

Name: Jack Dempsey

Career Record: [click](#)

Alias: Manassa Mauler

Birth Name: William Harrison Dempsey

Nationality: US American

Birthplace: Manassa, CO, USA

Hometown: Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

Born: 1895-06-24

Died: 1983-05-31

Age at Death: 87

Stance: Orthodox

Height: 6' 1"

Reach: 196

Trainer: [Teddy Hayes](#)

Managers: [Norman Weaver](#), [Billy Madden](#), [Fred Winsor](#), [Jack Kearns](#)

Career Overview

The most popular boxer of his generation and one of the most fabled athletes in history, **Jack Dempsey** changed the sport of boxing from a slow, defense-minded contest of single punches and frequent holding into an exciting, aggressive battle of furious combinations and blazing knockouts. A fearsome brawler, the likes of which the sport had never seen, Dempsey drew record attendances and live gate receipts, allowing his ascent from starving hobo to millionaire during his ground-breaking career. During the 1950s, a consensus of boxing sages voted Dempsey the "[pound-for-pound](#)" greatest fighter of all time. Even today, he is still routinely ranked by journalists, historians, and experts as one of the five greatest heavyweights in history. (According to a February 6, 1943 *Tacoma News Tribune* article by Dillon Graham--the Associated Press's Sports Editor, who had researched the AP's index cards to see which athletes had "grabbed" the most newspaper headlines the previous 30 years--Dempsey came in first, with [Luis Angel Firpo](#) being second, and baseball legend Babe Ruth coming in third place.)

Kid Blackie

The man who would be known as Jack Dempsey was born William Harrison Dempsey on June 24, 1895 in Manassa, Colorado. His father, Hyrum Dempsey, was a poor farmer, prospector, and laborer who hailed from West Virginia. William and his brothers grew up idolizing famous prizefighters, especially heavyweight [John L. Sullivan](#) and middleweight [Jack Dempsey](#) (a fighter known as "the Nonpareil"). Two older brothers, Bernie and Johnny, preceded him into professional boxing, both adopting the name of their idol, Jack Dempsey; neither was particularly successful. William left school at the age of sixteen and began working as a laborer at various Colorado railroad stations and mining camps. In his free time, he frequented saloons, challenging other patrons to fisticuffs for side bets. Though he weighed only 150 pounds, he routinely beat older, bigger men and the men who saw him fight began calling him "Kid Blackie" because of his jet black hair. Soon enough he was participating in organized prizefights, though the details of his record as Kid Blackie has been lost to history.

According to Dempsey himself, his first organized bout for money took place in Montrose, Colorado, sometime around 1913 against a fellow named Freddy Woods. Dempsey claimed to have promoted the fight himself. During the fight itself, he survived a knockdown to put his Woods out in the fourth. There is, however, no newspaper account or hard evidence to confirm this fight. The earliest fight that researchers have uncovered took place on August 17, 1914 in Ramona, Colorado, a six round draw against the otherwise forgotten Young Herman. A few months later he had relocated to Salt Lake City, Utah, where he won three consecutive bouts by first round knockout. He suffered his first recorded loss there in 1915, losing a decision to a more experienced fighter named Jack Downey. Less than a year later he knocked out Downey in two rounds. Kid Blackie continued taking bouts wherever he could find them in the West: Nevada, Colorado, Utah. In early 1916 he strung off seven consecutive wins and decided to try his hand in New York City. His brothers had retired by this point, and William looked to

make his name as the new "Jack Dempsey."

On June 24, in Manhattan, Jack survived two knockdowns against the bigger [Andre Anderson](#) to go the scheduled ten round distance in a no-decision bout. Official decisions in boxing were illegal in New York State at the time. A little over a week later, in need of cash and food, he fought [Wild Bert Kenny](#), again lasting ten rounds to a no-decision. These performances won him notice in the major New York newspapers and the attention of businessman John "the Barber" Reiser, who became his manager. Reiser matched Jack with [John Lester Johnson](#), an experienced New York native. In a hair-raising, closely-fought battle, Dempsey took what he later called "the hardest punch I ever took." A Johnson left to Dempsey's body shattered three ribs. Jack fought back and, though the fight was another no-decision, many in the press praised the newcomer's courage and endurance. After the fight, Reiser cheated Dempsey, who had been sleeping on benches in Central Park the previous night, out of most of his purse. Dejected, Jack stowed away on a train back to Salt Lake City, where he found work in various labor jobs and married a prostitute named Maxine Cates.

His professional boxing career at a stand-still, Dempsey served for a few months as a sparring partner for heavyweight contender [Carl Morris](#). Around the same time he found a new manager, Jack "Doc" Kearns. Kearns brought momentum back to Jack's boxing hopes. Between September and November 1916, Dempsey four successive victories against marginal (at best) competition in Utah and Colorado. Then Kearns got Dempsey a shot at his internationally known opponent, veteran heavyweight [Fireman Jim Flynn](#), a former title challenger known for his rugged fighting style and punching power. Days before the fight, Jack injured his right hand, but, in need of money, told no one. On February 13, 1917, in Murray, Utah, ten seconds into the match, Flynn landed a perfect right hand to Dempsey's jaw and put him on his back. Dempsey was unconscious on the floor long past the end of the referee's count. It would be the only knockout loss of his career. A little

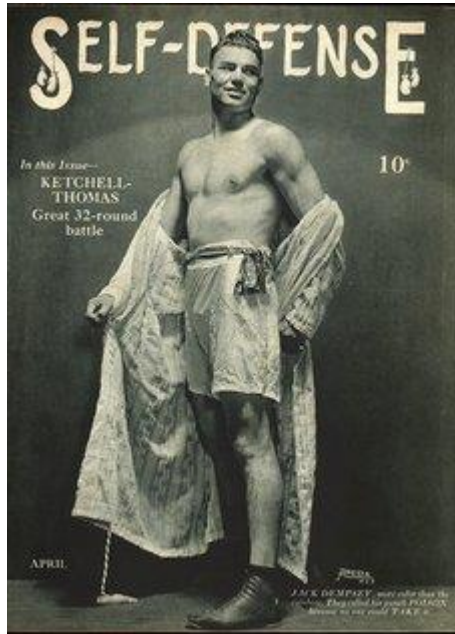
over a month later he lost a decision to [Willie Meehan](#), a pudgy Californian with nearly one hundred bouts under his belt.

The Road to the Title

His career once again floundering, Dempsey was forced to continue toiling in obscurity. He beat Meehan in a second fight and then went undefeated in his next five to secure a match with hard-hitting [Ed \(Gunboat\) Smith](#), a perennial heavyweight contender on the downside of his career. A four round decision over Smith proved to be Dempsey's first win over a nationally recognized name opponent. Then came a win over Carl Morris, the bulky ex-contender for whom Dempsey once worked as a sparring partner. Morris could do little but hold and wrestle against Dempsey's rampaging onslaught. In rematch, the referee disqualified Morris in the sixth of ten scheduled rounds. Then a rematch with Jim Flynn, the Pueblo Fireman, who had knocked out Dempsey in one round back in 1917. On Valentine's Day, 1918, Dempsey returned the favor, flattening Flynn in one minute and ten seconds of the first.

With four wins against name opponents inside of four months, Dempsey had made himself a viable heavyweight contender. Still more victories over quality opponents followed: [Bill \(KO\) Brennan](#) (knockout, six rounds); [Arthur Pelkey](#) (knockout, one round); [Fred Fulton](#) (knockout, one round); [Battling Levinsky](#) (knockout, three rounds); Carl Morris (knockout, one round); Ed (Gunboat) Smith (knockout, two rounds). In September of 1918, Dempsey lost another decision to Willie Meehan and ducked out of a 6-round war charity match at Madison Square Garden with Joe Jeannette, but it didn't matter. When he put together a streak of six consecutive first round knockout wins between January and April of 1919, the rampaging young heavyweight was the talk of fight circles and the leading contender to face the massive heavyweight champion of the world, [Jess Willard](#).

World Champion



Willard stood more than six and a half feet tall and routinely weighed in excess of 240 pounds, monstrous dimensions for a man of the early twentieth century. Despite Dempsey's recent success, he was seen as too rough-edged and too small to stand a chance against Big Jess. Indeed many sportswriters expressed concern that Dempsey might lose his life in the ring, as had a previous Willard opponent, [William \(Bull\) Young](#). When the July 4, 1919 bout began, however, their concerns immediately focused on the champion. Dempsey's fast hands and tremendous punching power made all the difference, sending Willard down and amazing seven times in the opening three minutes. He knocked out several of the champion's teeth, cracked his ribs and his skull, slashed his face to ribbons, and shattered his jaw and nose. When the round ended, Dempsey left the ring, confident--as were most in the crowd--that he had won by a knockout. But his manager, Kearns, called him back in. Incredibly, Willard wanted more. Willard fumbled around for another three rounds, unable to reverse his fortune. Though Dempsey proved unable to put him down again, Willard decided to retire from boxing while sitting on his stool awaiting the fourth round. Returning to his dressing room, the new champion learned that he would not be paid for the sweetest victory of his career. His manager had lost the purse on a bet that Dempsey would win in one round. The later accounts of some

involved in the fight, including Willard and promoter Tex Rickard, proposed that Dempsey had loaded his gloves with either plaster-of-Paris or steel, but those allegations have never been proven.

