

The Story of Matty Baldwin

*The Life and Adventures of a Clever
Boxer in the Lightweight Circles.*

*Graphic Details of a Typical
Boxer's Life, His Habits,
Tastes, Struggles and
Ambitions.*

By Alec McLean



THE greatest event in boxing circles is the winning of the heavyweight championship of the world. All other contests at other weights yield in importance to this. But if we look for the second most important event, we will have to go down the scale through the light heavyweight, middleweight and welterweight divisions, down to the lightweight ranks before we find it. There seems to be something in this contest among the little men which appeals to the popular idea of sport more than similar contests at any other weight, except, as we have seen, in the very highest.

Since the passing of Battling Nelson, there has been a chaotic state of affairs in the lightweight division. Ad Wolgast, the present champion, is by far the most prominent figure. The supremacy which he has won, however, has not been gained without a struggle, and it is still contested by a number of likely candidates.

Among this number, the most prominent by reason of his past achievements and recent showing, is Matty Baldwin. The Charlestown boxer has proved his right to be considered a logical contender for lightweight honors. He has had more boxing expe-

rience than the present champion, is fully as game, and can stand as great an amount of punishment. He has won the decision over such consistent performers as Owen Moran, and has tied in a twelve-round contest with the champion himself.

The showing he made on that occasion clearly entitles him to a return bout at a much longer distance, where the respective merits of the two men can be settled permanently and decisively to the satisfaction of all most interested.

Matty's Career as a boxer has shown that this much-criticised profession is not worthy of the hard knocks it has received. He has shown that even a ring man can lead a clean life, be a worthy member of society, and always retain his own self-respect.

This is a fact which the hostile public has so often overlooked. Most boxers are careful livers through necessity, if not from choice, as they know all too well that they must keep themselves in the best physical trim in order to succeed at their very strenuous profession.

Matty Baldwin was born at Charlestown, Mass. He went through the public schools, and attended the local High School for one year. Then, as

his father needed his aid he was obliged to go to work. As he was the oldest of fourteen children, and as his family was in none too comfortable circumstances, his help was very necessary. So at fifteen he started in running an elevator for a well-known concern in Boston, but he still continued his high school work, going to evening classes at the Boston English High School.

Baldwin never took a boxing lesson but, as is customary at that age, he sparred more or less with several fellows in his own neighborhood. One of these, Jack Bradley by name, a husky teamster, lived in the same house with Baldwin. Bradley, learning that Matty desired to become a boxer, started in to show him some of the fine points of the game. Perhaps, however, it is better to let Matty tell his own story of this occasion. He says, "Jack one night invited me into the cellar of our house, and started to show me the way in which Terry McGovern bested his opponents. I will never forget that night, for he came very near discouraging me from ever becoming a boxer. In showing me McGovern's style—a rushing, slam-bang method, he gave me a decidedly sea-sick feeling, and when it was over, I could not bear to look at a boxing glove again for a month. However, I went to Boston one day and saw a punching bag in a window, marked seventy-five cents. I had never seen one used, and did not know how it was suspended from the drum, but returned home, and after a good deal of teasing, my mother gave me the money. She did this rather unwillingly, for she did not like the idea of boxing, and thought it a wicked game. So I purchased the bag, and after I reached home, was at a loss as to how I was to punch it. Finally, I made a pilgrimage to the backyard, where I cut a section of the clothes line, and succeeded in hanging the bag to my own satisfaction."

Matty's first public appearance was at a smoke talk in South Boston, where he boxed three rounds with a little

fellow named Mills, at the time a local bantamweight champion. Matty did fairly well, but as he says, "I knew none of the fine points of the game, and only succeeded in stopping everything that came my way with either my jaw or my nose. In fact, the only thing I had in my favor at that time was strength and my ability to stand punishment."

While running the elevator, a boxer who had had one or two bouts used to come into the building where Matty worked. Hearing that he could box a little, Baldwin used to look at the fellow with pride, for he had seen his name in the paper, and concluded if he was good enough to have his name in print, he must be a wonder. The two would-be pugilists became friendly, and used to spar a little. One day, the blows were harder than usual, and finally Matty grew angry, pushed down the lever, and sent the elevator to the top floor. There the preliminary exercise was finished in strenuous fashion. There were repeated rings on the bell, from people on the ground floor who wanted to go up in the elevator, but Matty was far too busy to mind little things like that. The rings kept coming faster and faster, however, so he decided he must finish the scrap, which he did with a final hard blow that sent his opponent to the floor. Then he rode down in the elevator, feeling, as he expressed it, "Like a champion."

