

A Tale of Two Fists

The Life Story of Jack Dempsey

BY DAMON RUNYON.

IT'S VERY QUIET IN LONG BRANCH.

My friend, the Dorgan, and I went down to Long Branch on the New Jersey coast, one chilly March day to see Jack Dempsey. It is here Dempsey makes his Eastern headquarters. I was a little curious to see how prosperity had affected a former knight of the breakers, who suddenly found himself lined with money. Had he been a sort of bright lights kid. So I went to see what we might find. I used to manage Frank Moran, the old blond punch absorber from Pittsburg, and I am present publicity man for the Willard-Dempsey fight. These pugilistic matches are nowadays conducted as big business, on a portly scale.

Jack Kearns Appears.

We went by train, and Jack Kearns, Dempsey's manager, met us at the station. Kearns has for years been a well-known figure in sporting circles on the west coast. He is an astute handler of the genus pug. Before he got Dempsey, he managed dozens of other fighters, good, bad and indifferent. He was supposed to be the manager of Les Lacey when the Australian came to this country, but Les ran out on him.

Kearns is a slim, dapper, slick-looking individual, with experienced eyes. He has a neat, gray-around-the-edges. He had a new Chandler automobile, painted a delicate blue, waiting for us. "Welcome to Dempsey and me," he explained as we were breezing off in this nifty rig. "We bought it together. We do everything on a kick-basis. We're just like brothers. He's certainly a grand boy."

"And when he gets to be champion, and splits out with you, as all fighters eventually do after they're made, what then?" I asked.

"Oh," I interrupted, cynically, "this fellow's different from the rest, eh?" Kearns grinned. He has no illusions about his game. He has been around a long time. "Well, honestly I think he is different, at that," he said. "He seems to be very fond of Dempsey, and by the same token Dempsey seems to like Kearns. We stopped in front of a quiet house in a quiet street, quiet being the predominant feature of Long Branch. It is a celebrated old-time summer resort, but living there in winter strikes one as a prospect about as alluring as a residence in a baseball yard during the off season."

The house is a small two-story frame, set in a row of similar frame houses in a small hotel conducted by a fine old lady whom Kearns greeted as "Mother." We were ushered into a small parlor, which seemed crowded with men, but the crowd immediately dissolved into no more than two men. But they were very large men.

Look Out for This Boy.

One of them was Dempsey. I had met him before, so we were merely re-creating acquaintance. The other was a giant of Bob Fitzsimmons' youth—broad shoulders, legs, hands, feet, and everything else. He is Martin Burke, a 26-year-old amateur, picked up by Kearns to act as Dempsey's sparring partner. One of these days you may hear much of Martin Burke.

There was a big portolite stove in the room—an old-fashioned base burner—and it was aglow with heat. There was a table with a reading lamp on it; there were comfortable chairs and couches. It was an inviting, homey looking place, but about the last place you would pick as a prize fighter's retreat. It was certainly far from the lights of old Broadway.

"Dempsey lies down here," said Kearns, and Dempsey nodded acquiescence, as he pawed through a pile of phonograph records. "I can hear his latest Dempsey's musical taste is pronouncedly Al Jolson."

As a rule Kearns says "wow" in speaking of the firm, but the generous assignment of the liking to Dempsey alone did not astonish me. Mr. Kearns is incoherently reared.

"Oh, I like it here, too," he said hastily, noting my expression. "It's quiet—a statement of indubitable fact which caused the Dorgan, inmate of the Boaring Forties (jazz region of Manhattan island) to clear his throat as if he intended speaking. "And restful," continued Kearns.

Beauties of Long Branch.

"Yes, it's a great place," Dempsey said in. "I first got to coming down here to see Joe Bannon, a friend of mine who lives here in the summer, and I got stuck on the place. I trained here for the Pullman match. You see, I can do my roadwork on the beaches, and Jimmy DeForest has a good gymnasium around the corner. Of course right now I'm not doing any real training. I walk and jog a few miles every day, but I'm really just laying around and resting."

"You know," he continued, "I've been out with burlesque shows lately—girl outfits—and I tell you it's pretty nice to come back here and rest. I certainly like Long Branch. It's so quiet."

Mr. Dorgan listened to the quiet and shuddered slightly. There was a great deal of it indeed.

"You ought to see me act," said Dempsey. "I'm a better fighter. I'm going out again with an athletic show, and then I'm going out to Colorado to put in about a month in the mountains. I want to get the old altitude. Say, I hope they hold the fight some-

where out West. That's country, that is. At 6 o'clock "Mother" Hughes announced supper, not dinner—supper—and we sat down in the dining room at a long table with places enough to accommodate a dozen people. "Mother" Hughes has other boarders besides the pugilistic contingent.

The food came on heaped high in plates, Kearns assisting in carrying it in, and Dempsey and making snuff-dry sort of kitchenward for supplies. They are evidently thoroughly at home in "Mother" Hughes' house. They are members of the family.