Dempsey's first challenger for the title was faded contender [Billy Miske](#). A veteran of more than eighty bouts, Miske had supposedly never been down or out in his career. He had gone six rounds with Dempsey two years earlier, but by 1920 had already been diagnosed with Bright's Disease, a potentially fatal illness that attacks the kidneys. Ignoring the advice of doctors, Miske decided he needed the money and approached Dempsey and his handlers about securing a title fight. Dempsey pushed the match through and dominated his ailing friend. Dempsey later said he wanted to end the fight early to avoid dealing any prolonged punishment to the sick man. In the second, a body blow from the champion put Miskey down for the first time in his seven years as a prizefighter. Miske made it to his feet but fell again in the third. If Dempsey was trying to end it early, the challenger seemed averse to the notion. Miske again made it to his feet, only to be dropped yet again in the same round. The referee counted ten and Dempsey helped his barely conscious challenger to his corner.

Dempsey's debut at New York's legendary [Madison Square Garden](#) followed three months later, on December 14, 1920. His opponent was 'K.O.' Bill Brennan, an unpolished fringe contender who had put together a string of victories against no-hope opponents en route to securing a title shot. Rumors existed of Bill's connections to organized crime, including Chicago kingpin Al Capone. Rumours were just as prevalent that Dempsey was not taking Brennan seriously and that his training consisted more of women and booze than it did roadwork and heavy bags. Whatever the cause, Dempsey proved surprisingly vulnerable to Brennan's powers. In the second Jack was rocked by an uppercut to the jaw. Brennan failed to follow up on the advantage however and the champion survived the round. The rest of the fight was a competitive slugfest, with Dempsey digging into Brennan's body and

Brennan landing hard shots to Dempsey's head. It was, said the *New York Times*, "... one of the most vicious and closely-contested fights in history..." In the twelfth, a right-left combination from the champion dropped Bill for the count.

Trial of the Century/Battle of the Century

By this time, controversy began to surround the champion. During his early title reign, Dempsey was not a generally liked figure. His fighting style brought in crowds, but many regarded him as immoral, thuggish, and even cowardly as a man. The public considered Miske and Brennan to be push-overs for Dempsey, they demanded to see him in with a top flight fighter. Worse yet, information had surfaced that Dempsey had dodged the draft for the First World War, which had only just ended. His estranged wife, a prostitute, had publicly brought charges against him of neglect. Dempsey avoided a conviction for draft evasion by proving that he was the sole support for his large family back in Colorado, which precluded his eligibility for conscription. The divorce proceedings with Maxine Cates, meanwhile turned into what journalists of the times called the "Trial of the Century." In both the court and newspapers, Mrs. Dempsey spewed all sorts of scandalous intrigues about Dempsey's early years as a wandering hobo and frequenter of whorehouses. The public came to regard him as a far cry from the role model most expected from the heavyweight champion of the world. Eventually the trial faded from the headlines and the Dempseys were divorced. Still, all of the mud-slinging had left a bad taste in the mouth of the public for Jack.

[Tex Rickard](#), the most successful and innovative boxing promoter of the day, sought to cash in on the public's "bad guy" perception of Dempsey by pitting him against a classic "good guy" in [Georges Carpentier](#), the reigning light heavyweight champion of the world. In direct contrast to Dempsey, Carpentier was known as a perfect gentleman and an intelligent, scientific fighter. Women adored the handsome European, while Jack was regarded at the time as a scarred brute. Even more importantly, Carpentier was a twice decorated war veteran, having

served his native France as an observation pilot during the First World War. And he had not lost a bout in seven years. Rickard's publicizing of the disparate personalities and backgrounds of these men produced a mania in the sports world. The press anxiously labeled the proposed match-up as the "Battle of the Century." The result was the first million dollar gate as the sport's largest crowd yet, 80,183 people, packed into a specially built stadium in Jersey City, New Jersey and paid an unprecedented gate of nearly \$1,800,000.

The fight itself, though dramatic, failed to live up to its ballyhoo. Dempsey was obviously the bigger man in the ring and his shots took their toll. Carpentier's response was initially to box and move, but he eventually settled down into trading shots with the champion. In the opening round, the Frenchman landed a hard right onto Dempsey's head that clearly stunned the champion. Dempsey, after clearing his head, responded with a relentless body attack followed by a crisp left hook that broke Carpentier's nose. In the second, Georges went back to boxing and landed another terrific right, one that forced the dazed champion to take a rare backward step. Meanwhile, Carpentier stood frozen still, stunned himself by the pain of a thumb broken in two places. By the time he tried to force his advantage, Jack had recovered. With the challenger hurt and Dempsey determined not to have another frightening moment, the bout took a decided turn. No longer competitive, it became all Dempsey. He battered the European around the ring and put him face-down onto the canvas in the fourth with two consecutive hooks. Apparently unconscious at the start of the count, the brave challenger still made it to his feet by the count of nine. But Dempsey showed his terrific finishing ability by blasting him with another right hook that rendered Carpentier totally senseless. The challenger was not revived until long after the referee's count had concluded.

Gibbons & Firpo

The Carpentier fight made Jack Dempsey the richest athlete to that point in history. He was now a first tier celebrity throughout the world and

made friends among the rich and famous of Hollywood, journalism, literature, music, and sports. In the meantime, he avoided prizefighting for two years. As the champion relaxed, two top contenders emerged as potential challengers for his crown. The first was [Harry Wills](#), a fighter of supreme ability who had of late beaten [Sam Langford](#), Ed (Gunboat) Smith, and Fred Fulton. The press constantly hounded Dempsey over the issue of a bout with this latest sensation, but the only problem was that Wills was black. There had, to this point, been only one black heavyweight champion, [Jack Johnson](#). Johnson's reign had been so controversial and shocking that many within the fight business had been determined that there would never be another "colored" man allowed within a fighting chance of the laurels. Among those were Doc Kearns and Tex Rickard, Dempsey's manager and promoter; they shot down any talk of a fight with Wills. This left only [Tommy Gibbons](#) as a viable opponent. Though his resume was somewhat less impressive than that of Wills, the talented and tough Gibbons was coming off of three consecutive knockout wins and had been in the ring with the likes of Billy Miske, [Harry Greb](#), and Battling Levinsky. Thus Kearns began plans for what was supposed to be Dempsey's triumphant return, without Rickard's involvement. When officials from the small oil town of Shelby, Montana expressed interest in hosting the fight, Kearns accepted their offer of a guaranteed purse of \$310,000. However, the remoteness of Shelby and the complications of long distance travel at the time deterred many fans from buying tickets. Shelby had helped finance the construction of a massive stadium that was roughly the size of the town itself to hold the expected spectators, but less than 8,000 ticket-buyers showed.

The fight itself proved anti-climatic, with Gibbons doing little else but backing away and a rusty Dempsey content to do little else but follow. The fight lasted a boring fifteen rounds and brought boos from the crowd. Because the poor turnout failed to cover the expenses of putting on the fight, each of Shelby's three banks were forced to bankrupt themselves in order to come up with \$300,000 (\$10,000 short) for

Dempsey. Gibbons, the town completely bled dry, received no pay for his efforts. This financial debacle which lost all the private people of Shelby their life's savings, is still considered one of the worst promotional disasters in the history of boxing.



Saying he wanted to remain more active, the champion next fought [Luis Angel Firpo](#) of Argentina. Firpo had recently knocked out former champion Jess Willard and had also toppled notables Ed (Gunboat) Smith, Bill Brennan, and [Charley Weinert](#). A tall, broad-shouldered fellow, Firpo was nonetheless unschooled in the finer points of boxing and considered out of his element against Dempsey. When the pair finally fought on September 14, 1923 at the Polo Grounds in New York, before 80,000 people, they clashed in one of the wildest, most celebrated championship brawls of all time. In the first round, Jack floored his opponent seven times, just he had done to Willard four years earlier. But the young and game Firpo was determined to prove his worth and managed to drop Jack to his knees with a right hand to the body very early in the same round. Momentarily stunned but back on his feet in no time, Jack tore into the challenger without mercy. Later in the round, Firpo, after rising from his seventh knockdown, charged Dempsey, who did not have time to get away from the ropes. The challenger through a wild, looping right hand that struck Dempsey in the head and lifted his feet from the canvas. Falling backward into the ropes, Jack's body stiffened to balance itself and, with a little shove from Firpo, did a flip clear out of the ring onto the writers' table at ringside. The referee, from the ring, began his count as the champion floundered helplessly. With

help from the writers he was able to get his bearings and pull himself up and into the ring by the count of four. Again the "Wild Bull of the Pampas" charged him and this time Jack clinched. Dempsey remained dazed for the remainder of the round. In his corner Dempsey slowly regained his senses and came out for the second blazing away with punches; this time it was Firpo's turn to hold. Jack shoved him to the canvas with a push, but the Argentinean made it back to his feet and came right back in. After some in-fighting, the champion threw a fast left-right combination of hooks that put the challenger down for the ninth time. He was still rolling around on the canvas when the referee counted him out.

