

Historians may never decide who first punched whom in the nose. But stone carvings found in the Mid-East and dating back to 5000 B.C. clearly show pugilists with bandaged hands squaring off against one another.

The first record of boxing as a major sport comes from around 686 B.C. when the Greeks included it in the Olympic Games.

Early boxing was often a fight to the finish, and one early combatant, Theagenes of Thasos, reportedly dispatched 1,425 opponents in a row.

The Romans held boxing contests at burial services in the belief that the spirit of the departed would be so absorbed in the contest that he would forget to haunt the living. The Romans also introduced the cestus, or iron-studded gauntlet, to the "sport," and boxing and burials became almost synonymous. (Pacific explorers of a much later day would find the natives of the Mortlock Islands pummeling each other with gloves imbedded with sharks teeth.) Eventually, even the Romans saw fit to ban boxing.

Boxing as a sport was not formally revived until 17th century England. In January 1681, the Duke of Albermarle organized the first bare-knuckle fight in Britain, setting his footman on the local butcher.

The first generally recognized bareknuckle champion of Britain was Jim Figg in 1719. Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope were among Figg's supporters, as was Captain Godfrey, the author of the first textbook on boxing. Godfrey wrote of Figg: "Strength, resolution, and unparalleled judgment, conspired to form a matchless master. There was a majesty shone in his countenance, and blazed in all his actions, beyond all I ever saw. His right leg bold and firm and his left, which could hardly ever be disturbed, gave the surprising advantage already proved, and struck his adversary with despair and panic."

In 1733, Figg was deposed as champion by Jack Broughton, who was to become known as "the father of boxing." In 1741, after killing an opponent, Broughton set out to introduce "science and humanity" into the sport. He invented the boxing glove (then called a "muffler") and he created the raised "ring." (Why is a boxing square called a ring? The original ring was probably a circular area in Hyde Park, London, fenced off for impromptu bouts and the name persisted.)

A boxing match in Broughton's day featured as much wrestling as punching.

A round had no time limit. It lasted until a fighter was knocked or thrown over, whereupon he had 30 seconds "to come up to scratch," that is, a scratch mark in the centre of the ring. If the fighter couldn't continue, he was declared "knocked out of time."

Broughton's reign as champion ended in 1751. When he died in 1789, he was buried in Westminster Abbey.

The first major international bout was staged in 1810 when the British champ Tom Cribb defeated the black American Tom Molineaux. Molineaux died penniless eight years later at the age of 34; 118 years after his death, his descendant, John Henry Lewis, won the world light heavyweight title.

The only boxer ever to be knighted was the Irish champion (ca. 1815) Sir Dan Donnelly.

The longest bareknuckle boxing match on record—6 hours, 15 minutes—was recorded in Melbourne, Australia, October 19, 1856 between James Kelly and Jack Smith.

It was visiting British boxers who popularized the sport in the United States in the 1850s and '60s, but boxing remained illegal in most American jurisdictions.

In 1867, the Marquis of Queensberry scrutinized boxing in Britain and drew up his 12 famous rules. His innovations included the use of padded gloves during bouts, canvas, and three-minute rounds with one-minute intervals.

The first women's boxing match in the United States was held March 16, 1876, Nell Saunders defeated Rose Harland and won a silver butter dish.

Despite the Marquis, it was bareknuckle boxing that remained the standard in the United States. In 1880, Paddy Ryan defeated Joe Goss of Great Britain in 87 rounds to become the first generally recognized U.S. bareknuckle champion. In 1882, Ryan lost to John L. Sullivan, who was probably the last of the bare-knuckle champs and the first under the new Queensberry rules.

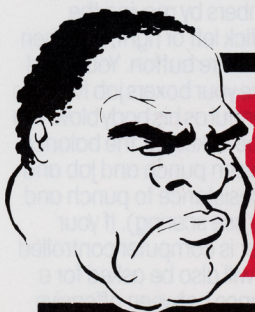
Said Sullivan in describing the transition: "The Old rules allow too much leeway for the rowdy element to indulge in their practices. Such mean tricks as spiking, biting, gouging, strangling, butting with the head, falling down without being struck, scratching with the nails, kicking, falling on an antagonist with the knees are impossible under the Queensberry Rules. Fighting under the new rules before gentlemen is a pleasure."



