come up and work out with Ortega?" I asked Jack. "'Oh. I can't fight" he said. "I'm no good. I'm tired of the game and through with it.'" "Come on over and work with the boys a little anyway." I said. "'I've got to work all day tomorrow" said Jack, "but I'll be up Saturday afternoon."

"He came up and boxed Saturday afternoon and Sunday. He was a nice boy and I offered to take him east in a month if he'd improve in boxing. He was strong and quick, but he would lead his right hand — **said he couldn't use his left.**

"So I had the boy's take a punching bag rope and tie Jack's right hand down to his side and make him box with his left. He had to use his left then, and pretty soon he was hitting pretty well, and because he hadn't a right to block with he was bobbing from side to side and ducking under punches. That was the beginning of his swaying style of fighting he's used ever since. The style that has fooled Willard and Fulton and all the rest.

Offered Kearns \$20 for Dempsey to Fight Meehan

“I went and tried to get him a match and they laughed. Dempsey’s a bum – he can’t fight” they said.

They offered me \$20 for Dempsey and I persuaded them to give him 20 per cent. He gave Meehan an awful beating. Then he beat Bob McAllister and knocked out Charlie Miller in eight seconds and Al Norton in two punches.

After that they began to look him over. They gave him a match with Gunboat Smith. The Gunner was good then. Dempsey had one fault still. He’d pull away from a punch instead of ducking close in. I told him about it but he would pull away. The Gunner measured him and caught him as he pulled back and nearly knocked him out. Jack reeled forward and the Gunner socked him again. That was when I learned Dempsey was game.. He lasted the round out. Between rounds 1 whispered to him to go get the Gunner before he could start from his corner. Everybody thought Dempsey was whipped, but he ran across the ring at Smith and gave him a fierce beating. Jack never pulled away from another punch.

After that he beat Carl Morris, and then he went east. He knocked Morris out twice. "In New Orleans he shifted, swung around and hit Morris in the stomach and knocked him out with the first punch. Morris fell on his face with his mouth open and his tongue stuck out so far it was covered in resin. Here the telephone rang again and I left Kearns talking to a man from Texas who wants to hold the big bout on his cattle ranch.

The Montana Standard

13 Jan 1929

Champions I Have Known. Robert Edgren

Jess Willard was a real champion. The day he whipped Jack Johnson at Havana he could have given a tough battle to any man who ever held the title. Like a football team on edge for the big game of the season, Jess was pointed, through five years of preparation, for that fight, and on the afternoon of April 5, 1915, he was invincible. He never went into any other fight with the same grim determination to win, and never before or afterward was in such perfect physical condition.

Unfortunately, Willard was so completely eclipsed at Toledo, where Jack Dempsey knocked him out, that Jess has been regarded as good joke material ever since and his real fighting quality forgotten. Jess was the biggest champion of them all, six feet seven inches tall and perfectly built in proportion. At Havana he was trained down as lean as a greyhound, and scaled 243 pounds stripped the day of the fight. He weighed 265 when he lost the title to Dempsey, and more than that in many other fights.

Naturally Peaceful.

reach, weight, strength, combined with unusual boxing skill and unusual quickness for a big man, put him in a class by himself among heavyweights. Willard's advantages in height, If he'd had Jack Dempsey's eager aggressiveness no man of his time could have stayed in the ring with him two rounds. But while he had plenty of courage, Willard lacked ring spirit. He was naturally peaceful in disposition. He felt embarrassed because of his size and had no inclination to enjoy putting over a knockout. He preferred to outbox his man and grin, clown it and laugh with the crowd. He never cut loose real fighting except when he was hurt.

The first time I saw Willard in a ring was at a small New York club, where he clambered over the ropes, not through them, and asked the referee to introduce him. He held a huge black Stetson cowboy hat in both hands and wore boots, and the crowd roared with laughter as he grinned amiably and bent low to whisper to the referee. He was introduced as ' 'Cowboy Jess' Willard, come all the way from Oklahoma to New York, looking for a fight." For weeks after that, Willard was introduced regularly to get the laugh that always followed. It was some time, before anyone thought of making the joke funnier by putting him on the bill of fare.

Raised On Open Spaces

I had a talk with Jess Willard one night when he got out of the ring. His history was interesting. Born on the edge of an Indian reservation, he had been brought up among the Indians, riding wild horses, hunting in Indian style and developing craft, speed and endurance.