Comeback & Later Life

Having successfully made his sixth defense of the championship, Dempsey again avoided the ring, this time for more than three years. He now reigned in the public consciousness as one of the most famous men living and lived accordingly. He bought a mansion in Hollywood and began a romantic relationship with one of the more popular actresses of the era, Estelle Taylor. He signed a lucrative contract to appear in movie serials for Universal Studios. He bought his mother Celia a twenty-two acre farm in Utah. He even underwent plastic surgery to reshape his battle-scarred features. In the meantime, he split with longtime manager Doc Kearns, after an argument about Taylor. The press, anxious to see the champion return, satisfied itself with covering the exploits of the division's leading contenders, men like Tommy Gibbons, Harry Wills, [Gene Tunney](#), and Charley Weinert.

When Jack did finally return to the ring it would be against Tunney, the "Fighting Marine" from New York, a smart, tactical fighter who had once been the light heavyweight champion of America. Between 1922 and 1926, Tunney had proven himself a worthy challenger with wins over Weinert, Carpentier, Gibbons, [Harry Greb](#), and [Johnny Risko](#). When the pair did battle on September 23, 1926 at the [Sesquicentennial Stadium](#) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, a record 120,557 people braved

a rainstorm in an open air arena to see the return of the heavyweight champion. What they and Dempsey got was a lesson in boxing technique from Tunney. Rusty and overconfident, Dempsey failed to connect with any big shots to his challenger. Tunney, meanwhile, boxed brilliantly, constantly circling the ring to keep the champion confused and off balance. He used his swift jab to keep Dempsey at bay, while Jack did little more than hopelessly pursue. The result was one of the biggest upsets the sport had experienced, a unanimous decision in favor of the New York fighter, the new heavyweight champion of the world. It was Dempsey's first loss in eight years.

Suddenly, much of the public came to admire Jack. Though he had always been a draw because of his exciting fights, Dempsey had been regarded by many as a thug wallowing in immorality and brutality. He was the man audiences loved to hate. With the intellectual and strategic Tunney as the new champion however, fans found themselves bored and missing Dempsey's ultra-masculine charisma and slugger's brawn. When Dempsey began his comeback, in pursuit of a return match with Tunney, by facing rising contender (and future champion) [Jack Sharkey](#) on July 21, 1927 at [Yankee Stadium](#), suddenly crowds were cheering in favor of him rather than against him. Like Tunney, Boston's Sharkey was a technical boxer. He had recently won by disqualification over Harry Wills and was this regarded as the most likely contender, outside of Dempsey himself, to garner a championship bout. The winner of a Dempsey-Sharkey showdown was to determine who deserved a go at Tunney. Again Dempsey fell behind on the scorecards, staggered in the first round and out-punched by the younger man's faster punches as the fight progressed. Dempsey did manage to give the Bostonian a few tense moments and, in round seven, in the center of the ring, let loose with a vicious body attack that may or may not have strayed below the belt line. Sharkey, forgetting the rule to protect one's self at all times, immediately turned to the referee to complain of being fouled. As he did, Dempsey let loose with his trademark left hook which hit Sharkey square in the jaw. Sharkey collapsed to his knees and then on his face,

still clutching his groin, and was counted out. While Sharkey continued to complain to the press that he had been fouled, despite the official knockout result. In earlier times the crowd would have believed him and complained about Dempsey's dirty tactics. But now, with Tunney as champion, they were just happy to see Dempsey win the fight and earn himself a rematch with the new titleholder.

On September 22, 1927, 364 days after their initial encounter, Dempsey challenged Tunney at [Soldiers Field](#) in Chicago, Illinois. The 104,943 people turned out for the rematch paid receipts of \$2,658,660, the highest gate for any sporting event yet and a record that would stand for more than a quarter century. The fight itself appeared to be a replay of the first in the beginning, with Tunney backing away and boxing and Dempsey pursuing without throwing punches. In the seventh, though, Dempsey landed a series of blows on the champion, who was pinned with his back against the ropes. Gene collapsed into the ropes and slowly slid down to the canvas. The excited Dempsey, forgetting the recently passed rule in Illinois that a man scoring a knockdown must go to the nearest neutral corner, stood over his fallen foe. Referee Dave Barry would not begin counting over Tunney until Dempsey obeyed the rule, but the confused challenger hesitated, giving Tunney precious time to regain his senses. By the time Dempsey had found his way to a neutral corner and Barry returned to begin his count, the champion had recovered his senses and was sitting upright on the canvas, smartly taking the remaining time to rest. Barry, who was supposed to pick up at the timekeeper's count, instead mistakenly started his count from the beginning, at "one." As a result, Tunney was able to rest a full fourteen seconds before rising at the count of nine. When Barry called for the two to fight and Dempsey charged out of his corner, Tunney bounced and danced along the ropes, making sure to stay out of Jack's way for the remainder of the seventh. In the eighth, a combination of hooks from Tunney put the pursuing challenger on his knees. Jack was up before the referee could begin his count, but was being thoroughly outboxed. When the fight drew to a close after ten rounds, the result was a unanimous

decision for Tunney.

On March 4, 1928, Jack Dempsey, the most successful athlete of the "Golden Age of Sports", announced his retirement from professional prizefighting. He did, however, continue to fight in short exhibitions, touring the country and giving highly attended performances. Among the notables he boxed in his post-professional career were [Charley Retzlaff](#), [Art Lasky](#), [King Levinsky](#), [Max Schmeling](#), [Max Baer](#), and [Tony Galento](#). He often acted as a referee in popular boxing and wrestling matches. An increasingly popular figure in retirement, he often managed, promoted, and advised younger boxers. During World War II he served as a Lieutenant Commander in the U.S. Coast Guard. In 1945, at age forty-nine, he fought alongside his men on Okinawa Beach. In later life, he owned a very successful restaurant in New York City and became one of the few financial success stories of champion boxers in their post-boxing life. After several years of heart problems, he died in New York on May 31, 1983 at age eighty-seven. In 1990 he became part of the inaugural class of inductees into the [International Boxing Hall of Fame](#).

Sources

Kahn, Roger. [A Flame of Pure Fire: Jack Dempsey and the Roaring '20s](#).
Roberts, James B. and Alexander G. Skutt. [The Boxing Register](#). 4th ed.
Fleischer, Nat. [The Heavyweight Championship](#).
[profile](#) at Cyber Boxing Zone

Factoids

- Early boxing [history](#)
- Reportedly went by the nickname "Kid Blackie" in his early days
- Former World Heavyweight Champion: 1919-1927
- One of the most popular boxers of all time. The Associated Press's mid-20th century poll of over 300 sports writers and radio sportscasters ranked Dempsey the best fighter of the past 50 years.

- Newspapers of October 18, 1924, reported that Dempsey's first manager, Norman (Buck) Weaver, 42, was accidentally shot dead while duck-hunting 19 miles southwest of Pueblo, Colorado. He and a companion, Howard Walker, 22, were sitting in separate boats, when Walker laid down his shotgun to pick up the oars to row when it discharged, the shots hitting Weaver in the face. He died several hours later.
- On Dec. 8, 1938, the Boxing Writers Association awarded Dempsey the first-ever [Edward J. Neil Trophy](#) for being the boxer who had meant the most during the current year. The award was designed to perpetuate the memory of the Associated Press sports-writer and war correspondent who had been killed the year before in Spain.
- Dempsey was also a popular boxing referee.

