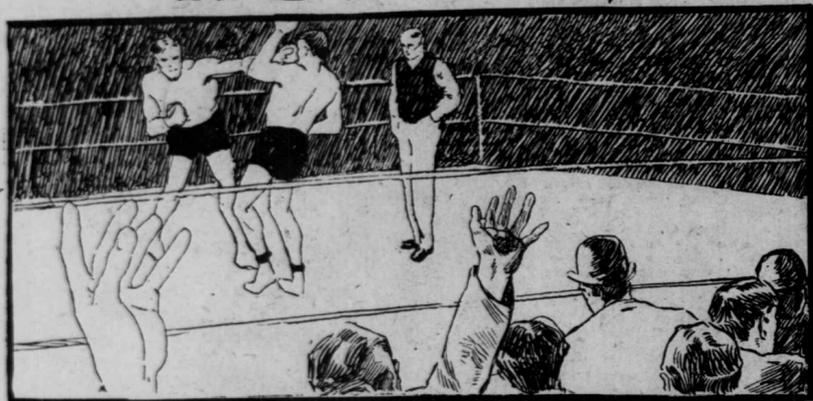


# HOW FIGHTERS BREAK THEIR BONES



BY  
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PHOTOS BY  
BUSINELL



**A** PROPOS of the severe injuries received by Britt in his recent contest with Young Corbett, Professor De Witt C. Van Court, boxing instructor at the Olympic Club, and one of the few men who have developed championship talent in such gladiators as Jim Jeffries, Jimmy Britt, Sam Berger, etc., has written for The Sunday Call the article herewith, demonstrating how fighters more often break their own bones than have them broken in the prizing, and illustrating it with pictures of himself and Harry Chester, light-heavy-weight amateur champion, also of the Olympic Club. This, therefore, is one of the most timely and instructive articles ever published on boxing.

And it. The fighter uses nothing more than the strength of the arm alone, instead of getting all the weight of his body behind the punch, as he would do if he fought more nearly erect. (The photograph on this page shows the wrong way of striking, with the fingers down.)

Another and frequent source of broken bones is both the right and left hand swing. Not one boxer in fifty lands either of these blows properly, and the result is invariably a broken thumb. That used to be one of the great difficulties with Jeffries. In nearly all his early fights he dislocated his thumbs, and it was not until he had been taught how to strike properly that he escaped injury and at the same time added immeasurably to his punching power.

The fault is that fighters do not learn, or else they forget, that the correct swing—correct not merely from the beauty and skill of the science, but because under all circumstances it is the most effective—should not be delivered with the arms spreading wide from the body and landing like flays. It should not strike against the side of the hand, in full impact with the thumb, as so many modern fighters land. In fact the thumb should never under any circumstances strike the opponent. It is not an effective blow, and self-injury is the inevitable result.

(To illustrate more clearly what I mean, look at the picture entitled "Breaking the thumb on the jaw," on this page. Now contrast with it the picture entitled "Correct blow with the knuckles.")

The correct way to land a swing of any sort for either the head or the body, with either hand, in order to escape injury to yourself is to turn the hand over, palm down, crook the elbow so that the first knuckle will strike fair and square against the spot aimed at, and the blow is not only safe but terribly damaging. And to land this well so that it is something more than a mere blow with the arm only—a swing with the full weight of the body behind it, as every blow should have—keep the arms as close to the sides as possible. If this rule is carried out it is next to impossible to strike with the thumb. It is the violation of this rule that accounts for so many wild swings in the ring. A flay-like blow gives your opponent every chance in the world to duck under it; to step back so that it whizzes harmlessly past his nose or steps in close so that it passes around the back of his head.

It is more than likely that this is how Britt fractured his right arm; from a flay-like swing wherein the forearm instead of the tightly closed



HOW THE BLOW SHOULD HAVE LANDED



BREAKING HAND ON THE ELBOW



CORRECT WAY TO LAND A STRAIGHT ARM PUNCH

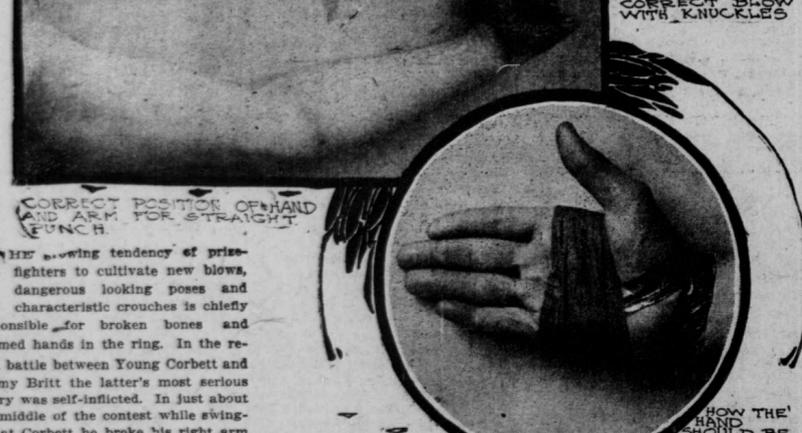
WRONG WAY TO STRIKE STRAIGHT LEFT ARM PUNCH



