

Tom Chandler Was First Middleweight Champion

Johnny Wilson, Who Recently Won Title From Mike O'Dowd, Is 15th Holder of Crown.

NEW YORK, June 18.—Johnny Wilson, new holder of the middleweight title, is champion of a class that has been productive of more disputes than any other division of pugilism in the United States.

The only champions whose absolute right to the title was not challenged at various times were Jack Dempsey, the "Nonpareil," Robert Fitzsimmons, Tom Ryan and Stanley Ketchel. None of the champions, however, made a more impressive record than Frank Klaus, who was really the first American with the right to take "world's champion" to his name, though there show Rooker's attempts made to deny his claims to the laurels.

In the early days of the middleweight division, when London prize ring rules prevailed, the middleweights were so greatly overpowered by the heavies that none of them stood out very prominently. But the middleweight division has been recognized in this man's hands for 53 years, from the time Tom Chandler was first given recognition way back in 1876 until today, when Johnny Wilson, newly crowned king of the division, the fifteenth man to hold the title.

Tommy Ryan was champion of the middleweight division for ten years, holding the crown longer than any other boxer in the history of the class, and Billy Papke was champion, the shortest length of time. His grasp on the crown lasted only one year.

Chandler Held It a Year.

Tom Chandler, the first to claim the title and gain recognition was champion but one year. George Rooker snatched the crown away from him, and as far as rather vague records show Rooker held sway for six years, when Mike Donovan came along in 1874 and uncrowned him.

Donovan was a bare-knuckle fighter of great ability and defended his crown for eight years, after which the title lapsed for two years before Jack Dempsey, the famous "Nonpareil," flashed across the fight horizon and drew away his claim to the leadership of the division. Donovan, incidentally, gained more in physical culture than any other trainer of athletes in many branches of sport and an instructor of boxing at the New York A. C. than he ever gained in the ring.

Jack Dempsey was an Irishman whose ring name was John "The Fighting" Dempsey. He came from County Kildare. He outclassed the field of middleweights easily and had every hand on his side until the lanky, frocked fury, Bob Fitzsimmons cast his elongated shadow on the trail. Dempsey and Fitzsimmons met and that was the end of Dempsey's reign, for he never recovered from the terrific beating he received at the hands of the Tintaru terror. Dempsey received one setback previous to his defeat at the hands of Fitzsimmons, the result of a pivot blow delivered by George La Blanche in 1889. La Blanche, however, declined to meet Dempsey a second time and drifted out of the limelight, whereupon Dempsey reasserted his claim to the title and was recognized.

Fitzsimmons was the middleweight champion for six years, when he vaulted into the heavyweights' division, and won the title from Jim Corbett. At this time Tommy Ryan appeared on the scene and laid claim to the title left vacant by Ruby Rob. Ryan's real name was Joe Young. He was of French-Canadian extraction and was born at Redwood, N. Y. For ten years Ryan reigned supreme, at the end of which time he retired undefeated. It was just about this time that Stanley Ketchel began to demonstrate the power of his punches around George Rooker, Ketchel, and he was a Pole. He won recognition as king of the middleweights in short order, but he had scarcely gotten the newness worn off the title when along came Billy Papke, the Kewanee Thunderbolt, and knocked him for a goal.

Papke Loved to Fight.

Papke loved to fight and gladly consented to a return match with Ketchel. The match was staged eight days after Papke had won the championship and Ketchel returned the compliment by knocking Papke out. This was the day of his untimely death in 1910. Ketchel was the king of the middleweights, having been in possession of the crown for three years with the exception of the 80-day reign of the Kewanee lad.

Following Ketchel's death there was wild scrambling among the middleweights for possession of his crown. A likely cluster of middleweights, headed by Papke, included Jack Wilson, Frankie Klaus, Eddie McGeorty, Jimmy Clabby, Hugo Kelly and many others. Mike Gibbons and Jeff Smith were welterweights at this time and made no bid for the crown.

Klaus emerged from a series of elimination contests with his rivals by winning a 20-round decision over Dillon, knocking out King and being over other good American middleweight with the exception of Eddie McGeorty, who fought him on even terms in a decision bout. These victories gave Klaus the right to claim the title and he was generally recognized as champion, despite many attempts on the part of the managers of his many rivals to press agent him out of it.

Klaus went to France in 1915, still holding his place at the head of the field of American middleweights, and stopped Georges Carpentier at Dieppe in 19 rounds, thus establishing a clean claim to the world's title, for Carpentier had beaten the best in the Old World before meeting Klaus. While in France Klaus also defeated Mike McGeorty and then took on Billy Papke in Paris and stopped him in 15 rounds.

Papke turned against Klaus shortly after he returned to this country. He was matched with George Chip and was beaten by a knockout. This bout was staged in Pittsburgh in 1915. A return bout the same year resulted in another knockout victory for Chip, and there was thus no doubt regarding the class of the Newcastle boy or his right to the title. Chip held the championship for only a year. In 1914 he met Al McCoy at the Broadway Sporting Club in Brooklyn and was stopped in the first round when McCoy landed a wild and heavy swing to his jaw.