Notable Bouts

- July 25, 1917 vs. [Willie Meehan](#): [Description](#)
- July 4, 1919 vs. [Jess Willard](#), Dempsey wins the World Heavyweight Title: [Description](#)
- Sept. 14, 1923 vs. [Luis Angel Firpo](#): [Description](#)
- Sept. 23, 1926 vs. [Gene Tunney](#), for the World Heavyweight Title: [Description](#)
- Sept. 22, 1927 vs. [Gene Tunney](#), for the World Heavyweight Title: [Description](#)

Reference Sources

- [Official website](#)
- [Find a Grave](#)

Dempsey v Gibbons

4th July 1923



Statement by Jack Kearns

"Well, we won didn't we? Gibbons Is a tough boy but Jack gave him an awful beating. It was a great fight but the champion would rather have stopped Gibbons. The champion will keep right after all the other boys and if there is any demand for another Dempsey and Gibbons match we are ready

Statement By Eddie Kane

"I think that Gibbons made a great fight and will sure take Dempsey if they ever meet again. The 'champion roughed it all the way and did as he pleased In the clinches without any interruption from the referee"
Gibbons fought clean He can beat Dempsey and the latter knows it We want another chance."

Jack Dempsey retained the world's championship today after one of the

greatest heavyweight battles in history while feathered Indians. Kilted Scots, cowboys and the sports of America cheered his defeated foe. For fifteen rounds Tom Gibbons, the St Paul battler took everything- that could be handed to him and although he was groggy, hanging on, and trying desperately to last through the finish he was the hero of Shelby's great day.

The fight, which was preceded by so much scandal and failure was from the fighting standpoint great enough to justify everything The twenty thousand maddened fans who sat through glaring heat and stewed in the intense heat of a blazing afternoon witnessed a struggle worthy of greater things and Shelby's day, after all, proved a tremendous success.

The pro-Gibbons crowd, going wild when at frequent intervals the St Paul boxer carried the fight to the champion and rocked him with repeated lefts Had Gibbons possessed the punching power of Dempsey tonight would have seen the crowning of, a new champion for it was not until the final round, when Dempsey's murderous body blows finally sapped the strength of Thunder Chief did he pile up and great advantage.

The fifth, the eleventh and possibly the thirteenth rounds belonged to Gibbons The second and fourth were so even no man could decide and in every other round Dempsey was the winner In spite of the fact that he drove his terrific right and left to Gibbons body with murderous force the St Paul boy was not hurt and Dempsey found out that he was facing, not a great fighter, but one of the most magnificent boxers in the ring Gibbons' elbow.- shed a thousand drives that were meant to destroy him and the darting speed of his head enabled him to avoid the knockout blow. Dempsey never before missed as many hard drives. Eight times he drove the left -with Intent to kill and each time he missed Seven times during that desperate struggle he hurled that killing right at Tommy's jaw and missed, sometimes by a foot. But Dempsey won. Decisively and beyond doubt He was -on strong and his methods elicited Jeers and howls from the great crowd.

Gibbons was holding down the punches and striving desperately to protect his body from the vicious short arm drives and frequently he pushed down Dempsey's blows so that his punch seemed to land too low several times, fortunately –without hurting the challenger or there would have been a riot.

The crowd while fair to Dempsey when he made his appearance, was partisan and as Gibbons carried "the champion round after round, and in frequent rallies out boxed him, the spirit of the crowd rose.

It was plain almost from the start. that Gibbons did not have power enough to hurt Dempsey seriously In the second round he out boxed him decisively and landed two sharp left hooks to the champion's head and a straight left that opened an old cut over his eye. But not one of those punches landing where they –would have wrecked another man, seemed to hurt Dempsey He came back fiercely in the third and beat Gibbons all over the ring but so great was the armor of elbows and shoulders and so clever the head and foot work of the challenger that Dempsey could not get him In the fourth Gibbons made his last dangerous rally. He out boxed Dempsey decisively And twice snapped his left hook to Dempsey's jaw, only making him slack His pace.

From that to the finish, save for a minute flash in the eleventh Gibbons was not dangerous Dempsey had punched him in the stomach, and kidneys until his blows lacked sting More and more the strength and power of Dempsey wore him down. More and more it became a question of whether Gibbons, by his cleverness and boxing could stave off defeat He clung desperately to Dempsey's arm and , glove, broke into clinches and held on while Referee Jimmy Dougherty fought and wrestled with the boxers to tear them apart. In the final round Dempsey stung by the jeers of the crowd and the howls of the colorful, motley crowd, went out to finish Gibbons and a vicious right drive under the St Paul boy's heart almost finished the battle. Through these three minutes Gibbons held on hugging and holding to his arm while Referee Dougherty fought harder than they did to tear them apart. Each time

Dempsey measured his man. Tommy, weary but alert, ducked inside the blow." took a shower of short body blows and clung blindly waiting the bell The bell, drowned in the uproar of The big crowd. left them.

Dempsey trying to tear himself free to strike the finishing: blow and Gibbons' eyes half closed, face distorted, heard it through a cloud and realizing that it was over, smiling through battered sweat stained countenance and shook hands.

Dempsey, weary, bat strong,. Seemed disappointed even when Dougherty raised his glove In the air as a signal of victory. Then. smiling he Grabbed Gibbons hand and shook It. Shelby's great day was over—and the crowd which for a month has waited, has been angry and threatening rushed the ring, poured over the barricade of reporters and stormed the ring cheering both victor and vanquished. And the cheers when Gibbons left the rang, rose higher and higher-and his progress seemed more of a triumphal procession than a march homeward to tell the wife and kiddies he had lost—and lost without receiving a cent for his work.

There was a great deal of howling and kicking against the work of Referee Dougherty -who had one of the toughest jobs in boxing history. The clinging and the close in fighting With his arms and the wrestling methods *gave* Dempsey considerable advantage, for under the rules hitting on the break was permitted, and Dougherty, dodging low between the fighters to avoid, punches gave Dempsey every opportunity to crash with right and left, in spite of the constant yelling- against low hitting by Dempsey Gibbons' only complaint was made when Dougherty ducked between them and Dempsey hitting over the referee cracked him sharply.

He was not well pleased either on another occasion when he went half through the ropes and Dempsey hit him while he was half outside .Dempsey was hit low once by accident And Gibbons apologized. Whether Dempsey has gone back or not is a problem. My opinion is that he met a. master boxer. So Shelby's great day ended well—save

financially. A great fight, no trouble—and a crowd was at least happy.

Jack Dempsey subdues Firpo wild bull of Pampas

14 Sept 1923

Beaten to the floor nine times, after he had twice downed the -world's champion, and once knocked him entirely out of the ring, Luis Angel Firpo, the wild bull of Argentine, was counted out in the second round of the most sensational and most savagely fought heavyweight championship contest of all time at the Polo Grounds last night.

Between 85,000 and 100,000 spectators saw the heavyweight crown topple three times from the scowling brow of Jack Dempsey and they saw it grabbed back and set in place three times, because a champion with *a* champion's brain did not lose the instinct when his senses departed.

Perhaps no one will ever be able to explain accurately and consecutively what happened in the first round of that sensational fight. It was patterned after that famous first round at Toledo when Dempsey floored the giant Jess Willard seven times.

Willard did not fight back, but Firpo got up seven times and went back to the battle like the wild bull that he has been called. Willard struck hardy a blow in defense, but Firpo lashed out in a frenzy of anger and desperation and three times he did what no other fighter has been able to do since Jack Dempsey became champion. He felled he champion three times.

Three times Firpo was within one punch of the title and its million dollars in assets. Three times he had the champion, punch drunk, weaving around on the ropes, groggy and almost defenseless. Three times with the crown right in his hands, Firpo lacked the technique. to finish it .He lashed out wildly and missed. Those misses cost him the championship.

Dempsey was never nearer to being knocked out in his life He never can come closer than he did and escape. The very first punch of the fight a staggering right that seemed to come up from the floor caught Dempsey on the jaw after he missed a left hook and the champion went to one knee.

Dempsey came up dizzy and he fought the rest of the round as though he were out of his head. He threw cautions to the winds, he abandoned all ideas of defense and tore wildly into the south American . The round developed into the most savage of free handed hitting that has ever been seen.

SHOWS GREAT STAMINA

Showing great stamina and a heart stouter than He had even been thought to posses Dempsey Tore in and turned the tide of battle when 85,000 wild, yelling fans jumped to their feet and prepared to acclaim a new champion.

Under short left and right hooks to the jaw And right hands that threatened to tear his Heart out of his side Firpo went down Seven times in that first round. He came Up each time not covered in defense but lashing Like a wild beast in a jungle fury.

Another tremendous right hand swing caught Dempsey on the jaw and hurled him bodily clear out Of the ring. Dempsey landed on the shoulders Of one of the judges down in the press box. The count went to nine before the champion Was able to pull himself back into the ring.

Dempsey flung out a crashing left hook and Firpo Went to the floor .the South American rose and flung himself Into the battle and dropped Dempsey to one knee With another right that was flying around like The flanges on a giant fan.

Dempsey was weak kneed and groggy , his corner was panic stricken and from the other side of the ring frenzied instructions were being been hurled at Firpo in Spanish. But if Firpo heard he failed to respond.

