

# **With Craft and Guile: Canada's Jimmy McLarnin and the Business of Welterweight Boxing During the Great Depression**

Don Morrow  
University of Western Ontario, London Ont.

Western Canadian Jimmy McLarnin fought professionally for 13 years. Between 1927 and 1936, he dominated the world of welterweight boxing by fighting primarily out of New York City. In McCallum's *Encyclopedia of World Boxing Champions*, McLarnin is described as "one of boxing's biggest attractions in the late 1920s and 1930s" and, further, that "few prize fighters of any era have been more idolized and lionized." This paper examines the reasons behind the phenomenal success of Canada's "best boxer of the first half century." Specifically, it establishes that McLarnin's business acumen, development through

shrewd coaching, unique boxing prowess and media promotion were the critical factors in his career. The paper analyzes McLarnin in the social context of his boxing times by building upon earlier work by Waters, Waters and Morrow, Lappage, and Schrodtt on sport during the Depression years.