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The last bareknuckle prize-fight in the United States took place in Richburg, Mississippi, July 8, 1889. (By that time, barefist fighting was illegal in all 38 states.) More than 3000 fans, mostly from New Orleans, travelled to Richburg in 100-degree heat to watch Sullivan, who'd eliminated his previous 59 opponents before the fourth round, take on Jake Kilrain of Baltimore, who had been declared champion by the influential Police Gazette. The purse was \$10,000 winner take all.

Bettors not only tried to pick a winner in those days, but also determine who would draw first blood and who would be credited with the first knockdown.

Kilrain drew first blood, but finally tossed in the sponge in the 75th round. The fight had lasted two hours, 16 minutes.

At the end of the bout, both boxers were arrested and charged with assault and battery. Kilrain was

sentenced to two months in jail, while Sullivan was ordered to serve one year, a sentence that was later reduced to a \$1000 fine.

Sullivan, who preferred drinking his bourbon out of a stein, retained his title until 1892 when he lost in a gloved fight to James J. "Gentleman Jim" Corbett. Kilrain was a pallbearer at Sullivan's funeral in 1918. Corbett, the first officially recognized heavyweight boxing champ of the United States, fought for 18 years, allegedly without sustaining as much as a black eye or bleeding nose.

On April 6, 1893, Andy Bowen and Jack Burke fought the longest gloved match in history—110 three-minute rounds. Both fighters refused to come out for the 111th and the bout was declared "no contest."

After leaving his post as marshal of Tombstone, Arizona, Wyatt Earp headed for San Francisco, where he became a boxing official. On

December 2, 1896, Earp refereed a match between the superb British-born New Zealand boxer Bob Fitzsimmons and a lesser fighter named Tom Sharkey. Fitzsimmons pounded Sharkey for seven rounds, but in the eighth, with Sharkey dead on his feet, Earp stopped the fight and awarded it to the American on a foul. The irate Fitzsimmons started after Earp, but the ex-marshal pulled a loaded revolver and Fitzsimmons decided to withdraw his protest over the decision.

A year later, Fitzsimmons, not having to contend with Earp's refereeing, defeated Corbett for the heavyweight title. Fitzsimmons weighed 156 lbs. at the time. He eventually lost the title to Jim Jeffries, but continued boxing until 1914 when he was 52 years old.

Beginning in 1900 a fighter from Philadelphia named Joe Grim was a major gate attraction, despite the fact that he rarely won a contest. Grim's claim to fame was that he refused to be knocked out.

His career as a human punching bag lasted two decades before he was finally KO'd by Sailor Burke in 1920.

In a bout between Oscar Nelson and Christy Williams in Hot Springs, South Dakota, December 26, 1902, Nelson knocked Williams down 42 times.

Between 1905 and 1918, Abe "The Newsboy" Hollandersky fought 1,309 boxing matches and 387 wrestling matches.

The smallest heavyweight champ in history was the 5-foot, 7-inch 180lb Canadian Tommy Burns. Burns won the title in 1906 and on March 28 of that year defended it against Jim O'Brien in San Diego. Burns knocked out O'Brien in the first round and, still raring to go, he challenged heavyweight Jim Walker, who was in attendance, to a title fight the same night. Burns KO'd Walker in the first round.

Burns lost his crown to the first black heavyweight champion, Jack Johnson, in Sydney, Australia, on December 26,

1908. Johnson was to hold the heavyweight crown longer than any other fighter except Joe Louis.

Between 1897 and 1928, Jack Johnson lost only seven of 114 bouts. In a fight October 16, 1909, Johnson hit challenger Stanley Ketchel so hard that several of Ketchel's teeth were afterwards found lodged in Johnson's glove.