Jimmy DeForest who trained Dempsey into the title and started Firpo said the the south American could have won with one short punch while Dempsey was on the ropes, but Firpo, as experts had predicted, lost his head in the heat of battle and did not know how to get over the one punch. '

DEMPSEY FIGHTS WILD

Dempsey was so obviously fighting out of his head that he Firpo twice on the jaw with short right hooks after the bell rang. He seemed to know that the round had ended only when the referee across the ring in his corner.

The champion always has shown great powers of recuperation and has revived under the treatment of his seconds. He came out cool headed and savage in the second and in 57 seconds of fighting he battered Firpo twice to the floor with a left hook and a right to the jaw that landed almost simultaneously on the target.

The second time Firpo went down he stayed. He was counted out not because his heart failed him, but because he was physically, unable to follow his desire to get up and resume fighting.

Firpo was dragged back to his corner and it was almost a minute before he seemed to realize that the fight was over.

A SENSATIONAL FIGHT

No more sensational fight was ever staged. No two heavyweights crowded into less than a round and a third more real fighting than Dempsey and Firpo displayed.

Dempsey was thrown clear off the fight that he had planned when he was cracked on the jaw and dropped to his knees by very first punch of the fight, boxing left him, his ideas of science were forgotten and he became a wild fighting man just like Firpo.

The champion beat Firpo at his own game and he retained his title because he punched shorter, more frequently and with more accuracy than the South American.

Firpo's dream of becoming the heavyweight champion was only for the time shattered. The huge South American showed that he was *almost* an even match for the champion and they are sure to meet again. Tex Rickard said he would like to match them again next summer, it would be a great fight.

There was nothing in last night's fight designed so produce another million dollar gate. Given one more year and better instructions and Firpo will take the title from Dempsey just as surely as he failed last night.

Firpo showed beyond doubt that he was game. He has a great fighting heart And it is only the lack of experience that caused him to lose. No doubt Dempsey chills a little When he thinks of what might have happened if Firpo had Lasted thru the second round.

Because he had never been called upon to show it before, Dempsey also manifested for the first the ability to "take it" and he took it as no other champion ever did. No other fighter in the world could have stood up under the punishment delivered by Firpo.

This article was published the day following the Dempsey Firpo fight of Sept 1923 and I am sure many members of the forum, and sports fans

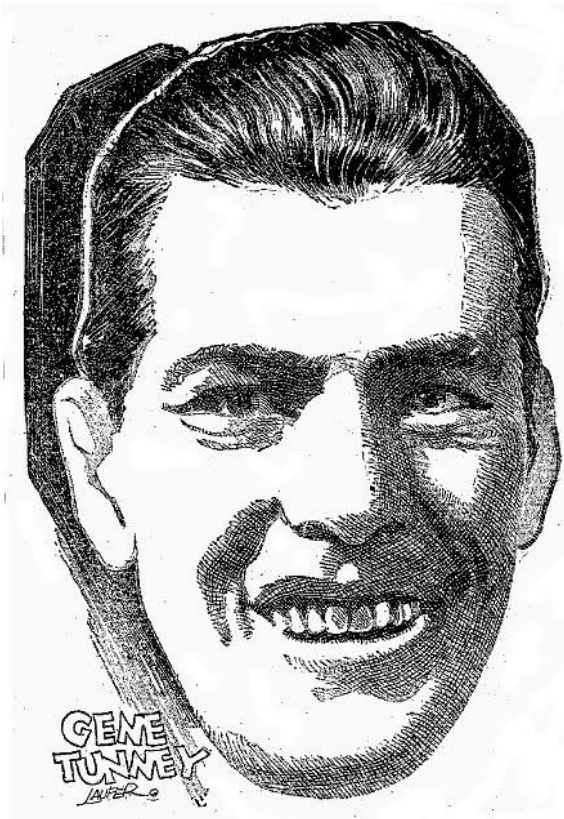
everywhere, will find it of some considerable interest and so very relevant to what we have at the present in all sports. I do not think the writer of the article could have possibly envisaged that the concerns he expressed all those years ago could have actually grown into what we have today.

Sport and High Finance Incongruous

All sport must necessarily be overshadowed when high finance is reckoned. To fight for such enormous sums of money as Dempsey and Firpo do battle for Leaves sports in the darkened background and profits in the limelight. Honest Sport and high finance are incongruous; to weld the two is impossible.

As this match is put over, money and the gambling element must of necessity Predominate .It is doubtful if there can ever be a reformation, so far as sport is concerned, But there can be an elimination of the gambling, that's as certain as rent day.No line of human behavior is worth what these two fighters are battling for. If it is allowed to continue it will certainly kill the game.

Dempsey v Tunney 23 September 1927



Gene Tunney began his second years turn as heavy weight Champion of the world September on 23, 1927 but only after the backers of his opponent, Jack Dempsey, had vigorously Demanded a “recount” of the vital moments of the Spectacular battle at Soldier Fields.

The marine had repeated his victory of the previous year ,and by the same verdict, a decision at the end of the 10th round. However, on this occasion he had come within a second of being knocked out and of the throne when he was dumped, dazed and shaken to the floor in the seventh

round for a count of nine which in the opinion of many ringside observers was from 12 to 15 seconds.

Tunney’s hand was raised in triumph, duly earned after A stirring rally through the last three rounds which Had Dempsey on the verge of a knockout himself In the final round.

The champion was still a champion and fought like one At the finish but to thousands it seemed that the gods of fortune were with him. Save for the break in the seventh round ,and the interpretation of the Illinois boxing commission knock down rules, he might have been counted out and seen his million dollar crown pass back to the old wearer.

Instead of the count being started and continued Uninterrupted - as in the old prize ring rules – from the time Tunney Hit the floor, from the effects of a vicious right hand smash and a short left hook. The toll was delayed several seconds while the referee Waved Dempsey to a distant

corner.

At the count of nine Tunney got up to back off and circle Until his faculties cleared. He had already had the benefit Of at least three and possibly five to six additional seconds to pull himself together. Dempsey's handlers hotly asserted that he should Have been counted out and Dempsey had been robbed of a knockout Victory which would of made him the First ex champion to regain the title .Tunney's handlers

Declared their man the winner and was simply profiting From the rules, that he was ready to get up at "nine² whenever that count was reached. And that as a matter of fact he started to rise at the count of five But stayed down to get the benefit of the long count on advice from his corner.

So far as the rules are concerned they were subjected to various interpretation but the Boxing commissioner at ringside made it clear That no actual count was possible until Dempsey was in a corner well away from his fallen foe.

Champ Rallies

However, as close a call as it was and whatever "break" he benefited by In the seventh round there was no question in the mind of observers that Tunney was the master. He out pointed Dempsey for the first half of the fight and After weathering the old warriors most furious bid For victory, out fought, and out boxed, Dempsey in the last three rounds.

Tunney had met and beaten a far different fighter from the More dangerous puncher and more flaming spirit than the Uncertain, floundering figure that was toppled from the fistic Thrown a year before.

Round One

Dempsey left lunged falling into a clinch. Jack piled in again with two

left hooks to the ribs. In the clinch that followed he clipped Gene four times with a right on the back of the head. They sparred cautiously, Dempsey preferring to feint for openings while Tunney lay back Gene snapped a left to Jack's chin

and followed with a right smash to the chin. Jack fell into a clinch, taking another right to the head as he came in.. Jack dropped a left on Tunney's body. Jack backed away while the champion followed him across the ring with a volley of lefts and rights to the head close to the ropes. Gene missed an overhand right' as the bell rang

Round Two

Dempsey was fighting cautiously, apparently seeking to evade the disastrous first round spasm like that at Philadelphia last fall. They came out boxing again and. Gene shot a left and right to the chin. They were dancing, boxing high. Gene dropped an overhand right on Dempsey's chin after chasing him to a corner.

another right missed and Dempsey smashed a left to the body and three lefts to the chin before Tunney could tie him up. Hands high, Jack dodged away from a right. There was little action as they sparred carefully in the center. Tunney's left was short, but Dempsey merely fell into a clinch. Gene missed two more lefts while Jack clipped two short left hooks to the body. As Dempsey lunged low, Tunney missed again but managed to catch himself' and fleck two soft lefts to the face as the round ended.

Round Three

Again they boxed carefully, slowly, in the center of the ring. Dempsey apparently was trying to tantalize Tunney Into "leading and making an open fight of it, Tunney sneaked over a pretty left jab, but took a half dozen raps on the back of the neck. Gene took the offensive, driving Dempsey into the ropes, where Jack tied him tight. As they bobbed in the center of the ring, Tunney led. and fell into Dempsey's straight right

smash to the body. Gene held while Jack clouted both hands to the mid-section. A right smash to the 'heart drove Tunney back. As they fiddled - about, Dempsey wove in close again to cuff the back of Tunney's head with his right and dig his left twice to the champion's ribs.

