

The Funny Side of Fighters as Seen by Jack Skelly

Humorous Adventures of Some of the Most Prominent Boxing Stars

"THERE have been many humorous boxers in the ring, especially those with Irish blood in their make-up," said Jack Skelly to the sporting editor of the Yonkers Daily News.

"One of the most comic fistic fellows I ever knew was Patsey Doody, who passed away with hasty consumption, about twenty years ago. Patsey lived in the old fourth ward, New York, where he was well-known for his wit and humor. He could dance a jig and sing a comic song, as well as any man on the vaudeville stage.

"One day Patsey rigged up a soap box to represent a camera. In the centre of the box he inserted a big horse syringe and covered his fake with a black cloth. Doody finally induced a couple of Italian barbers to sit for their pictures. After carefully posing his victims. Doody squirted the water from the syringe all over the barbers and quickly made his escape. The Italians were wild with rage, but the crowd that gathered to see the operation laughed them into subjection. Patsey was full of these pranks and many of the old fourth warders can tell of the numerous tricks he pulled off.

"Jack Grace, the globe-trotting boxer, is another chap who is full of fun. He was up to see me recently before he left for England, and his many adventures, around the world, would fill a book. He has fought and faked in every civilized country. While in China a few years ago he was matched to meet the lightweight champion of Pekin in a finish contest. Jack looked upon the bout as a joke until the Chinese manager of the club informed him just before he entered the ring that the loser would be immediately beheaded after the fight. Grace

said it was the toughest joke ever played upon him, and for once he had to win on the level or lose his "block." Jack had a hard task, but finally put the Chink out. Then he beat it out of Pekin and left his victim to the mercy of the headsmen.

"In Buenos Ayres, Grace picked up a big red-headed Boer, who greatly resembled Bob Fitzsimmons. He taught him all he could, in a few lessons, about boxing, and finally framed up a match with him before the swellest athletic club in the gay and festive city. The Boer was billed as the real Fitzsimmons and the fans gave up big money to see the fight. In fact, there was great excitement over the affair. Grace had agreed to go out in about the tenth round, after a supposed hard fight, and he had tipped off a few friends to this effect. When they entered the ring, the Boer balked and wanted to win on the level. He went at Jack and tried to beat him up in terrific rushes and heavy swings. Grace finally grew angry and undertook to punish his opponent, and in a mix-up landed a swing that laid the husky Boer on his back, and he was counted out. The news was quickly cabled to New York and back came word that the real Fitz was playing a theatrical engagement in Philadelphia, and Grace again had to make his escape to another quarter of the globe, or get what was coming to him. Jack has a lot of these comic jokes, as he considers them, up his sleeve, and he loves to recite them to his friends.

"My old pal, Jack Dempsey, also was very fond of a practical joke. I remember some years ago he had Paddy Gorman, the hard-hitting middleweight on the road with him giving exhibitions. They hit a wild, woolly town out in Mon-

tana one night, and several big Indian chiefs attended the show. They were greatly surprised to see Gorman knock a big miner cold in a couple of rounds. In fact, the Redskins thought Gorman had killed his man, and they eyed him with great interest. After the show Dempsey got Paddy and a couple of the big chiefs in a small back room. He had told the Indians that Gorman was a one-punch man-killer, and whispered to Paddy that the Redmen were also desperate fellows. After a drink or two Dempsey managed to slip out of the room and lock the door. Gorman looked at the Indians rather wickedly, and they returned the look with a wild glare. When Paddy found the door was locked he let a roar out of him like a bull, and his fierce shouts frightened the Indians, who stood up with bowie knives and revolvers in their hands, while Dempsey and a few friends watched the proceedings over the fan light. Paddy was almost scared to death, and the Indians couldn't quite understand the strange situation, but what grunts of relief they gave when Dempsey, with a merry laugh, opened the door.

"When the late Stanley Ketchell was training over in Jerome avenue a couple of years ago, he was as full of fun as a school boy. One day an automobile party drove up to the road-house where Ketchell was getting into condition and one of the party insisted on having an or-

der of stewed tripe and onions. The rather dopey German waiter informed them there was no tripe in the house, nor in the neighborhood. Still the party insisted and said he would wait an hour for the dish. The autoists soon became boisterous and were trying to bulldoze the German, when Ketchell took in the situation. Quickly donning a waiter's coat and apron the great middleweight hastened to the party and said:

"Gentlemen, you can have the tripe in ten minutes! It's on the fire now!

" 'Ah!' exclaimed the tripe guest, 'we've at last struck a waiter who knows his business. He's certainly up to snuff!'

"Then Ketchell went to the kitchen and sliced up a small white rubber hose. Over this he poured some melted butter mixed with flour, a few boiled onions, heated the mixture red hot and served it in a handsome covered dish, after which he disappeared behind a screen to await results. When the hungry guest got his mouth full of hot rubber there was a wild cussin' scene, and the proprietor came forth and explained matters. The party rather enjoyed the joke, hunted Ketchell up and offered to open the wine. He was only a boy and loved to joke as well as he did to fight.

"You'll find fighters generally have more or less humor in their composition, and they are just as human as college professors or people in other walks of life."

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