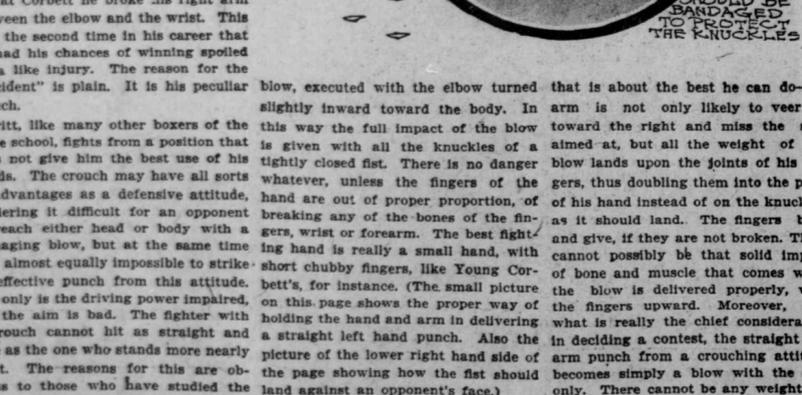
BREAKING WRIST OR ARM ON BACK OF HEAD



BREAKING THE THUMB ON JAW



CORRECT BLOW WITH KNUCKLES



CORRECT POSITION OF HAND AND ARM FOR STRAIGHT PUNCH

**T**HE growing tendency of prize-fighters to cultivate new blows, dangerous looking poses and characteristic crouches is chiefly responsible for broken bones and maimed hands in the ring. In the recent battle between Young Corbett and Jimmy Britt the latter's most serious injury was self-inflicted. In just about the middle of the contest while swinging at Corbett he broke his right arm between the elbow and the wrist. This was the second time in his career that he had his chances of winning spoiled by a like injury. The reason for the "accident" is plain. It is his peculiar crouch.

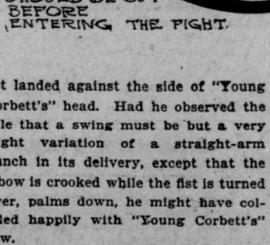
Britt, like many other boxers of the same school, fights from a position that does not give him the best use of his hands. The crouch may have all sorts of advantages as a defensive attitude, rendering it difficult for an opponent to reach either head or body with a damaging blow, but at the same time it is almost equally impossible to strike an effective punch from this attitude. Not only is the driving power impaired, but the aim is bad. The fighter with a crouch cannot hit as straight and sure as the one who stands more nearly erect. The reasons for this are obvious to those who have studied the game and ought to be doubly so to those who take an active part in it.

For instance, in a straight left-hand punch one of the simplest but at the same time most effective blows known to the prizing, the arm should be shot out, palm upward, with all the weight of the body behind it. It should be and when delivered properly is just what its name implies, a straight arm

blow, executed with the elbow turned slightly inward toward the body. In this way the full impact of the blow is given with all the knuckles of a tightly closed fist. There is no danger whatever, unless the fingers of the hand are out of proper proportion, of breaking any of the bones of the fingers, wrist or forearm. The best fighting hand is really a small hand, with short chubby fingers, like Young Corbett's, for instance. (The small picture on this page shows the proper way of holding the hand and arm in delivering a straight left hand punch. Also the picture of the lower right hand side of the page showing how the fist should land against an opponent's face.)

Now it is a physical impossibility to strike a correct left-arm punch from a crouching position. In the first place, the fighter with the crouch uses his left shoulder as one of his main defenses for his head and jaw. This necessarily compels him to turn his arm and hand over, palm downward. Therefore, when he strikes a straight arm blow, or rather attempts to—

that is about the best he can do—his arm is not only likely to veer off toward the right and miss the spot aimed at, but all the weight of his blow lands upon the joints of his fingers, thus doubling them into the palm of his hand instead of on the knuckles, as it should land. The fingers bend and give, if they are not broken. There cannot possibly be that solid impact of bone and muscle that comes when the blow is delivered properly, with the fingers upward. Moreover, and what is really the chief consideration in deciding a contest, the straight left arm punch from a crouching attitude becomes simply a blow with the arm only. There cannot be any weight be-



HOW THE BLOW SHOULD BE CUT BEFORE ENTERING THE FIGHT



CORRECT POSITION OF THE KNUCKLES FOR LEFT HAND SWING

in this way if the fight is at all vicious.

But of all things the tendency of almost every fighter of the day to wear bandages in the ring is the cause of more injured bones and ruined hands than anything else. It is all so needless. Not one in a hundred fighters ever applies the bandages properly, or perhaps knows any good reason why he wears them at all, except on the much exaggerated theory that they are absolutely necessary to save the knuckles. Invariably instead of doing good work they work their own injury.

The reasons for this are plain. To begin with the bandages are usually applied in the dressing room, when the fighter is comparatively cool before entering the ring. His body is at a normal temperature. And in this stage the adhesive rubber tape is wound round and round the knuckles, the wrist and even the thumb, and allowed to remain thus all through the fight. What happens. As soon as the excitement of the fight begins, and the boxer becomes overheated, his hands swell, and swell and swell, until the bandages, instead of being a help, are a positive and dangerous hindrance. The bandages do not stretch one jot. They stick fast for just the purpose they were intended. If anything gives it the bones and knuckles of the hand they were designed to protect.

To obviate this difficulty, if bandages must be worn, I always insist that they shall be cut through at the palm, after being applied and before the gloves are donned for the contest. This protects the knuckles fully, while leaving the hand free to expand as much as it will with the heat.

The disregard of these simple little rules often works more injury to fighters than all the grueling their opponent is able to administer. As in Britt's case, self-injury is the very worst sort since it often results in in-

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