Round Four

Dempsey took the offensive, but Tunney's right cracked on his chin. While Dempsey rapped two lefts to the body Gene complained that the blows were foul and fought Jack desperately as they fell against the ropes. Gene missed with a right and took another left to the body. Jack was leading again, now, short lefts to the body, while Tunney counted just as lightly to the head. Tunney tried to nail -Jack coming in, missing with both hands, but saved himself by falling into a clinch. Two right smashes to the chin -stung Dempsey. Gene lifted two more left hooks to the head and nailed Dempsey in the ropes. A right sent Dempsey -reeling into 'the corner. A left hook nearly floored him. • As Dempsey lay against the ropes stunned, Tunney missed with both hands and the bell killed his opportunity.

Round five

Dempsey's handlers were working furiously on him during the intermission, while Tunney' handlers yelled that the stimulants were unfair. Tunney missed a right and they fell into a clinch. Jack fell in close, pounding to the body, when Tunney, overanxious, missed again. Jack, backed away now, falling into- the ropes as Tunney

took to the attack. When Jack tied him up, they sparred out to the center of the ring. Dempsey bobbed out of three left jabs. He sent Tunney's head -back with a stiff straight left. A right high on .the temple shook Dempsey badly. The champion backed away, however, content to jab and wait. In another clinch. Jack rapped again on the back of Tunney's neck. Gene dug two nice lefts into Dempsey's body at the bell.

Round Six

They boxed carefully several seconds before coming together, for a flurry -of body punches.' The crowd, bellowed as Dempsey's right hand, "old iron mike," smashed under Tunney's heart. But the champion came back, ripping both hands to the chin, Dempsey, tiring, fell into a clinch after the blows. Jack turned the champion half way around with a right hook to .the head. Tunney came back strong but two more left hooks and a straight right stung , the champion. Missing a long left,-Jack took a right under the heart as they fell again into a clinch.

Round Seven

Dempsey's handlers pleaded with him to keep his chin down. As he came out bobbing, weaving 'under Tunney's right, Jack slapped a soft right to the ribs. A volley of right and left hooks to the head floored Tunney, for a count of nine. Dempsey, in close, was smashing a body attack. Wobbling and' dazed, Tunney "only .could jump and flounder backwards. Dempsey cornered him at the ropes and smashed a left and right to the body. Gene came back weakly, jabbing a left to. the head, Dempsey laughed and urged Gene to- come in and fight. Losing his temper Jack smashed Tunney with left and right swings to the head. Gene! badly dazed, jabbed Dempsey. with both hands and still was holding on fiercely at the bell.

Round Eight

Dempsey came out in a crouch. Apparently somewhat . recovered, Gene stabbed with his left rind clinched. As Tunney back pedaled furiously, Dempsey made' no effort to catch him, merely walking after, him and taunting him to fight Tunney did fight, whipping a left and right upper cut to Jack's chin. As they missed rights, Dempsey lifted his left to the jaw. In a clinch, Jack again cuffed Tunney's head. A smashing left to the body drove Tunney back and a right to the heart made him grab Jack. As Dempsey dodged a right he slipped to one knee for no count. Taking courage. Tunney. flew at Dempsey, pumping both hands to the head.

Again Tunney nailed Jack with both hands to the chin as the former-champion bounded out of the ropes. They were boxing cautiously, both tired, -waiting for openings, as the round, ended.

Round Nine

Tunney's retreating tactics drew boos from the crowd between rounds. Jack grabbed the champion and smashed him half a dozen times on the'-back of the neck. They both had slowed up from the fierce pace. Tunney, standing In the center of . the ring, held Jack off for a few moments with three straight left jabs. But Jack bore right to close quarters. Coming In,. Gene's right opened a cut over Dempsey's right eye. The champion went after the wound fiercely. Snapping out both hands high to the head, Jack tried to bob, but two solid rights bounced- - off- his Jaw.- Dempsey was wobbly, but as he cocked his right Gene ran away. The champion came back and rocked Jack again with swinging smashes to the head, Dempsey came into his corner a bit wobbly as-the gong sounded.

Round Ten

They shook hands in the center of the Ring. Jack floored Tunney again with a left and right to the chin. Gene was up before the timer could start counting. Jack's right smashed into Gene's head again- and the water from Jack's hair splashed over the ringside writers. Jack, the tiger again, whaled in with both hands, but Tunney tied him up in a clinch.They pause*, and as Dempsey dropped his hands, Tunney whipped a left and. right -hook into the Manassa Mauler's face. Gene came. In to the

attack, ripping both hands' to the head. While Dempsey. appeared to tire, Gene laid him on the ropes, but the champion's two-handed attack was a bit wild. Dempsey drove several rights to the body. . Gene countered with a left. Badly staggered, Dempsey wobbled about the ring as the bell sounded. The former champion, still groggy, sparred dizzily after the gong.

Fighting with the fury of a bulldog tearing down a mastiff. Jack Dempsey

knocked out Jess Willard here in one round.

The second round never should have been fought and never would have been fought but for a series of amazing blunders caused by having amateur officials. Technically the knockout was scored after the end of the third round when Ray Archer threw the towel into the middle of the ring, with Willard terribly beaten and helpless in his corner with one eye completely closed. It was the most one-sided fight for a title ever seen in any ring.

Willard, smiling and apparently confident, landed the first two blows before Dempsey went into him like a thunderbolt. Half a minute later the biggest of -all champions -was a reeling, battered hulk, dazed, smashed out of all resemblance to anything human. The effect of Dempsey's blows was startling. They landed .so fast the eye could hardly follow the flying gloves. At each crunching, 'crashing clout Willard's face was changed as if Dempsey were a sculptor dissatisfied with a portrait in clay and deliberately obliterating it

feature by feature. Cuts and huge bruises showed every time Dempsey's hand 'snapped back to position for another drive.

Carl Morris in Madison Square Garden in the tenth round with Flynn, "Battling'-' Nelson in the fortieth with Wolgast at Port Richmond, were no more terribly .beaten than Willard in a single round with Dempsey.

Dempsey One of Most Remarkable Fighters of All Time.

.Whether it was a one-round fight or three. Dempsey has shown the world that he is one of the most remarkable fighters that ever clouted his way to a championship. He is of "a new type. They were right when they

called him a 'bone crusher.'" He fights like no other champion, ever did. Beside his action -in- a real fight his training work was merely play. Cool when the fight was actually started, terribly grim and determined, he was like a bulldog taking his grip, never to be shaken off. His speed was startling and his

attack .so sudden and furious that nothing could stop it. Yet when Willard halted for a moment Dempsey stepped toward him. Panther-like he feinted and stepped aside to make Willard follow and leave an opening. He was not simply a plunging, battering fighter. He was cold, calculating and sure of the effect his blows would produce. –

The great arena began to fill early in the day. Airplanes flew about 'overhead.'" 'Hundreds of flags fluttered in a sharp breeze. A big Blimp hung over the stands -at the end of a steel cable. Cars rolled down the single road and masses of spectators walked in straggling columns. The big park around the - arena was covered with refreshment stands. It looked for all the world like the infield at the English Derby.

Inside the arena the great crowd was in its shirt sleeves broiling under a sun that (dared down from a sky of polished brass. The heat was terrific. hardly a 'bit' 'of air was stirring in the great bowl. Thousands stayed under the stands until the big event was about to go on. The preliminaries were hardly looked at in the tense excitement of waiting for the main event. At 3-30 o'clock when the fighters were to have been in their corners. Major Biddle appeared with his marines, with guns and bayonets, and gave an exhibition of bayonet and knife fighting that was tolerated by the waiting crowd.

The major- took part in various exhibitions himself, explaining hoarsely that he had invented some marvelous fighting stunts and then demonstrating; - He was always last on his feet, while the marines were strewn around the ring: and" the moving picture cameras" clicked merrily. The crowd grew restless while the major posed. At last that was over and just four minutes before -4 o'clock Dempsey stepped into the

ring, accompanied by trainer staff, who were to second him. Dempsey was pale under his deep coat of tan. His face looked drawn and he was evidently under an intense nerve strain. - But he' look his corner immediately and sat down while Bill Tate raised a. big green umbrella over him to protect him from the sun.

Jess Leans Against Ropes After He Enters the Ring-.

"Within a few seconds Willard came into the opposite corner and stood there leaning against the ropes. Like Dempsey. Willard was pale. Close to him, I saw that the "goose Mesh" showed on his legs and when he stood still there was a slight twitching of the muscles of his thighs. I could see the throb of his heart under the tight drawn skin that covered his ribs. He stood in the corner looking around over the crowd and in a moment the signs of nervousness disappeared. A sun shade was raised over him too. And he stood there at ease, leaning against the ropes and looking around the ringside to nod and smile at his friends.