McCoy, a tough though never spectacular fighter, held the title until 1917, when Mike O'Dowd came out of the West and beat him at the Chertmont rink, Brooklyn, by a knockout. And now O'Dowd, in turn, has passed along with the others and Johnny Wilson is being hailed as the new champion, having won the crown a short time ago in Boston by gaining a 12-round decision over the St. Paul slugger.

TAD'S TID-BITS

THE GREATEST FIGHTER.

Dear Tad—It was in November, 1909, over at McDonoughville, La., across the river from New Orleans, in the "Parish of Free Jefferson," where anything went, that the crashy, slashing, hanging, ferocious, fearless Ad Wolgast, "the greatest fighter I ever saw," who seemed immune from a knockout and had the offense of a tiger, disposed of Henri Piet, lightweight champion of France.

In the same arena, Jim Kendrick, Johnny Coulon, Frankie Burns, Young Corbett, Jack Britton, Philis Conley, Marvin Hart, Charley White, Jimmy Clabby, Jimmy Gardner, Grover Hayes, Johnny Lynch, Fatsy Brannigan, Joe Rivers, Johnny Dundee, Eddie Campi, Johnny Lora, Jack Redmond, Joe Mangos, Pete Herman and a score of other boys settled their differences.

A touch of the dramatic featured the affair. Piet was the first to enter the ring. With the colors of France pinned around the post in his corner and handed by a score of seconds, the Frenchman danced nervously while having the gloves adjusted. Wolgast took his corner. With a huge American flag over his shoulders as a robe, Ad fitted over to the "frog's" dugout.

Harry Stout, of Milwaukee, called the boys to the center of the ring. Instructions were given as to the rules. "Protect yourselves at all times," Wolgast growled, as was his wont, as he shook hands for the opening session. Seeing the Frenchman was so much for him, he said to his landlady as he left his corner for the second round: "This bum must go to sleep."

Take a flash of lightning Wolgast uncovered a wicked left hook to the stomach and a right to the jaw. Piet fell in a heap. No longer was he the lightweight champion of France.

"I'll fight anybody in the world but Wolgast," said the Frenchman after the fight.

Bill Hamilton, of the New Orleans Item, who has covered every important battle in the South, in these many years, remarked to the press boys: "It's tough when you have to go almost 5,000 miles away from home for a lacing."

That's how far Piet came.

Wolgast played the New Orleans crowd once more after the memorable battle with Piet. Joe Mandot, New Orleans barker boy and the greatest fighter ever developed in the South, was Ad's opponent. It looked as if Ad won, but the Frenchman was so busy scribbles assigned to cover the battle could see nothing but Joe, so the busy telegraph wires were burned up that night telling the world that Joe Mandot earned a newspaper verdict over Ad Wolgast.

Adolph Wolgast would have been champion today and he would have been

recorded in the archives of pugilism as the most durable, hardest punching and gamest lightweight who ever donned the mitts had it not been for an attack of appendicitis. That sickness prevented Wolgast from reaching a position that no other lightweight would have ever attained.

SMITH SAYS SOMETHING.

"Gooner" Smith, once a famous white hope, now paddling in the surf at San Francisco, has his own ideas about things. We copied this from a western exchange.

"I'll bet on Jack Dempsey to whip Fred Fulton any time they meet," remarked Gunboat Smith, "but I'll also bet that Fulton can whip Harry Wills 'Fulton is too easy to hit to stand a chance with Dempsey. But let me tell you something about Wills. I've known him a long time, and I'm the one man in San Francisco, I suppose, who does not think his match with Jack Thompson at the Coliseum was a fake. Wills has to get his man going in the first two or three rounds or he becomes discouraged. He couldn't get Thompson going as soon as he thought he should, and that explains the entire business."

"They can say what they want about Fulton, but he has a great left hand, and it takes a man like Dempsey, one who knocks them down quick, to get him."

"Fulton will outbox anybody I know so long as he's on his feet. Fulton has the longest reach I ever saw. He can reach up and hit you on the chin while he's sitting down."



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THE FOXIEST FIGHTER.

Dear Tad—About nine or ten of your experts pick Kid McCoy as the foxiest guy that ever rubbed his smeller with a boxing glove.

I have a man who, compared to McCoy, makes the latter look as foxy as a Jersey cow.

My man is "Lullaby" Finnegan. He met "Smifter" Riley down at the old Atlantic garden years ago and won with one punch.

Before the fight "Lullaby" bought two pounds of limburger and had his seconds, who were gas maniacs, give him a rubover with the cheese. That night he didn't take off his robe until the bell rang. As it changed he rushed at Riley, got into an awful ditch and held his man until the latter's knees sagged. Then he shot a right to Riley's kisser.

They drew the cheese line on "Lullaby" and he never fought again. Yours, HARRY POTTER.

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