He became a plains teamster. One day he drove his six horse team and loaded wagon into a small town in Oklahoma and found everyone wildly excited over the defeat of Jim Jeffries by Jack Johnson, news of which had just come in. Willard listened. He felt just a little disturbed that the great Jeffries had lost the championship to a black man.

But there was no surge of race feeling in Willard. The landlord of the hostelry where he took his meals and stabled his horses came up gesticulating and red faced. **“Jess”** he said **“why the hell don’t you lick that nigger? You’re big enough”**

Willard quietly put up his horses. As he worked he indulged in the usual process of thinking. Jess finished his job and hunted up the landlord. “ I will “ he said That was all. Jess had the habit of not wasting words. He turned in his team and rode to Tulsa, looked up the proprietor of a gymnasium where small bouts were put on, explained to the promoter that he wanted to become a fighter and fight Johnson. Amused, the gentlemen sent Jess to the gymnasium and told him to go ahead.

Willard started, alone and friendless, asking questions of the few boxers he could find and grinning in friendly fashion when they laughed at him, but he quickly picked up skill. Willard knocked out several local heavies and then went to Chicago and trained in Mullen's gymnasium, meeting better boxers and learning every day. He knocked out three men in small bouts, and went to New York.

Could Hit Like Pilcdriver

As I explained above, Jess was a joke in the big town. Until he was given a chance. First, he fought a 10-round no-decision bout with Arthur Pelky, a rugged heavyweight developed in a Tom O'Rourke white hope tournament. Three weeks later, Luther McCarthy, who had just knocked out Al Palzer and come on to New York, was given Willard at the Garden, Jess being picked as a good punching bag for McCarthy. McCarthy had everything, including contempt for the big fellow being thrown to him. He ran straight at Willard at the first bell and posted big Jess furiously through most of the first round. A hard right raised a reddened bruise under Willard's eye.

The punch didn't daze him, but it hurt him, and Jess handed Luther a good pasting. Then he grinned again, but he met McCarthy's rushes with jabs and uppercuts, and though there was no decision at the end of 10 rounds, I, for one, wrote that Willard had won.

Jess knocked out Sailor White in one round, and then was given Soldier Kearns, a replica of old Tom Sharkey. Jess clowned and laughed until the eighth round. Then Kearns jammed swinging punch wrist-deep into Willard's solar plexus. Willard got mad. Kearns had jumped back fully eight feet. Somehow Willard hurled himself forward. His right fist landed on Kearns' chin, lifted him clean off his feet and whirled his 208 pounds through the air like a pinwheel. He fell on top of his head. That punch gave Kearns a "glass jaw" and finished him as a fighter.

Willard won more fights, but dropped a 20-round decision to Gunboat Smith in San Francisco. In a later fight, Willard knocked out Bull Young in the eleventh round at Vernon Cal., and Young unconscious was rushed to a hospital. Young died almost immediately and Earl Rodgers, Willard's attorney, developed so much of a question about what really killed Young that Willard was promptly acquitted of the charge of manslaughter.

But that incident nearly finished Willard as a fighter. He told me later, when he fought a rotten 10 round no decision bout with Carl Morris in new York, in which both men seemed afraid to lead, that he couldn't hit because **“every time I wanted to let a punch go I saw Bull Young there in front of me instead of Morris, and I didn't dare to “**

His heart “ out of the game” big Jess grew fat and slothful, but he fought occasionally. However he was offered the Johnson fight, in Mexico. Johnson, escaping a jail sentence in Chicago, had skipped to Paris. He couldn't come back to the United States without being jailed again, but he was willing to fight anywhere else.

Willard trained for several months under the direction of his manager Tom Jones. He was training at El Paso when Johnson refused to land in Mexico after coming by way of South America. Johnson had been told he'd be seized and held for ransom by Mexican bandits. He landed at Havana, and the fight was transferred.

In Perfect Condition

I never saw a fighter in better condition than Willard was at Havana in the last month of his training and for once his temper was waspish. The night before the fight I was suddenly taken sick. I told Tex O'Rourke I must see Willard before sending my story by cable, and O'Rourke brought Jess to my room. I said to Jess: "**You can't, be worrying about the fight or you'd be in bed by this time, trying to sleep.**" "I've nothing to worry about," smiled Jess. "This is the big chance I've been working for these five years, and I could fight all day and not tire.

