

WILLARD FEARED TO USE PUNCH

Ex-Champion Knew His Strength but Afraid He Would Kill Somebody With It

By FRANK G. MENKE

Whenever a thought drifts along to Jess Willard, the comment is made: "If he had been vicious by nature — if he had possessed only half the relentless fury of Dempsey —"

But he didn't. And so he passed from the heights in his second defense of the title, after four years of reign and slipped into certain forgetfulness instead of remaining an unbeatable champion.

No man ever held the crown who had the mighty strength of Willard; none could hit with such murderous force, yet Willard, giant that he was, gentler-like in the power that was his, rates now in memory as a tapper and a slapper.

Along in 1922 when he was making his comeback and was tuning up for a fight with Floyd Johnson, I asked him:

"Why don't you ever let loose with your punches?"

Willard looked calmly at me for a full minute. Then slowly, he answered:

"Because—well—I guess I'm a little afraid."

And that perhaps was the truth, the whole truth and nothing else. Young Willard knew his strength and his power; knew it and yet had feared it from the night nearly 10 years before when he had unleashed an uppercut, caught "Bull" Young under the chin, and a few minutes after they counted out Young, he went into a coma—and died.

Willard never was the same afterward.

His career began in 1911. He howled over men with ease and regularly in that year. It rarely was necessary for him to use his right hand. He jabbed with such crushing power that a few tabs in another man's face staggered him and another jab or two, or a tapping right cross finished him.

In 1912 he knocked men right and left. And in 1913 he added to his string of kayo triumphs. Then came his fight with Young in August of that year. Willard expected an easy battle but Young was tough and rugged and those left jabs that staggered other men rattled off Y.

Things began to look bad for Willard—there was the likelihood that he might go down to a decision defeat. Faced by that possibility he waited patiently for the chance to deal forth the mightiest of his blows—the one that he feared himself.

It was a right hand uppercut.

The opening came—at last! Willard lunged forward a bit, swung that terrible long arm, the flat went crashing under Young's chin, his head snapped upward, he toppled over—and that was his mortal end.

The death of "Bull" Young rade Willard resolve to quit the ring.

But he was coaxed back months later for a fight with Bob Rodel, as the fight was about to start, Jimmy Johnston, managing Rodel went over to Willard and whispered:

"Remember 'Bull' Young."

Willard turned pale. Memory came back; fear of his own power overwhelmed him. And rather than risk a repetition of that Young tragedy he simply slapped and cuffed Rodel for ten rounds and let the Boer stay the distance.

Fears Consequences

I saw Willard in most of his fights thereafter—and only twice did I see him swing with all his force the right hand uppercut that finished Young. Even in 1915 when he mixed it with Jack Johnson with the world's heavyweight championship at stake he never made a real try with it.

He feared it—feared the consequences if it struck.

So here was a man possessed of the most terrible blow in all ring history—one that could have won him an almost unending succession of victories, deliberately refusing to use it.

In 1916 when he fought Frank Moran in defense of his title, he crossed with his left and his right—but he never let that uppercut, swish through the ozone, although he had a score of chances.

He used it against Jack Dempsey in a desperate hour—used it in the second round. And this is Dempsey's story:

"I all but murdered Jess in the first round. When he came out in the second, after seven knock-downs, he looked like a wreck. His arms seemed limp; his legs were buckling. I crowded in, set myself for a few finishing punches and then a ton of dynamite landed under my chin."

Willard, punch-drunk, hazy, with normal caution gone, forgot the fear of that blow—the consequences of it. He had turned to its use in the hour of his greatest need; let it go with legs that gave him no leverage and he struck with an arm, the muscles of which were almost limp.

Dempsey Lifted Off Feet

The punch lifted Dempsey off his feet and, as Jack afterward explained:

"It nearly lifted my head off. I've been forever thankful that he did not lift one under my chin in that first round. Otherwise, I might not have lived to tell the neighbors about it."

It was in 1922 while I was chatting with Willard about his forthcoming fight with Floyd Johnson that he said:

"I've got to win this fight at any cost."