It was home-cooked food, and plenty of it, with homemade bread, and I could readily understand after watching Dempsey's trencher work why he likes the place. He is what you might call a good feeder.

In the evening we took a brief turn through the quiet streets of Long Branch to settle our supper, streets that are teeming with life in the summer evenings.

"There isn't much doing," said Dempsey, "but I can take you to a picture show if you want."

But we preferred to go back to that healthy old base burner, and got our chairs close to its gleaming bosom. It was then that Dempsey began telling me his story, which he continued at other times and in other places.

Visitors dropped in from time to time. One fellow came in about a Holigan puzzle and much in the way of evidence been bargaining for. The owner had decided to reduce the price. Jack could have it for \$25.

"I've already bought two of 'em, and sent 'em home to my folks," said Dempsey.

The telephone bell rang frequently and generally the calls were for Dempsey.

That fellow's going to send me a book," he announced. "It's about a fighter, and it's called 'Cashed Byron's Profession'."

"That's a little bit of a girl," he said, after another call. "She's only seven, and she's a great friend of mine. I like kids. I know a lot of 'em around the neighborhood."

"But in this all you people do?" demanded Mr. Dorgan, feebly. "Get up, and sit down, and then go to bed!"

"Well," said Kearns reflectively, "this has been rather an exciting evening. Generally there's not so much doing. It's real quiet in Long Branch."

Presently it came bedtime, or anyway, it came to 11 o'clock, and Kearns took us upstairs to put us away in a spare room, explaining meantime that we had kept Dempsey up rather late and paying no attention to Mr. Dorgan's manifest horror at the idea of going to bed before midnight at least.

Dempsey and Kearns apparently occupied most of the house. Upstairs they had a couple of rooms largely filled with wardrobe trunks. There must have been half a dozen trunks all leading to them. Per years Kearns has rivaled the blues of the field in his array, and he is evidently conducting Dempsey along his own sartorial path.

And a few brief years ago a varnished suitcase with a few extra dollars in it was Dempsey's notion of traveling abundance.

Kearns also has Dempsey wearing a wrist watch on a hairy wrist the size of a leg of mutton, or maybe it is Dempsey who has Kearns wearing the pulse ticker, anyway they both wear 'em. Shades of Tom Figg and old John L.

Soon the unearthly quiet of Long Branch, N. J., settled down and encompassed all in its deadly folds, and nothing could be heard in the house save the partnership snore of Messrs. Kearns and Dempsey and the shivers of the Dorgan shaking the bed in terror over the cause of stillness.

"It can't sleep a wink," he was heard to mumble. "It's too damn quiet."

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In the opening exhibition games the Red Sox fairly outclassed the Braves, being especially strong on defense, as is their habit.

PETE HERMAN WANTS TO MEET WILDE WITH AN AMERICAN REFEREE.
Bantamweight Champion Pete Herman declares that he is anxious to accept the challenge issued by Jimmy Wilde, the flyweight champion of England, but will insist upon an American referee. According to Herman's manager, Sam Goldman, the bantam champion of the world has no fear of Wilde, but he does not agree with the system of judging points in use in England.

Goldman points out that American boxers seldom are able to win the decision in English rings when opposed by English boxers. In bouts between representatives of the two countries American boxers have scored many knockout victories, but it was seldom that an English referee could be induced to decide in their favor when the contest went the limit.

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Lee Magee Traded To Brooklyn For Infielder Kopf

CINCINNATI, O., April 12.—Infielder Lee Magee was traded to the Brooklyn club for Infielder Larry Kopf, according to an announcement from the offices of the Cincinnati baseball club here today. Magee did not take his spring training trip with the local team, as the club refused to meet his demands for a salary increase.

MRS. WAGNER LEADS.

At the regular weekly play at the Colonial Country club for the Halle trophy Thursday Mrs. H. J. Wagner led the field with low net. Mrs. E. L. Fowler led with low gross.

FERGUSON STARTED EARLY

Alex Ferguson, the Bloomfield, N. J. boy, who is at the Yankees' camp in Jacksonville, trying out for a place on the pitching staff, signed his first New York contract in February, 1918, and trained that year with the club at St. Louis. He was a frail youngster then, whose physique made it certain that he would not stick long in the majors. He was let out for seasoning, and now he comes back a well-built athlete, who has filled out to the extent of 15 or 20 pounds since his first tryout.

O'DOUL FAVORS SPOKE.

Frank O'Doul, the southpaw pitcher drafted by the Yankees from the San Francisco club, may never approach the heights as a ball player which Tris Speaker has reached, but he closely resembles the Cleveland star in many ways. He has all the mannerisms of the hard-hitting Texan in the outfield and Tommy Tucker styles in endless variety—\$4.95 to \$14.50.

Chick Evans, who now holds both the open and the amateur golf titles of the United States, probably will not defend the former crown in the open tournament at Brae Burn early in June. Chick says his business is taking up most of his time these days.

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