I've never been knocked down or hurt much by a blow and I don't believe Johnson could knock me down. I know his only chance will be in the first few rounds. He has gone back and I've come up to my best. I will fight him at his own game—make him lead He'll have to, or there'll be no fight I have all afternoon. I'll wear him down and knock him out. He'll shout everything he has in five to seven rounds and he won't be dangerous after that. I'll play on the defense and take care of myself until the time comes, and I'll never cut loose until I know I have him helpless. Then I'll knock him out. He may last 20 rounds, and I don't care If he lasts more than 20—the end will be the same.

So Willard described the fight to me the night before. And so it came out, except that Johnson didn't break so quickly, and was still dangerous up to the twentieth round. Willard boxed carefully, wore Johnson down round by round. The last few rounds, I could see Jim Savage, seconding Willard, urge him to finish It, and each time Willard shook his head. At the beginning of the twenty-sixth, Savage said to Willard. 'it's over. Finish him now.'" Willard looked across the ring and nodded, "You're right, he said to Jim, "I'll finish him now." At the bell Willard leaped at Johnson and swept him back with a savage body blow, brought Johnson's instinctive guard of crossed arms down a few inches with a light body jab, and shot over the finishing right. Johnson fell at full length. Five minutes after the count out his seconds had to almost carry him from the ring.

"I'll never fight again," Willard told me that night. "**My job was to knock out Johnson, and I've done it. I'll always be remembered as the man who brought the championship to the white race — that's enough.**" Willard did box 10 rounds with Frank Moran Later he fought Dempsey but that's another story.

End

Lincoln Sunday Star
5 April 1931
State Commish In Far West cracks down On
Title Holders' Tricks

BY ROBERT EDGREN.

With the California athletic commission absolutely barring non-title, fights it is likely other states soon will realize the usefulness of that action and pass similar rules. When there are no safety zones left where the timid champs can squirm and wriggle out of all danger of losing their titles, we'll see old-time championship fighting, and not before that. As long as champions can make no-decision matches or force their opponents to fatten up and come in overweight, they'll get the money with as little risk as possible. That's because boxing has become a business proposition under modern conditions- The old days when boxers fought for glory are gone for good.

Victim of Raw Deal.

Young Corbett is the chief victim of the unwillingness of champions to take a chance. Corbett's hard luck followed a lot of hard fighting that usually found the other fellow on the floor, and fully demonstrated the fact that Corbett was nobody's sparring partner. That at once barred him from the company of champions, who, as clever business men, recognized him as a menace to well established industry. Corbett had scores of fights and whipped scores of fighters, but the managers of champions, one after another, passed him up with just a few kind words. "That guy Corbett." said the manager of Jackie Fields, "is a southpaw, and that lets him out." He said it with a slight sneer, as one unwilling to knock anybody but unable to tell a lie. Pressed for more comment, he said:

Draws Line On Southpaws.

"I'll-never match Jackie and him because he is a southpaw, and awkward, and it wouldn't make a good fight." The manager's idea of a good fight for Jackie was a fight in which Fields, a perfect master of boxing, could pile up a lot of points without running into an accident. The fellows who fought Corbett usually ran into something. Eventually there was such a demand for a Fields-Corbett match, so much general public wondering why Fields was afraid to fight Corbett, that the match was made. But with a reservation. The champ demanded that Corbett fatten up and come in over the welterweight limit, thereby making the match a non-title affair so to be carefully advertised to save the title to Jackie if Corbett happened to slap his man on the button and knock him out, _ or by mischance even decision him on points.

Gave Fields Neat Thrashing

Corbett gave Fields a complete thrashing, and only Jackie's swift legs and very great boxing skill pulled him through to listen to the bell at the end of the last round. Losing a decision didn't worry Jackie and his manager much. Corbett had been forced to come in overweight

and the money-getting title was still safe. Later, Fields lost to Young Jack Thompson, and Young Jack, who had been mugged up by Corbett previously, became bold enough to take the "risk" of a non-title fight, Corbett again fattening up according to contract and coming in overweight, although he is a natural welter.