And I knew what it meant. The whole attitude of him showed that if he couldn't beat Johnson with hooks and jabs, that he would, if need be, call into use his mighty uppercut and risk the consequences.

For ten rounds they fought—and Willard never called upon his famous blow. He was outcoring Johnson, but a decision victory over Floyd was not what Willard wanted to reestablish himself. A knockout triumph was vital.

In the eleventh he came out—and the zero hour for Johnson began to strike. The youngster came plunging in, several times Willard stabbed him back; several times he tried to land a right cross. He failed. There was but one thing left to do. And Willard did it.

He let Johnson step in—and then he let go with his uppercut. The blow landed; the fight was over. And the flat career of Johnson really came to its end then. The punch disturbed some muscles in Johnson's neck and head, destroyed the functioning of some nerves and it wasn't long after when Johnson, a pitiful figure as an athlete had to quit the ring.

If Willard had used that punch in every fight—

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CROWD CHEERS TUNNEY AS HE PUMMELS HEENEY

More Fight Fans See Bout Than Was Expected

YANKEE STADIUM, NEW YORK, July 26.—(AP)—Gene Tunney appeared tonight in the second defense of his heavyweight title and for the first time before his home folk before a crowd which made up in enthusiasm what it lacked in numbers.

When the Greenwich village boy went out to trade punches with the rugged challenger from New Zealand, Tom Heene, the thousands of spectators showed that they had come to cheer.

There were many more customers than many experts thought would drop in on the fight, heavyweights it was the evening that not so many of the millions had remained away as the pessimistic advance observations had suggested.

The crowd was far from the 97,000 capacity of the house of the world champion New York Yankee boasts but neither Tex Rickard, the promoter, nor any others concerned expected anything approaching a sell-out.

Society Folk Attend

Every phase of life was represented in the enthusiastic crowd. Figures prominent in other sports than boxing were on hand, society folks in evening dress and just plain "house" in caps and sweaters mixed with them. Well-known figures on the stage whose names

blaze in electric lights on Broadway sat beside people who had come from cities far away, and did not recognize their neighbors.

The common language of the crowd was the cheer. The customers roared their approval when the champion sent two stinging blows to the challenger's nose and there was hardly less volume to the whoops and yells greeting a smash from the New Zealander to Tunney's jaw.

The bells had it, no matter what happened.

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INSURE WITH HENRY TROMP.

YOUNG GOLFERS SCORE TWO UNDER PAR RECORD OF TWO AT NORTH SHORE

NORTH SHORE, CHICAGO, July 26.—(AP)—A perfect day for golf inspired two young professionals, Bill Tindler of Anderson, Ind., and Phil Hessler of Bristow, Okla., to score 70, or two under par, today to take the lead of the first half of the large field in the elimination round of the western open golf championship at North Shore club.

This score is a competitive course record, the only better score being a 69 by Harry Cooper during an exhibition from the forward tees.

Only one stroke behind this brilliant pair came Jim Noonan, of Gary, Ind., to complete a trio of par busters for the first day's play over the 6800 yard course, more difficult because of its newness than for the real golfing difficulties built into the links.

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NEWS THAT GENE WINS FLASHED AROUND WORLD

By Radio, Telegraph and Cable, Story is Flashed

NEW YORK, July 26.—(AP)—"Tunney Wins!"

By radio, telegraph and cable those two words flashed tonight not only around the world but up and down the face of the globe to waiting news presses in every important center.

"Tunni Fobidit!" was the way it came to Moscow, well into the activities of a new day while the crowd still was struggling from the Yankee stadium.

"Tunney Vainqueur!" said the cable to Paris in the early dawn where many had waited on the boulevards for the result.

"Gano Tunney," chattered cable instruments in Buenos Aires and Madrid, and "Tunney Slegt" was the two-word combination to pugilistic fans in Berlin.

Through the closely knitted web of wires of the Associated Press and its affiliated agencies the result of another long campaign to unseat a sovereign of sport was "told the world" in brief seconds virtually. Special circuits were set up to South America, Mexico—despite the internal crisis—asked and received "most complete details," and new beam wireless was used to transmit columns of descriptive matter to Australia and New Zealand, Heene's homeland.

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