After that Baldwin was a local favorite, and succeeded by making frequent excursions to the top floor in proving his supremacy over every office boy, or other member of the office force who cared to contest that point.

Matty's first real bout occurred shortly after this event. It was staged in a cellar, was a ten-round bout, and was held under the auspices of a local boys' club. The purse was \$1.00, divided in the ratio of 40 per cent. to the manager, and 60 per cent. to the boxers. The managers' share according to the agreement was to go for rub-down and tape for the hands. The admission was fixed at the nominal

price of ten cents. The referee throughout the contest smoked a T D pipe. Unlike other fighters, according to the stories, Matty did not give his purse to his mother, but used it to buy ice cream instead.

Matty was sixteen years old when he made his first important match. This was a contest with a colored boy named Javis. Javis was managed by the now-famous Sam Langford. Matty states that Langford came to him before the contest with advice, which he offered him, accompanied with his best wishes. The advice was that Matty for the two days prior to the fight should drink all the water he possibly could. "Drink buckets and buckets," Langford said.

Matty took the advice, not knowing that Langford was managing Javis, and gave him the advice hoping to injure him. Nevertheless, in spite of this water cure, which Baldwin followed strictly to the letter, he won the fight, and knocked out his opponent. Those at the ring said then that if he would be good and go home, they would have his name in the papers the following day.

Since then, Matty has increased wonderfully in efficiency as a fighter. He has fought with such sterling ring artists as Abe Attell, Jem Driscoll, Owen Moran, and Ad Wolgast.

He has never yet been knocked out. He has always been noted for his strength and gameness, the latter especially. A striking instance of this characteristic was shown on the occasion when Baldwin fought several rounds with a broken arm against Battling Hurley of Boston. Matty has always been a support to his family, and although he is married himself and has two children, since his father died two years ago, he always sends home part of his earnings to his mother.

Matty has one characteristic in his favor which cannot be said of some of the other leading boxers in the lightweight circles. He is a natural lightweight, and is always able to make one hundred thirty-three pounds with ease. This is an advantage which such



MATTY BALDWIN AND ALEC McLEAN
OFF FOR A TOUR OF THE
CONTINENT

boxers as Packy McFarland and others might well envy. Many of the contenders for the lightweight honors are obliged to starve themselves in order to make the weight limit of one hundred thirty-three pounds. This rigorous course of training cannot fail to weaken a boxer materially, and this advantage of Matty's is one of his strongest assets.

Matty's three years' training in high school have brought out some traits and characteristics which would not ordinarily be looked for in a typical boxer. His special hobby is music, and he is an admirer of all the grand opera stars. He never talks fight. It is the last thing he refers to—he would much rather discuss music, and is by no means a poor singer himself. He has a rather clear baritone voice.

Matty, just before he left for the South, expressed his pleasure that Zanatello, the great Italian tenor of the Boston Opera House, would be able to sing in this country this coming winter. Zanatello, as may be remembered, was detained in his native country, Italy, as a member of the Italian army, now fighting the Turks, and was but recently excused from military duties that he might fulfill his contracts as a grand opera star in America.

Baldwin is also a great admirer of the late railroad magnate, E. H. Har-

riman. The lives of some of our noted financiers have always exercised a peculiar interest for him, and he reads everything that falls into his hands about them.

Matty has very good habits. His greatest pleasure is reading and music, as has been said. He is a careful liver, a conscientious trainer, and with anything approximating good fortune, should realize his ambition of a return match with Ad Wolgast.

Matty's recent trip to the Pacific Coast was a success from every standpoint. He showed very prominently among the boxers of the West, and wherever he went received a most cordial reception. He fought twice at Salt Lake City, and three twenty-round

bouts in San Francisco. To illustrate Matty's activity as a boxer, he has traveled twice from coast to coast since June, 1911, covering a distance of 17,000 miles. He fought seven long battles in the hot weather of last summer, and was uniformly successful.

Matty is always working. He is a hard worker by choice and by profession. He has his eye on the highest honor at his own weight, and he will never be satisfied until he gets it. Whatever, his success, he belongs to the best type of athletes, the man who wins by cleverness, skill and strength. at a game which is more than 2,000 years old, and which is well worthy of the high esteem it has always enjoyed with the American people.



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