Young Corbett gave Thompson a very artistic thrashing, knocking him down for a nine count and nearly finishing him—although it wouldn't have made much difference, as the title would have been safe for Thompson even if he was knocked out, owing to the overweight clause in the contract. At that, Corbett was only just enough overweight to tip the beam at weighing in time, and an actual welterweight in the ring.

After that Thompson lost the title to Freeman, having made the mistake of letting Freeman come in at weight and underestimating Freeman's fighting ability. Then Freeman, a bold (?) fighter, became a regular champion and began looking around for non-title matches, like all the other champs.

Freeman Ducked Out.

He was offered a big purse to fight Young Corbett in California, and was willing to accept the money, provided it was signed and sealed as a non-title fight, 12 rounds to no decision. He might have gotten away with it, too, but just then the new state athletic commission, of which the writer is a member, decided that California had seen enough stalling by timid title holders, and ruled absolutely that on contract or secret agreement between a champion and a contender could provide that the contender come in overweight, under penalty of suspension for all parties to the agreement, and that a champion cannot appear in a non decision bout but must defend his title in every fight against an opponent who was within the weight limit of the class.

California Says Nay.

Freeman immediately dropped the idea of fighting in California. Here in California, we consider that the failure of one of these dodging champions who are willing, by any subterfuge, to avoid risking their titles, is no loss to boxing. The new idea seems to be gaining ground in eastern states, and, after a while, champions will have to act like champions or go back to work, for there'll be no place for them in the ring. And why should there be.

Even the dictionary makers agree that a champion is one supreme in his branch of sport, who stands ready to defend his honors against any recognized rival.

Playing An Old Game.

Some very good fighters have hidden behind the non-title thing when they became champions. You wouldn't think it of some of the lads, who were bold enough to take any chance when they were climbing to the top. Money makes cowards of them—it isn't that they have any fear of a punch on the nose. They aren't afraid of losing blood; they're afraid of

losing money.

Joe Dundee was one of the roughest fighters I ever saw, as a contender. As a champion he was a cooing dove. Even Mickey Walker, who isn't afraid of anything or anybody, let Jack Kearns make opponents come in overweight to keep the middleweight title safe. You wouldn't think that of Mickey. You'd expect Mickey to say: "Wottell, Jack, toss 'em in and let us fight."

Mandell and McTigue.

Mandell, the clever, forced Fields to come in overweight when clever Jackie was a lightweight, and it was good financial judgment, for that time Jackie had the edge. McTigue was a very clever and hard hitting light-heavyweight, but when he didn't have his own referee along he was strong for no decision fights.

Even buzz-saw LaBarba, flyweight champ, made dangerous punchers fatten up to fight him. The championship holding generally spoils a good fighter. The only thing to do about it is to make champions defend their titles every time they show, and then we'll see championship bouts, not joke exhibitions.

Corbett and Pirrone.

Last week I saw Young Corbett and Paul Pirrone of Cleveland in a fairly hot 10 rounds. Pirrone is a dangerous puncher, and while Corbett earned the fight to him all the way and outboxed him enough to hold a lead, he boxed with plenty of caution. In the tenth round, Pirrone shook him up twice with right hand smashes on the jaw. Corbett won.

After the fight Pirrone walked over to Young Corbett's dressing room, slapped Corbett on the back laughingly and said: "I'm going to take a shower and dress. Hurry up so we can go out and get that spaghetti dinner/" Corbett laughed and went to the showers. Half an hour later the two boys who had been trying to knock each other for a goal were on the way to dinner together. Pirrone is a couple of months short of twenty one. Corbett is already a veteran.

Pirrone Has Better Chance.

Of the two, perhaps Pirrone has the better chance to become officially a welter champion. The champion may fight the youngster and step in the way of his punch. But the welter champion and two or three favored "contenders" know what will happen if they meet Corbett. and they'll duck every time he comes in sight. It will be a pity if the best welter in the world grows too old to fight before he gets one of these dodging "champions" into a corner.

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By Robert Edgren

Benny Leonard for the lightweight championship at Jersey City July 27th, is going to have half a chance to get the title. There being no decisions in Jersey bouts he can win only by knocking Leonard out. After all the talk and challenging, the evasion and sidestepping and haggling of the past two years this should have been a decision bout.

Where men are at all evenly matched and both are clever boxers the chance of a knockout in a 12 round bout are slight.