Willard was a picture of a trained athlete. On the outside, at least, he was a perfect specimen of a man. Around the huge arena all was so still that you could have heard a pin drop. There wasn't even the click of a telegraph instrument or a typewriter as all strained to see the two men who were about to meet for the championship of the world.

After a moment Willard walked lightly across the ring and offered his hand to Dempsey. who was still sitting in his corner. Willard was smiling. He always smiles. A smile is his natural expression. Dempsey looked up grimly and shook hands without a word. Willard went back. Then they came out again and stood side by side while the camera, were snapped and the moving picture machines clicked. Willard towered over Dempsey. But Dempsev didn't even look up at him as they shook hands again.

Facing Willard squarely, he kept his head lowered and his eyes staring Straight at the middle of Willard's body, as if he was concentrating: every Thought on striking at that spot the moment the fight began.

Damon Runyon wrote

Squatted on his stool in the Corner a bleeding trembling-, helpless hulk, Jess Willard, the " Kansas giant", relinquished his title of heavyweight champion the world, just as the bell was about to toss him into-the fourth round- of a mangling at the paws of Jack Dempsey. .the young .mountain lion in human form, from Colorado. '

Willard Sad Sight After third.'

- He was a sad sight as he sat there, this ponderous fellow, who, four short years ago. was acclaimed mightiest of men when he beat down old Black Jack Johnson.The right side of his face was pulp, where the fists of the. Indian brown boy from the Centennial State

had been landing "for nine minutes with fearful force. The right eye of the champion was completely hidden behind. that bloody smear. His left eye peered over a lump of flesh in grotesque "fashion. The great, doughlike body of the giant was splotted with red patches. They were the aftermath of Dempsey's glove thumping there and giving back a hollow sound as they thumped. –

At. the feet of the gargantuan pugilist was a dark spot, which was slowly widening on the brown canvas as it was replenished by the drip drip-drip of blood from, the man's wounds. He was flecked with red from head to foot. The flesh on his enormous limbs shook like custard. He was like a man who had just been pulled from under the wreck of an automobile or railroad train or who had met with some, other grave accident. He blinked .the one eye, through which he could still see daylight at the glaring sun, looking out over the heads of the crowd that had gathered to see something like this.

In the corner opposite him, tugging at the ring ropes like a pet terrier tugging at the leash: and scratching his feet on the canvas with sinister impatience, was the saddle colored demon who had ripped and pounded and pounded. and slashed this tremendous fellow into this distressing

state.

Mumbles to Toss Towel.

It seemed incredible and yet it was so. Another round was coming on. Another round of mauling and maltreatment- for the giant. The OX cannot beat the tiger. The bruised lips of the champion moved. He was mumbling some words . an instant later and he was no longer champion of the world.

Walter Monahan turned and tossed a towel into the ring. This towel was slightly spotted with blood. The rag rose no higher Than the ring ropes and fell limply, but it represented the Formal transfer of the heavyweight championship crown.it was Surrender.

It was Willard's order. another instant passed until the crowd realized What had occurred and the 40,000 persons went raving Crazy for the moment.

Shakes hand with conqueror

The towel had no sooner hit the ring floor than Willard was on his feetWalking over to meet the already advancing Dempsey with his gloved hand outstretched. One side of his face – the side of his face which was not swollen –Carried a strange smile.

Willard was almost knocked out in the first furious rush of the Colorado boy. In fact everybody thought he was out and that the fight was over. The faulty bell had tinkled but few had heard it. Men rushed into the ring When the Ref, who had kept his head well during the clamour Made his handlers understand that only the round was over.

Willard weathers second

The crowd settled back and the bell tapped again. Out came Willard smiling that simple smile, his flabby legs shaking Under every step that lifted his bulk forward and now to the astonishment Of everyone the

giant rallied.

No one believed he could possibly weather that second round But he pushed on under a veritable barrage of hammering Not only to the end of that round but to the close of the third. It was only a question of time when he must collapse however.

He was almost blind, he was a welter of blood. He was weak and unable To defend himself. he fought through the second and third rounds With courage. And for all this he got \$100,000 besides the thousands he got at the training camp.

After it was all over Willard walked out unsteady to meet his conqueror He congratulated him after the time honoured custom of beaten Ring men. Then Willard lifted his ponderous bulk down from the **Ring and went into fistic oblivion.**

Once while sitting in his corner beneath a dingy old umbrella Covered with advertising signs before the fight Dempsey smiled. He sighted Tad, the cartoonist, sitting at the ringside and the brows Of the challenger softened as he relaxed his features.

That was almost the only time his face was so set that many Thought he was nervous. Over in the corner beneath a new brown Umbrella Willard fairly beamed on the crowd, nodding Pleasantly to familiar faces in the audience and generally Conducting himself like a man at a function given in His honour. A few minutes later and he was stumbling about the ring Like an ox in a stall, dull eyed and heavy limbed, it Was a startling transition.

Dempsey fails to hear bell

The men returned to their corners and Dempsey Continued to look everywhere but at Willard. Something went wrong with the bell It was on Willard's side of the ring, and it gave of a feverish light tinkle, when Warren Barbour – former amateur heavy weight champion – who Was

the timekeeper gave it a tug.

Willard heard it and started to leave his corner but he saw that Dempsey was still leaning against the ropes opposite him His back to the ring. And realized that Jack had not heard. Willard glanced expectantly at the timekeeper, Barbour Gave another yank and the bell tinkled softly again.

Willard once more started forward but still Dempsey Did not hear .he stood pawing his feet on the canvas and gazing out over the crowd. From a seat nearby his camp jester, Max Kaplan a fellow from long Beach where Dempsey used to run Was making an unearthly outcry Jess nodded and smiled in a most Polite manner and finally Dempsey turned as the bell tinkled And Jack understood that the fight was on.

Willard makes first lead

They advanced toward one another Dempsey crouching slightly And his shoulders moving in that curious "shimmy" style which he has made his own. Willard was fairly upright .Willard making the first lead, it landed lightly. Dempsey paid no attention but kept marching in. Willard jabbed At him slightly several times without much effect.

First the left hand then the right went swishing upward .his first lead Was for the broad white body spread so invitingly before him. And his fists seemed to sink in as they landed. Then the attack shifted to higher ground So to speak. Willard seemed to have no sense of location Whatever as he tried to stave of the first rush of the challenger which He had been told to expect and had come as predicted.

Crowd goes mad

Dempsey's fists fairly thudded against Jess's stomach then Suddenly a brown sinewy arm with a glove at the end shot Upward to Willard's jaw and the champion seemed to crumple Up in the middle. His gigantic body plumped to the floor. The crowd went stark mad. Hats flew into the air and the Pine crater on the banks of the bay where the men were

fighting Erupted with a terrific volume of human voices.

But Willard was not down for good, he was on one knee listening intently to the ref counting. Willard knew what he was doing then all right. He asked the ref what the count was and got on his feet before nine, and know the wildcat Was loose. Dempsey swarmed up to the gigantic form Of the Kansan . Now Willard was on the ropes his great weight causing them to sag deeply. Now he was half under them, .a haze had settled in his eyes., he had the Look of a man gazing through a mist. now you couldn't see the Right eye at all.now the blood began welling from cuts on the face and slowly Trickling down his cheeks.

Totters out for second

The big man tottered out for the second round, that is the only way which describes his coming.

Dempsey began tearing at him again as eagerly as a wolf Tearing at a wounded prey. Poor jess fought back feebly .he could not keep the lighter man from slugging him to the ropes and then slugging him to the ropes again .he was battered all round the ring but even so someone suggested Dempsey might be resting.

Willard seemed stronger after that round .it probably looked that way Merely in comparison to the first. However he came out for the third Round apparently desperate as he met Dempsey's attack with Both hands flailing wildly. A right upper cut which Jack delivered brought blood pouring from Willard's mouth to swell the stream that was leaking from his nose and from cuts on his face.

Dempsey's white trunks red

Dempsey wore a pair of white silk shorts, they were dyed crimson By the gore from Willard's wounds.

The only decent thing to do was to stop the fight and Willard stopped it.

Dempsey-v-Jack Sharkey 1927
The Bridgeport Telegram
22 July 1927

**Knockout Comes as Sudden Climax to Most Dramatic
Battle Ever Staged.**
FOUL IS CLAIMED
**Referee. However. Refuses to Rule on Claim—Victory
Comes after Near Defeat.**

YANKEE STADIUM. New York. July 21

The rip tearing Jack Dempsey of old came back tonight to smash his way to a spectacular knockout victory over .Jack Sharkey the young Boston heavyweight, and gained the height to ft return title match with Gene Tunney.

While a vast, deliriously excited throng of 82.000 spectators cheered him on, the former champion rallied after a wobbly start, bored through Sharkey defense with a clashing attack which brought the 24-year-old sailor , down for the count of ten in the seventh round of what was to have been a 15 round match.