In 1910 in Reno, Nevada, Johnson faced former champion Jim Jeffries, who had come off a five-year retirement. Johnson's victory, which made him the first officially recognized black champion, sparked race riots across the United States.

On December 9, 1913, in Paris, Jack Johnson defeated Jim Johnson in the first all-black heavyweight title fight.

Johnson eventually lost his crown to 6-foot, 6½-inch Jess Willard in Havana in 1915, in a famous fight many observers accused Johnson of throwing.

In a match between Sam McVey and Joe Jeanette in Paris in 1909, there was a total of 40 knockdowns. Jeanette won when McVey collapsed answering the bell for the 49th round.

During a heavyweight bout at the Manhattan Opera House in 1916, Charles Weinert knocked his opponent Andre Anderson out of the ring. Anderson rolled off the stage and into the orchestra pit. Reported Ring magazine publisher Nat Fleischer: "He landed set first in the wide, inviting mouth of the big bass horn. Tightly wedged into the horn, Anderson strove in vain to extricate himself while the referee reached through the ropes and tolled off the fatal ten."

Jess Willard held the heavyweight title until he lost to Jack Dempsey, July 7, 1919.

Someone once calculated that Dempsey's 8-10 inch punches travelled at 135 miles per hour.

The first title fight broadcast on radio was the Dempsey-Georges Carpentier bout at Boyle's Thirty Acres, Jersey City, New Jersey, July 2, 1921. The fight was also boxing's first million-dollar gate.

Dempsey once hired the young J. Paul Getty as a sparring partner.

During his reign as heavyweight champ, Dempsey fought a total of 138 minutes, during which time he earned \$2,137,000.

In 1927, Dempsey lost to Gene Tunney, who became the only heavyweight boxing champion ever to lecture on Shakespeare at Yale University, although, years later, Muhammed Ali was invited to lecture on poetry at Oxford.

Joe Louis, the Brown Bomber,

defeated James J. Braddock for the heavyweight title in 1937. Louis was only 23. He went on to defend his title a record 25 times.

In 1938, Henry Armstrong of Columbus, Mississippi, held the world featherweight, lightweight, and welterweight championships simultaneously.

Lou Nova KO'd Max Baer in the first ever televised fight. It took place at Yankee Stadium, New York, June 1, 1939. Max Baer, Jr. starred in television's The Beverly Hillbillies.

Despite an all-time record crowd of 135,132 that watched Tony Zale knock out Billy Prior in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, August 8, 1941, the promoters did not make a profit. The bout was a free exhibition staged by the local Fraternal Order of Eagles.

The quickest knockout on record occurred September 24, 1946, at Lewiston, Maine, when Al Couture decked Ralph Walton while Walton was still adjusting his mouthpiece. Total time of the fight: 10½ seconds.

In his career, Rocky Marciano (born Rocco Francis Marchegiano) won 49 professional bouts—43 by knockout (11 of those in the first round)—without a loss. Marciano defended his title six times before retiring in 1955, the only undefeated heavyweight champ in history.

Between August 10, 1938, and November 28, 1949, an unheralded boxer from Gloucester, England, Hal Bagwell, compiled a record of 178 wins, no losses, and five draws.

Future heavyweight champ Ingemar Johansson of Sweden was disqualified in the 1952 Olympic final for not throwing any punches. Seven years later Johansson knocked out Floyd Patterson to win the world title.

Professional boxing is outlawed in Sweden.

When Muhammed Ali (then Cassius Clay) KO'd Sonny Liston in Lewiston, Maine, May 25, 1965, to retain his heavyweight title, there were only 2,434 fans in attendance. The 22-year-old Clay had won the title the previous year from Liston.

Howard "John John" Davis, a former drummer for the Godfather of Soul, Mr. James Brown, won the Olympic lightweight title in Montreal in 1976.

At the 1977 Saginaw Golden Gloves in Michigan, Harvey Gartley came out of his corner, danced around a bit, threw one punch at his opponent, missed, and fell down exhausted. He was counted out at 47 seconds, the victim of the quickest self-knockout in history.