A knockout is more likely in this bout, however, than in many others because Leonard never makes a runaway fight, and if Tendler's attack weakens Leonard will press him hard and try to finish him. With Leonard standing up to Tendler's attack there will always be a chance that Tendler may slip through Benny's guard a punch like the one that knocked out Bobby Barrett for half an hour.

What are Leonard's chances? Leonard hasn't shown any sign yet of slipping back in fighting form. Whenever he trains for a lightweight championship bout he gets down fine on weight and looks as hard as when he won the title. He has all his speed and courage, and is always trying to win as quickly as possible. When Leonard is hurt he fights faster and hits harder.

His fights with Willie Ritchie and Mitchell are examples of Benny fighting style. The first time he fought Ritchie in San Francisco he was nearly knocked out in the second round and pressed hard in the third, but he came back fighting toe to toe in the fourth and drove Ritchie back on his heels with hard punches. When he fought Ritchie in New Jersey he knew every move Ritchie might make and he slugged with Willie and battered him until he was helpless. In the Mitchell fight Benny was nearly knocked out but recovered immediately and knocked Mitchell out.

Leonard is a fast boxer and a slugging fighter in one. In Kilbane he met a clever boxer with a world of speed and a good punch. He went after Kilbane from the first step, dazzled Kilbane with shifty fighting and swift punches that went through Johnny's guard like hornets through a wide open barn door, outclassed him in everything and quickly and easily knocked him out.

That was years ago but Leonard hasn't "Gone Back" since. He is never out of training, and he lives like a college athlete. Tendler, also a Hebrew, is much like Leonard. He knows that the championship would mean a fortune to him.

And for two or three years has concentrated everything on winning it, sticking to training and the simple life. Tendler is less stocky than Leonard and taller. Tendler has lighter legs

than Leonard, his shoulders are wide and his reach is long. His face is long and narrow, and his nose prominent and his jaw is square.

In boxing Tendler is entirely different. He follows the "southpaw" style once made popular by Knockout Brown of New York. Boxing with right foot forward and right hand extended. He uses the left hand with much of Brown's effectiveness. Beside having something of an educated right. Tendler has an advantage in his boxing position because he has plenty of practice in fighting men who stick out their left hand and left foot, while others have little experience against southpaws. He has fought nearly everyone but Leonard among the lightweights. Leonard hasn't had any other starboard battery rivals.

Lew Tendler was a Philadelphia newsboy, and had his first ring experience when he stepped in as a volunteer for a preliminary fight, when he was fifteen. He made good from the first bout. He was naturally cunning and crafty. He didn't win many fights with knockouts for a long time, but he was always fighting fast in the last ten seconds and nobody stopped him. As he met better men he improved and still held the lead.

Once in a while Tendler surprised his followers by knocking out some good man. He stopped George Chaney in a round, and half a dozen others of like class in from 3 to 6. He is cautious more than aggressive, but he has a quality of determination that shows up when dazed or hurt. Like Leonard he is dangerous all the time. But where Leonard is always out to win at the first chance, Tendler is too cautious try to hurry matters.

When he slips over a K. O. punch it is after long and cautious waiting and calculation of risks and chances. In the recent Barrett fight Tendler knew he was against the most dangerous puncher among the championship hunters. He never let Barrett find an opening for his deadly right hand punch. At the same time he punched Barrett steadily until at last he found his opening and drove a crashing left into Barrett's solar plexus for a clean one-punch knockout.

That's the punch Benny Leonard will have to watch. It's the punch Leonard hasn't been accustomed to in other fights. For several months part of Leonard's training has been against clever boxers who have been coached to oppose him in Tendler's characteristic position. But the imitation never has the genius of the original. Blocking the sparring partner's imitation of Tender's best punches isn't like blocking the real article when it comes winging.

Tendler is undoubtedly going to keep Benny busy watching. But Tendler isn't going to have any restful time himself. It is said that Tendler has most trouble with a free right hand puncher. Willie Jackson once turned Tendler a half summersault and nearly slapped him for a ten count with a half hooked right on the chin. Rock Kansas, with his disregard for hard punches

and his busy right hand, won a New York decision over Tendler. And of all the right hand hitters in the lightweight ranks Leonard is fastest and surest. Benny usually starts them with his left, but he's an artist in finishing the job with a couple of right hand socks Dempsey wouldn't need to be ashamed of.