A terrific right hook to the pit of the stomach doubled Sharkey up and a crashing left to the Jaw brought the Boston giant down for the fatal count after 45 seconds of fighting in the seventh round.

So close to the border-line was Dempsey's crushing left — the really decisive blow — that Sharkey started to claim a foul, only to go tumbling down In a moment from the impact of Dempsey's right hand. The referee, Jack Sullivan, at first seemed puzzled as what to do but finally decided to ignore the excited yells of Sharkey's seconds. He

finished the count in unison with the official knockdown timer and waved Sharkey out.

Claim foul.

Sharkey's handlers persisted in their protests after the fight but their attempted action was drowned in the wild outburst that came from the huge throng, most of which had come to cheer the 32-year-old ex-champion in his colorful come-back.

It was a sudden climax to one of the most dramatic heavyweight battles ever staged, a slashing, mauling struggle in which Dempsey defying the craft and stamina of Sharkey's youth, demonstrated that he had come a long way back from the floundering form that cost him his title last fall.

Staggered and badly shaken up by vicious left hooks to the jaw toward the close of the first round and jarred frequently by Sharkey's stiff counter wallops. Dempsey fought on and won because he refused to be beaten back or balked. Shaken as he was at first Dempsey had the resources to come back, keep plunging in. breaking through Sharkey's guard with short left and right hooks. His right eye cut and streaming blood, his lips split by vicious jabs. Dempsey nevertheless had the power to keep plunging in until he won.

TERRIFIC TWO

The vast crowd, which paid close to \$1,100,000 to see the spectacle was thrilled by Dempsey's sensational, doggedly persistent fight to victory against odds that seemed all against him at the start. The former champion's old speed the fighting spark that made him the vicious "Manassa Mauler" of old seemed lacking as the fight began. The younger, speedier and more clever Sharkey outstepped and outboxed the Former champion and when he came in with a series of terrific blows toward the close of the first round the

end seemed in sight.

It was such a first round last September that had started Dempsey on his downfall at Tunney's hands. But tonight he had the stamina and gameness to fight back to a victory that seemed out of his grasp when the gong ended the first round and he wobbled to his corner.

Keeps Battering

Somewhere Dempsey had gained a new store of stamina. His old speed was not quite returned nor were his blows as sharp but he had the stuff to keep battering, flailing away at his rival, growing stronger instead of weaker as Sharkey tried in vain with hooks and uppercuts to beat the former champion off.

From the second round through the sixth it was a slugging attack chiefly to Sharkey's body while the ex-sailor tried to fight his way clear, ripping in left and right hooks that sometimes slowed up and cut Dempsey but which never stopped his persistent attack.

Blood spattered from Dempsey's eye under the impact of left jabs and he spat blood frequently from his mouth but it did not halt him.

The fury and bull-dog grit of Dempsey's drive enabled him to hold Sharkey even in the second round after the first had gone to the ex-sailor, and to outpoint his young rival in the third, fourth and fifth rounds. Sharkey carried off the sixth as he speared Dempsey with rights and lefts, sent the former champion back but the spirit of the old "Manassa mauler" flared up in slashing finish that had Sharkey on the run at the gong and paved the way for the big climax in the first minute of the next round.

Until the finish Sharkey it seemed was the stronger as well as the faster of the two but he was beaten. apparently because he fought almost

exclusively on the defensive form from the first round on .Perhaps Sharkey's plan of battle was to lay back, holding off Dempsey until the latter tired, then leap to the attack. If so,he delayed too long and lost his chance of fighting for the championship of the world at least this year. If not. It was because he found Dempsey's attack too furious and persistent to offset or to counteract.

There was no question that Sharkey's hitting accuracy was far from its Usual high mark. His right, the blow that laid Jim Maloney low two months ago was short or wild. He landed it a few times especially the first and sixth rounds, but otherwise the bobbing, weaving Dempsey appeared to elude a target to connect with.

Sharkey had the youth and speed but Dempsey had the punch Aggressiveness and stamina to offset his rivals assets.

Fight By Rounds

ROUND ONE

Dempsey came out in a crouch and fell into a clinch hammering five short rights to the body as Sharkey missed a left-hook. Dempsey bore in again, drilling hard smashes to the ribs. Jack hooked two lefts to Dempsey's head. They were in a clinch again and Sharkey got in two more to the head. Sharkey stabbed Dempsey with a left to the head. Dempsey bore in again, took two lefts to the head and again drove short punches to Sharkey's body Sharkey looked tired.

A left hook shook Sharkey's head back Sharkey licked Jack with two right uppercuts. Dempsey, reeling ran around the ring. Sharkey smashed him with rights. Dempsey was groggy as Sharkey missed a long right. The bell caught Sharkey half way through a right swing. Dempsey went to his corner very tired.

ROUND TWO

Jack came out slowly and Sharkey missed a left. Sharkey drove Dempsey to the ropes with a right to the jaw. Dempsey fought, fiercely at Sharkey's body but laid heavy in the clinch. Dempsey missed a left hook. In close, they swapped jolts to the ribs. Dempsey held Sharkey clubbed him to the body. Sharkey nailed Dempsey with a left to the head and drove Dempsey to the ropes with short rights to the jaw. They slugged at each other. Dempsey was very tired after the flurry but managed to hook his left hand twice on Sharkey's chin. They were in a clinch at the bell.

ROUND THREE

A small cut appeared over Dempsey's left eye from Sharkey's jab. Dempsey drove a long left to the stomach and then to the head but landed two right jolts on head but landed two rights on Sharkey's chin. Jack Dempsey shuffled in, apparently stronger, crowding Sharkey with a body attack. They were locked in a clinch. They stood for a moment and looked each other over, tired from the fierce pace. Dempsey whipped over a right uppercut as he wove. Sharkey caught Dempsey with a wicked right smash to the chin as the former champion came in to whale at the Boston boy's body.

Sharkey hurled two lefts in Dempsey's body and Dempsey stepped back. Sharkey slipped and went down in his own corner but was up without a count. No blow was struck and the bell ended this session while Sharkey was on his knees.

ROUND FOUR

Sharkey seemed less confident when he missed. Dempsey drove Sharkey around the ring with fierce punches to the body. Sharkey

punched hard as Dempsey nailed a left to the chin. Sharkey cut three left Jabs Into Dempsey's face and hooked both hands to the face. Dempsey's right eye commenced to bleed badly. Dempsey came in again with a short right to the body and lifted Sharkey's head with a right uppercut and took two smashing jolts from Dempsey's left hand .Sharkey missed frequently as Jack danced about.

Dempsey nailed Sharkey with a left hook fully on the jaw driving the sailor into a defensive crouch in a neutral corner. They were plugging away at the bell.

ROUND FIVE

Dempsey appeared to be finding himself under the heat of the milling. He shuffled out and skimmed Sharkey's chin with a left. Sharkey stabbed Jack about the head but Dempsey caught a left hook on his nose. Sharkey spit blood as Dempsey swung in close for another short armed body attack. Sharkey met him with a right uppercut coming in but Dempsey got In two lefts to the ribs. Sharkey landed a straight right to the head and Dempsey clinched. A cut appeared on Dempsey's left cheek. Dempsey bore right back, throwing rights to the body but taking Sharkey's left four times to the head. Dempsey hooked a solid left to Sharkey's head and the sailor wobbled. Another left drove Sharkey back but the Boston boy came out slugging as the round ended.

ROUND SIX

Sharkey, apparently much fresher than Dempsey was playing a waiting game. He left Dempsey rush him again and Jack missed a long left to Sharkey's head. Sharkey was short with a left to the chin but his right smacked solidly on Dempsey's Jaw. Dempsey missed a long left. Dempsey came steadily on. However ramming to the body but Sharkey was all elbows on defense, Sharkey slapped in a right to Dempsey's face. Dempsey followed him and they bobbed at each other until Sharkey shot Dempsey's head back with a terrific right upper cut to the

Jaw. It was the cleanest and hardest punch of the fight so far. Dempsey leaned in, however, pushing Sharkey to the ropes. Dempsey caught the sailor coming out with three smashes to the head and the crowd booed as Sharkey deliberately punched Dempsey after the bell.

ROUND SEVEN

Dempsey was weaving again and Sharkey held as the fire grew hot about his body. Dempsey knocked him down with a right. Dempsey suddenly whipped his hand into Sharkey's stomach and followed with a straight right hand smash to the jaw that sent Sharkey down. Sharkey got to his knees at the count of nine, swayed and fell flat to his face as the referee counted ten. ,

Sharkey's handlers claimed the blow was foul but the referee upheld his decision. Probably the greatest ovation given a fighter was accorded Dempsey as the referee raised his hand in victory. The stadium fairly rocked. The round had lasted only forty-five seconds